

To the Select Committee into changes to the CFA Act and Fire fighter Presumptive Cancer Legislation

My name is Janette O'Keefe. I am a very concerned rural citizen. I have had many years' experience with the CFA in an ancillary role. My concerns are as follows—

*The proposed splitting of the CFA does not have a business case, there are no costings and appears to be a rushed thought bubble to solve a problem that the State Govt has brought on itself. How is this to be financed in future—what will be the effect on the Fire Services Levy?

* There has been no public outcry for this to happen, nor to increase paid fire fighter numbers as there has been for increased police numbers and service. As a matter of fact, in an integrated station near me, there are 3 times as many paid fire fighters on duty at night as there are police and that appears to be back to front priorities. The nearest police support after hours is an hour away whereas the nearest fire support is 5 minutes away.

* Contrary to the Govt's PR that would have you believe they have held extensive public consultations prior to the bill to split the CFA was presented to Parliament, there has in fact been NO public consultation. This has left communities feeling undervalued, confused, concerned and vulnerable. Where is the evidence of this such as minutes, attendance sheets, dates and times.

* The integrated fire service model has long been accepted as a modern contemporary fire service. The proposed splitting of the CFA totally destroys our integrated model—the ill will this has created in our communities will take many years to heal if indeed it ever can be. Interestingly, New Zealand is about to adopt an integrated model as being the best in fire service delivery.

* I question the motive of the Government to put the Presumptive Cancer compensation legislation in with the destruction of the CFA integrated model. Not only does it appear that the volunteer fire fighters do not have the same presumptive rights as paid fire fighters, but to make it an all or nothing bill is a disgrace and an insult to volunteers, especially as it has bi-partisan parliamentary support.

* Contrary to Govt claims that this proposal will lead to improved community safety, I believe it will have the opposite effect. The overmanned integrated stations are flooding out into volunteer brigade areas which will have the long term effect of losing volunteer fire fighters leading to a loss of surge capacity in campaign fires making our rural communities more vulnerable and less safe.

This bill must NOT be allowed to proceed. Meaningful consultation with volunteer fire fighters, communities and CFA staff MUST take place, then a new proposal put forward.

Janette O'Keefe

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