

LCSC@parliamint.vic.gov.au

Attention the Fire Services Bill Select Committee.

Dear Committee Members,

I take this opportunity to raise some of my concerns about the Fire Services Legislation which the Andrews Government has rushed through the Lower House and attempted to rush through the Legislative Council.

I am the proud Captain of the Nar Nar Goon Fire Brigade. I first joined as a member in 1972 and have served as Captain, Lieutenant, Treasurer and Firefighter for 40 years.

My brigade responded to 330 calls last year of which 110 were Road accident rescues requiring the extraction of the trapped victims.

I raise my concern as an experienced CFA officer and fire fighter with a high understanding of CFA and its relationship with Victorian communities.

One of my concerns is that the Presumptive Rights legislation. This legislation should be separated from the Fire Services Bill. It needs to be debated and voted on its merits.

The Presumptive Rights Legislation does not treat paid and volunteer firefighters equally. Under this new legislation a paid firefighter with one of the 12 nominated cancers will automatically get access to treatment and compensation. A volunteer firefighter will have to be "considered" by an unspecified panel and then may be granted compensation.

Victoria is recognised as one of the most at risk bushfire regions in the world and as such needs the best firefighting capability in the world.

I was on the fire ground on Black Saturday. I saw how important the volunteers from the outer suburbs are crucial to provide the necessary fire fighters on a day such as that.

This legislation splits up Victoria's firefighting capacity and potentially puts us all at risk when the next Ash Wednesday or Black Saturday occurs. We will have a huge decline in volunteers and Victoria will suffer huge losses as a result.

The new FRV will not have the capacity to provide surge capacity let alone the relieve crews necessary in a campaign fire.

Why do we need to split CFA up?

None of the inquiries suggested it and the Bushfires Royal Commission actually praised the integrated model of paid and volunteers working together.

How are we supposed to work with FRV, a separate organisation with different priorities? A simple question if a CFA volunteer crew and a FRV crew arrive at a fire, who's in charge?

What is the motive for this dramatic change in fire services in Victoria? The Premier spoke about the stream of Inquiries into CFA as a justification yet not one of these inquiries advocated for a restructure of CFA, Indeed where CFA's structure was mentioned it was to support the integrated model.

Our Chief and the Emergency Services Commissioner have spoken on many occasions how the integrated model is the best possible model for Victoria.
Is this exercise nothing more than a very expensive strategy for Premier Andrews to sell firefighting in Victoria out to the UFU?

Finally, considering Victoria is one of the most at risk fire regions in the world and that this legislation will affect every Victorian household, please consider these key questions,

1. **Do you believe that the Victorian community has been sufficiently consulted and supports this legislation?**
2. **Are you confident that this legislation will not harm CFA's surge capacity?**
3. **Do you believe that even with this short Inquiry that you know enough about this legislation to risk Victoria's fire safety?**

I wish to add one last comment regarding the career firefighters currently working within the CFA. Our brigade has an excellent working relationship with them. We feel wanted when we support them and respectfully treated when they support us. We are made welcome at their station when we enjoy a coffee on many occasions. I believe our common bond of the CFA logo on our uniform enhances this relationship. I would welcome the change in direction of the legislation and keep the current CFA staff within the CFA. Our culture is very similar.

I believe the CFA staff culture is closer to the volunteers' culture than the MFB.

Please retain our common values. They can be employed by FRV but work for the CFA. It is seen as desirable for Operation Officers and Operation Managers so it certainly achievable for our fellow firefighters.

Thank you for considering my submission.

I wish for this submission to be listed on the Committee's website.



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