

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 / Victorian Government / Premier Andrews has rushed through the Lower House and attempted to push through the Legislative Council.

I am a proud CFA volunteer firefighter with Bairnsdale Fire Brigade

I am a professionally trained and qualified CFA volunteer fire fighter with Bairnsdale Fire Brigade

I have been a member for 20 years and have served as Captain, LT, Crew Leader and Strike Team Leader.

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

One of my concerns is that the Presumptive Rights (Cancer) legislation does not treat paid and volunteer firefighters equally. Under this new legislation a paid firefighter with one of the 12 listed 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. As an example, a paid firefighter that attends approx. 150 calls a year gets support no questions asked and myself a volunteer who attends 230 calls a year has to fight for support and compensation.

Having watched the Fiskville process where members had to fight for their rights, I would hate for my family to have to go through the process. This legislation treats me like a second-class citizen. It is unjust.

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. This legislation splits up Victoria's firefighting capacity and potentially puts us all at risk when the next Ash Wednesday or Black Saturday occurs.

When (not if) another major fire event occurs will we have the surge capacity to meet the challenge? Or will it have been eroded because those brigades we depend on have been deskilled or sidelined because they are in FRV areas? We

have already seen CFA integrated stations tell their volunteers that they are no longer welcome in the brigade they help build.

Another of my concerns is the motive for this new legislation and its potential effects on CFA Volunteers I don't understand why we need to split CFA up.

None of the 8 or more inquiries suggested it and the Bushfires Royal Commission actually praised the integrated model of paid and volunteers working together.

Will the reforms pave the way for FRV to go to large regional towns that don't have carrier staff and take over the fire services in that area.

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, can a CFA volunteer be on a FRV appliance.

Also after the dust settles what funding will volunteers have access to will the current funding boost dry up and our annual budget be reduced, is this going to be consumed by FRV and leave the regional areas with less protection for the community. The CFA already run on a budget that is less than the budget set aside.

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.

Is this exercise nothing more than a very expensive strategy for Premier Andrews to sell firefighting in Victoria out to the UFU? This also outline that the current EBA on offer will affect volunteers even though the Andrews government stated that it doesn't.

Also that the Andrews state that the volunteers are not profesional and second rate, how can this be we are trained the same way carrier staff are on the same courses and we have protected comunitys for hundreds of years.

Their has been no mention of how the CFA will change inregards to the way they function now, whats going to change and how do they implement it. The CFA need to have some change in the way we operate and conduct or service to the community, but this would be better done with consultation and discustion not reforms and union driven change.

Also the current CFA staff and MFB staff how would this affect them, will CFA staff lose their current service history and MFB will be dissolved and no longer exist. The staff of these organisations are in line for just as much change and emotional pressure will we lose some of our experienced staff for good.

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 hamper 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?**
- 4. Why can't the questions be answered now before reform (get it right now so the future is protected)?**

Thank you for considering my submission

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

Yours faithfully,

Aaron Lee

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