

Attention the Fire Services Bill Select Committee.

Dear Committee Members,

I take this opportunity to raise some of my concerns – these are my views only, and not necessarily those of other brigade members.

I have been a member of the CFA almost 35 years – I joined the Monday after Ash Wednesday, and have been a fully committed member ever since. I currently hold the position of 1st Lieutenant of Connewarre Fire Brigade.

I have many concerns the way the Andrews Government has tried to push the Fire Services legislation through both houses of Parliament. I don't understand why such an important piece of legislation is being pushed through with so little consultation. It seems like up until now no one really cares what we think. In the past we have worked well with the permanent staff – what is the motivation for this new legislation? Is it just to get an EBA passed for the UFU? It's a high price to pay.

Presumptive Rights Legislation:

If the Andrews Government really cared about our health, they would not attach this legislation to this divisive bill, and would treat all sick firefighters equally. Instead we have to be approved by a panel which will consider whether we are entitled to some compensation. We all go to the same sort of jobs as firefighters – we are told we are all equal, but it seems some are more equal than others.

It is my firm belief that we should not split our integrated structure. It may need some review from time to time but it has served us well for over 70 years.

But if we have to go down that path and become a fully volunteer fire service, we should have all of our staff working for the CFA, not seconded from FRV staff, taking these roles of our Operations Officers and Operations Managers.

We must have a bigger input into policy shift, and we need a Board that will support us, not hand picked to get a political result.

I never thought I would be in this position – having to ask for help to protect something as important as this. We, the volunteers, give so much to protect our community and our State from whatever the threat.

We deserve better.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Regards,

Philip Stewart

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