

**Kirra Vanzetti**

**From:** Sarah [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 6 July 2017 9:47 AM  
**To:** LCSC; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Sassafras Ferny Creek Fire Brigade submission to the Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

**Importance:** High



## SASSAFRAS & FERNY CREEK FIRE BRIGADE

PO Box 8, Ferny Creek, Victoria 3786 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Website: [www.sassafrascfa.org.au](http://www.sassafrascfa.org.au)



Wednesday, 5 July 2017

Dear Sir/ Madam,

On behalf of the Sassafras Ferny Creek Volunteer Fire Brigade we thank you for the opportunity to raise our concerns in relation to the Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

- **Protection of life and Property.** The Brigade is most concerned at the lack of detail for us as those most affected but importantly the community we serve. The current negative campaign "fire Doesn't wait" promulgated by the UFU informing the community that targeted areas are at risk. The clear intent is to denigrate volunteers and suggest that a lesser service is provided by Volunteer Brigades. Changes to Boundaries and the name on the red truck will make no difference. This negative campaign has put a false and misleading fear into the community to get this bill through. As a brigade, we have had to work even harder to reassure our community that they are safe and protected by their local volunteers.
- **The Fire Services Levy.** The current Victorian Government has stated they will provide \$100 million extra to support the transition plan they are proposing for uniforms etc. these costs haven't been detailed in any budget papers so far.  
Splitting the volunteers and paid firefighters into separate agencies will inevitably increase the fire services levy even though the government states it will be capped for a period of time, not permanently. Brigades are already struggling to get extra funding for uniforms, torches, training etc at present. The brigade can see that as time goes on the CFA volunteers will become the poor cousins as the Government/ UFU and FRV start taking money from CFA to pay for this Fire Services Split as no one has actually got a figure on how much it is going to cost. We are concerned that as the money dries up the community and everyone will have to pay significantly more in our Fire Services Levy.
- **Consultation.** Clearly, none. There has been NO consultation with the CFA or the communities they protect. All consultations to date have only been between the Premier and Peter Marshall of the UFU. It appears that these so-called consultations have been behind closed doors. Only recently did we get a 20-minute talk from Mr. Merlino and the chance to meet with two of the Greens members. These discussions can in no way be construed as consultations!
- **The EBA.** The MFB and the CFA EBAs will be replaced with a new FRV EBA. This will obviously allow the Veto Clauses to be rammed through giving the UFU control, significant additional allowances and additional costs which in turn will ultimately impact on the Fire Services Levy. This will result in the Volunteer CFA being treated as the poor cousins and left alone to fend for themselves. As our brigade is 100% Volunteer the pay and allowances given to paid personnel doesn't really concern us. However, our brigade does have members who are volunteers and are also paid personnel of CFA. We are concerned that they will not be given the option to keep their jobs in their current role and that there is not a clear direction in relation to the length

of time. In other words, if a paid (Operations EBA) CFA member is currently an Operations Manager with 30 years' experience there is nothing in this bill to say that they will be in that same position or the length of time their contract will be in place. This then also raises a question relating to the staff on other EBAs currently employed by CFA, what happens to their positions?

- **FRV.** The setting up of FRV in our brigade's view, is not designed to improve public safety, as one would expect from any legislation such as this, it is simply to ensure passage of Enterprise Agreement. We have had numerous Boards, Minister Chief Officers and CEO's forced out and replaced. These positions will now be replaced with a Fire Rescue Commissioner and a deputy Fire Rescue Commissioner appointed by the Minister.
- **Assets.** What will happen to our CFA assets that we have raised by doing sausage sizzles etc and or been donated to us by our community? This bill allows FRV to Seize CFA assets.
- **Command.** What about the Local Knowledge, experience, expertise?? Within our brigade we have members who have lived in our area (one of the most dangerous within Victoria) all their lives and have been a wealth of knowledge to not only other members of all the emergency services but the local community. It appears with this amendment that volunteer fire fighters collocated with FRV will have no authority to make decision in the event of a fire unless FRV fire fighters request it. This is a dangerous situation for the Emergency Services personnel and the community. Chain of command and decision-making needs to be in the best interest of the community and the Emergency Services personnel. We all want to come home safe not fight about who is in control of the situation. This will also result in those volunteers leaving as they are clearly not valued.
- **Boundaries.** While changes in the fire district boundaries have always been available, the process was required to be signed off by the MFB, Council and ultimately the Governor in Council. Under the proposed legislation a "committee" decides! Clearly a Union based group to continue the quest of removing Volunteers and increasing membership. **Surge Capacity.** Since the previous Board, Minister Jane Garrett, Chief Officer's, CEO's etc have been either sacked or resigned the morale within all CFA brigades especially ours has resulted in members who usually put their names up for strike team duties, IMT roles or interstate deployment dwindle. This has put more pressure on our members to concentrate only on our local community to help instil confidence again. However, at present if this legislation goes through we risk losing volunteers at a great rate which will ultimately reduce Victoria's ability to mobilise enough fire fighters to protect the communities. This decline in numbers will put lives and properties at risk. Fewer firefighters/ Volunteers mean emergency response capability, fuel reduction burns, community education, fire equipment maintenance and junior members and new recruits all dwindling the future of CFA will not be guaranteed and therefore a significant risk to the State.
- **Presumptive legislation.** To link presumptive legislation to the fire services bill would have to be the lowest act possible by any government, clearly designed to take appropriate focus and scrutiny from the Fire Services Legislation. This should have been treated separately. This presumptive legislation unfairly discriminates against volunteers showing already that we are going to be treated like the poor cousin.

On behalf of our brigade I thank you for taking the time to read our submission.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Krumins  
(Secretary)  
Sassafras- Ferny Creek Fire Brigade.