

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Darren Carle [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 6 July 2017 10:50 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Submission to the Fire Services Bill Select Committee

Dear Assistant Clerk of Committees,

I wish to submit for the consideration of the Select committee evidence that the Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform Bill) does not improve fire service delivery across Victoria to the community in the short or long term.

I provide my evidence from the observation status of being an urban based wildfire and structural volunteer firefighter in the far South West of the State. Specifically I currently serve in the Portland Fire Brigade as the First Lieutenant, the senior volunteer officer. I have been a CFA volunteer for thirty years undertaking the roles of Captain, First, Third and fourth Lieutenant, Secretary, Treasurer and Training Coordinator spread across three different fire brigades.

The fire services amendment bill does not contain any initiative to improve fire service delivery to the community that is not already available to the two existing fire services.

The current CFA has no legislative restrictions upon the number of, or location of career firefighters.

Section 47 of the Bill which restricts the CFA to being a fully volunteer fire fighting service, supported where necessary by paid staff severely restricts the future operations of the CFA, particularly away from the main cities. It provides for only two very different levels of fire service delivery across the state. Full time manned stations with the exact same number of firefighters on duty irrespective of the risk at the time, fire weather conditions, or needs of the local area and fully volunteer. Volunteer firefighter professionalism has continuously improved through out the history of CFA and CFBB. Currently, and more and more in the future further improvements in volunteer professionalism will require more and more volunteer hours in training, standby on High Fire Danger days, and delivery of specialist capabilities. The Bill prevents the development of alternative models where needed that build volunteer capability and improve service delivery. Such models could be part paid, retained, combined support and operational full time roles or compensation for employers where volunteers are required to standby on days of High Fire Danger.

The Fire services bill will reinforce under resourcing in the more distant parts of the state. There is presently numerous roles within CFA that are restricted to UFU members only, but no applicants have come forward. Under the Bill these vacancies will remain restricted to FRV employees while CFA will have no control over the conditions and selection of candidates who are suitable and willing to commit to rural communities.

The fire services bill will likely to lead to a loss of capability in the medium to long term as the positive interactions between CFA career operational firefighters and management staff and volunteers are cut. There are no provisions to ensure CFA career operational firefighters continue to mentor and train neighbouring brigades. The workload undertaken by on station operational career staff to assist with time consuming tasks such as hose repair and testing, ordering and maintaining consumable inventories for surrounding brigades, liaising with weekday working government authorities and acting as a distribution and collection centre for PPE and equipment will cease. This will increase volunteer workload or see beneficial activities cease.

Overall the Bill has not been supported with any regulations or details which make it impossible to assess it's detailed impact. It seems likely that the CFA will be asset stripped as the largest and most expensive facilities are passed to FRV and a lot of the specialist equipment and extensive inventories of the CFA integrated stations are transferred to FRV.

The creation of Fire Rescue Victoria requires significant expenditure for no benefit to rebrand career staff stations, uniforms, trucks and administrative tools. The administrative and purchasing inefficiencies that exist from having two fire services with different standards types of equipment will be sustained. The bill is a strategic U Turn compared to the superior strategy of previous Labour and liberal governments to move towards one fire service with multiple delivery

models. Numerous inquiries including and subsequent to the 2009 bushfires royal commission have studied fire services structure in detail and none has recommended the 2017 Fire Services Legislation. In fact all lean towards further agglomeration and centralisation of roles and command to improve efficiency and synergies.

Darren Carle

1st Lieutenant Portland Fire Brigade

