



6 TUDOR COURT ROAD, YELLINGBO, VIC. 3139.

No 13757

Assistant Clerk Committees  
Department of the Legislative Council  
Fire Services Bill Select Committee  
Parliament House  
Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

5<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of the Yellingbo Rural Fire Brigade we feel compelled to express our profound concern with regard to the *Fire fighters Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Service Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017* that is currently being considered by your committee.

Above anything else, the Bill combines two totally separate issues: We strongly urge you to split the above-mentioned Bill in order to separate presumptive rights compensation from the aspects relating to structural change to Victoria's Fire Services. The Presumptive Rights Compensation section clearly discriminates against volunteer fire fighters and hence should be judged as a separate bill and on its own merits.

With regard to the proposed structural change to Victoria's Fire Services: While we are supportive of genuine and cost-effective fire service modernisation, the approach to modernisation needs to go through a transparent and proper process of scrutiny and review before any legislation is passed. So far this has not been done and as a result there is little detail included in the above-mentioned Bill.

As we see it, the Bill, as it currently stands:

- creates less flexibility for the fire service to adapt to changing risk and service demands.
- fragments Victoria's fire services when all recent reviews have stated that fire service modernisation needs to be about joining up effort.
- creates 35 separated fire service islands spread throughout regional Victoria creating confusion, duplication and complex chains of command.
- attempts to drive a wedge between volunteers and paid staff thereby seeking to demoralise, discriminate and segregate volunteers from paid staff.

Volunteer fire fighters are fundamental to Victoria's emergency management capability, fundamental to community resilience and at the core of communities sharing responsibility for their own safety. Hence it is vitally important to ensure that volunteers are involved in decision making on all issues that affect them, both to make the most of their frontline knowledge and to help sustain Victoria's essential volunteer resource. Any change that is designed to devalue and undermine volunteerism, such as this legislation purports, must be rejected.

We feel constrained to write this submission on behalf our members as we are acutely aware of the intense demoralising effect this protracted *struggle for survival* is having on them. If this relentless pressure from the United Firefighters Union, epitomised, sadly, in this Bill, is allowed to continue unchecked, we risk killing the deeply rooted volunteer spirit that is the hallmark of the CFA and which has been 150+ years in the making.

Trusting that you will take our submission into consideration as you meet together in the next few days,

Yours sincerely,

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**Captain:**

Paul Spinks

A black rectangular redaction box covering contact information for the Captain.

**Treasurer:**

Lindsay McKenzie

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