

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017 [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 6 July 2017 2:38 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Mrs Lynette Harris
 [REDACTED]

State President
 The Country Women's Association of Victoria
 [REDACTED]

SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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The Country Women's Association of Victoria is a membership based organisation operating in Victoria for 89 years. There are currently some 5,500 members representing some 330 rural, regional and metropolitan communities in Victoria. Members of CWA Victoria know and understand their communities very well and use this information to enhance the wellbeing of their communities, improve conditions for those considered to be most vulnerable, advocate for change and contribute to their community's sustainability.

Each year a State Conference is held and recently the 2017 event was held in Shepparton. The conference provides a structured opportunity for members to raise issues which are of concern. These issues are presented as formal resolutions, with significant research being presented, debate amongst members occurring and a vote taken.

At the 2017 State Conference on 27 May an URGENT RESOLUTION regarding CWA of Victoria's serious concerns about the splitting of the CFA was adopted. This resolution forms the basis of our submission.

Urgent Resolution

The Country Women's Association of Victoria Inc., express serious concern at this week's announcement by the State Government of the splitting of the Country Fire Authority to create a new organisation to be known as Fire Rescue Victoria, without any consultation with the Victorian Community and we ask that this action be put on hold until such consultation takes place.

The following points were raised by members in relation to this resolution:

- Concern that the consultation by Government with CFA volunteers, as required under the CFA Act and Volunteer Charter, has not taken place. We believe that volunteers and communities are feeling frustrated, anxious, undervalued and vulnerable, particularly following the last twelve months of turmoil.
- Grave concern was expressed regarding the principle of including the Presumptive Cancer Compensation

for Fire fighters legislation in the same bill when that part has bipartisan support.

- No evidence of data or enquiries has been made publicly available that support the claim that splitting the CFA is about public safety. We understand that there have been a number of major enquiries into the fire services following large fire events, and to our knowledge none of them has recommended the splitting of the Country Fire Authority.
- The proposal as presented to the public does not appear to have been costed, is unfunded and without cost benefit analysis.
- The potential that the proposal by the Government to co-locate a volunteer brigade with a paid firefighter brigade when each has their own assets, equipment and vehicles could ultimately see a breakdown in operational procedures and a further loss of goodwill between the volunteer and paid firefighters.

With reference to the committee's Terms of Reference, particularly

A. impact on fire service delivery across Victoria and

B. effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery

One would assume that to fully appreciate these issues extensive community consultation is required. Whilst we have been advised that some meetings have occurred in Integrated Fire Services with only fire service staff present, we have also been advised by Government representatives that there have been no community consultations in any Victorian community. Members of the CWA of Victoria find this extremely concerning given the interest that community members have regarding fire safety and their awareness of the impact on their communities of the current situation.

The lack of community consultation is inconsistent with the principles underlying the Government's Regional Partnerships initiative

Members of The Country Women's Association of Victoria consider that the proposed changes place the safety of Victorians at risk and urge you to support our request for serious and extensive community consultation about this important issue.

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File1:

File2:

File3: