

Kirra Vanzetti

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 5 July 2017 2:16 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Services Bill Select Committee submission

Assistant Clerk Committees
 Department of the Legislative Council
 Fire Services Bill Select Committee
 Parliament House, Spring Street
 EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

5th July 2017

Dear Committee,

I would like to **make a confidential submission** to the Committee regarding the proposed changes to our Fire Services.

Submission

After the last state election, the United Firefighters Union submitted an EBA which I believe threatened the very fabric of our fire services, the CFA. As we know the then Minister Jane Garrett refused to let the EBA go through as she knew that it would cause major damage to the volunteer section of the CFA and thus take away one of the greatest things the CFA has, which is surge capacity. Since then, we all know the story in terms of the minister being forced to resign, the CFA board and several others leaving either the CFA or MFB.

So this is how I see things:

1. The Andrews Government and the UFU told us that the EBA would not impact on volunteers. After the Turnbull government was re-elected and introduced legislation which protected volunteers, the UFU withdrew the EBA. So the Government and the UFU lied to all the CFA volunteers and the people of Victoria. The UFU EBA did have a major impact on CFA volunteers.
2. The only people that have actively pushed the EBA are Daniel Andrews, James Merlino and Peter Marshall. However on the other side of the fence, the following people have come out against the UFU EBA and proposed changes to the fire service:
 - The Previous Emergency Services Minister Jane Garrett
 - The last ALP Emergency Services Minister Andre Haermeyer
 - Lucinda Nolan Previous CEO
 - The Previous CFA Board
 - The vast majority of Victorians
 - Jack Rush QC – who assisted at the Black Saturday Royal Commission
 - Joe Baffone – former chief office
 - Euan Furgerson – former chief officer

Peter Rau - MFB chief office

Jim Higgins - MFB

The entire MFB board

Michael Eburn - Associate Professor ANU Law expert in Emergency Services and to quote Mr Eburn

“The enterprise bargaining agreement, central to the sackings, is contrary to the CFA Act.

It provides unprecedented powers within the CFA to the United Firefighters Union.

The EBA undermines the role and independence of volunteers.

Those sacked or resigning had no choice but to oppose the EBA.”

This is not a good thing for Victoria and from a management point of view is destructive.

The Victoria's Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission has also said that the EBA breaches equal opportunity legalisation which even the Governments own legal advisors has said that it breaches equal opportunity legalisation. It also breaches the CFA Act as there has not been dialogue between the Government and the VFBV.

So when you look at the above and look at the people that are pushing for the EBA, who are:

Daniel Andrews

James Merlino

Peter Marshall

And the rest of the secret cabinet sub committee

Very little in the way of fire service experience but are seeking to introduce change!

3. “This legislation delivers much needed reform to our outdated fire service.” Nothing could be further from the truth. All the legislation does is to take the career staff out of the CFA and puts it into an organisation where there are no volunteers. This then allows the government to push the original EBA as it can't contravene the changes enacted to the fair work act introduced by the Turnbull government as there are no volunteers.

It also does not deliver the changes the UFU has claimed in their Fire Doesn't wait campaign. As an example, in the UFU campaign it mentions the Springvale CFA station. This is station is a career station with career fire fighter on station ready to respond. By changing the name, does this speed up their response time? The answer to that would be NO! And that's all this damaging piece of legislation will do, is to change 35 CFA stations names from CFA to FRV. That is not reforming our fire services and to call it much need reform to an out dated service is absolute rubbish.

It should also be noted that in other country's they seem to be doing the opposite and I would draw your attention to our closest neighbor, New Zealand.

“NEW Zealand volunteer and career firefighters have merged to form an integrated service, a move in stark contrast to Premier Daniel Andrews's bid to split Victoria's CFA.

In launching Fire Emergency Services New Zealand, Internal Affairs Minister Peter Dunne said it would bring 14,000 volunteer and career firefighters, 40 organisations and more than 600 brigades “into a single integrated service”.

“Fire and Emergency New Zealand is being established with one over-riding goal — to ensure all our firefighters, urban and rural, career and volunteer, have the tools, support and mandate they need to meet the diverse needs of all our communities,” Mr Dunne said.”*

So, you have to ask, why are we doing the complete opposite?

In conclusion, it seems to me that on one side you have a large group of people that have a vast knowledge of fire and emergency services that want the best for Victoria and on the other side you have a very small group that is putting their own self-interest ahead of the interest of all Victorians. The legislation put forward does not deliver reform at all and the biggest issue is that Peter Marshall and the UFU have put out forward an agreement, which at no stage have they moved from and have with dogged determination stuck too. If these changes go through, god help us during the next big bush fire, because we will not have the surge capacity we’ve had in the past and the potential for loss of property and life could be great.

For the good of all Victorians, **you must not pass this dangerous and bad piece of legislation.**

Yours sincerely

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*The Weekly Time 5th July 2017