

Assistant Clerk Committees  
Department of the Legislative Council  
Fire Services Select Committee  
Parliament House, Spring St  
East Melbourne Vic 3002

4<sup>th</sup> July 2017

### **Submission on Fire Services Bill**

Dear Committee Members

I am forwarding this submission to you on behalf of my local fire brigade, ie, Marlo Fire Brigade, as well as other Brigades in the Orbost Group of Brigades.

I have been a volunteer fire fighter with Marlo brigade for forty three years, joining in 1973, during this time I have filled many roles including two terms as captain. In recent years I have worked along side staff CFA members on Incident Management teams managing large fires including the 2007 and 2009 Gippsland fires.

The concerns our group has are as follows;

#### **TRAINING**

At present training is carried out at brigade level, followed by formal training by CFA staff, brigade members cannot carry out assessments. It is our understanding that all CFA staff will go to Fire Rescue Victoria, with those staff in country areas, eg, Bairnsdale being co-opted back to the CFA. This is a major concern. Where will these staff loyalties lie? Will volunteer training be run by Melbourne centric people? If this was to be the case it is not acceptable to Volunteers, we want dedicated staff to assist in training, we would also like skilled volunteer fire fighters to be accredited as assessors for brigade members.

#### **CO-OPTED STAFF**

It is our understanding current CFA staff will go to Fire Rescue Victoria and be co-opted back to the CFA. Where will their loyalties lie? How much time will they have for volunteers? Rural brigades should have access to dedicated paid staff that has direct access to Emergency Management Victoria.

#### **WORK COVER**

At the present we are covered for work cover the same as paid staff. This must continue for Volunteers, if we are injured at an incident we need to know our medical bills must be covered.

#### **EQUIPMENT**

Currently all CFA equipment is designed and built by skilled engineers who know and understand firefighting in rural Victoria, resulting in brigades getting what they need. If we get equipment designed by and for Melbourne staff it would be an absolute disaster. We need input into the type of equipment we get.

#### **FIRE RESCUE VICTORIA**

In principal we have no problem with the creation of this body, as long as it`s area of influence is the greater Metropolitan area, not rural Victoria.

Our only concern is that the Volunteers in Brigades taken over by FRV will either pushed out or walk away. If this happens it will make fighting large wildfires in rural Victoria. In large fires extra task forces, usually night shift, are generated from brigades in locations that will be covered by FRV These volunteers must be looked after somehow.

In closing we urge the Committee to give serious consideration to the issues listed above and arrive at a decision that benefits all Victorians.

I would be more than willing to be called as a witness to this enquiry if required.

Brian Cotter  
Captain  
Marlo Fire Brigade

