

Parliamentary Committee. Inquiry into Fire Services Bill Select  
Committee.....

4—7—2017

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My name is Noel Austin and I have been a volunteer with the C F A for 53 years and over that time I have watched the C F A grow into a magnificent fire fighting organization the State of Victoria should be proud of , however over the last 5 or 6 years there has been a cancer eating away at the very heart of this magnificent organization, the UFU have been sneaking little bits of control into their EBA for some time.

eg. = C F A can no longer employ casual volunteer Instructors to train other volunteer fire fighters even though they are highly qualified and did a very good job.

One example is to be a structural instructor naturally they have to be fully qualified but the UFU stipulated they had to have at least 5 years experience as a career fire fighter as well.

This clause in their EBA resulted in a paid CFA instructor who was fully qualified and had been a volunteer and Captain with the Horsham Urban fire brigade for many years could not act as a structural instructor because he wasn't a UFU fire fighter.

This resulted in District 17 being without a structural instructor for 4 or 5 years because the Melbourne based UFU fire fighters would not go to the country to live.

This clause in their EBA meant that in District 17 when there was a need for structural fire fighter training they had to get a UFU structural instructor to come up from Melbourne.

The instructor would have to travel up the day before the training day/night stay the night wait around the next day do the training the next night, stay the night again and go home the next day, the cost of all this had to come out of the District 17 training funds and this left little money for other training across District 17

Another example of UFU interference was the take over of the training grounds across the state from the local training ground committee's, since then the training grounds have been run from Melbourne The Longerenong training ground attendance by volunteers has dropped by more than 50%, however I cannot comment on other training grounds across the state

This last EBA the UFU went for full control of the CFA and this has met with resistance from the volunteers and CFA & MFB and the public right across the

state as well as interstate.

The Andrews Government have tried to ram their wishes and their UFU mates directions through the Parliament without any consultation with those who would be effected. Mr Andrews and Mr Merlino say they have consulted with the volunteers this is a complete lie, they simply have not.

So to the problem we have at the moment, The Andrews Labour Government combined these two separate issues and hoped they could get it through so they could get their UFU mates EBA through but it did not work. There is so much opposition to this planned EBA they should scrap the whole thing and start again and this time sit down with the stake holders and the UFU would have to use some common sense.

The UFU and the Andrews Government have driven a wedge between the career and volunteers and that has to be fixed. The career fire fighters and the volunteers have always got along well for years until the Andrews Government and Peter Marshall came along

### **There should be two separate bills.**

#### **Fire fighters Presumptive Rights Compensation Bill**

All Fire fighters Career or Volunteer should have equal rights [ under this bill they do not,] there is one paragraph that reads; “ and have been diagnosed since 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016 “ should be deleted and replaced by a statement “ have been diagnosed “ it should be so simple to write up legislation to be the same for everyone.

#### **Fire Service Legislation Amendment Bill.**

This needs full consultation with all stakeholders eg. VFBV/ CFA &MFB.

The present CFA staff who look after the volunteer needs etc, (Operations Officers and staff in District HQ) should be employed by CFA not FRV as this will cause problems with UFU interference in the operation of the CFA

There is no disputing the suburbs around Melbourne such as Dandenong , Oakleigh, Frankston, Melton, Geelong etc are not country any more, when the CFA was founded they were country towns, now volunteers can't manage the number of callouts those stations receive.

As integrated stations with career and volunteer fire fighters they have worked very well over a number of years and will do so for many years to come. If those stations were to become part of the MFB the turnout times would not alter one little bit and the public would still have the same service as they have now. The only difference is the state would not have the surge capacity that we have with the CFA volunteers at present and according to the Weekly Times the CFA would receive \$200 million less in fire service property levies if the Integrated CFA stations were to become part of the MFB network.

This brings up the fleet replacement question? At present the MFB replace their fire fighting trucks every 15 years, the CFA replace their fire fighting trucks every

25 years, and now some CFA tankers are over 30 years old.

At present the Andrews Government are about 3 years behind with the CFA fleet replacement program and with the CFA to lose \$200 million does that mean the CFA volunteers are going to be driving around in trucks 30 to 35 years old or older? All vehicles should be replaced at least every 10 to 15 years because of new safety features such as ABS brakes, stability control etc. because most of these vehicles need to be driven at high speeds as emergency vehicles they need all the latest safety features that are available on modern vehicles and of course the OH&S requirements for the crews who man these vehicles should not be forgotten either. There are many questions the Andrews Government have not answered and until they do, this bill should be put aside until they are answered and with a rock solid guarantee.

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