



6 July 2017

Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Parliament House
Victoria

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

The Members of VFBV District Council No.16 welcome the opportunity to make submission to the Fire Services Bill Select Committee’s Inquiry into the Firefighters’ Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

VFBV District Council No.16 comprises Sixty Four Volunteer Fire Brigades and Six Fire Brigades Groups from the West Region of Victoria encompassed by the Country Fire Authority’s District 16 which consists of the Local Government areas of Ararat Rural City, Pyrenees Shire and Northern Grampians Shire. Most of these Brigades and Groups are to be found in the electorates of Ripon and Lowan.

The Members of VFBV District Council No.16 are deeply concerned that the proposed reforms and cancer compensations offered in the proposed bill DO NOT substantively benefit the Communities of the State of Victoria and are discriminative towards Volunteers.

The Proposed Cancer Compensation offered states that Volunteers will need to serve a mandatory qualification period before their case can be considered while Career Firefighters do not. We urge to remind you that **Cancer does not discriminate** while this legislation most certainly does and strongly argue that any Volunteer Firefighter that may be susceptible to these forms of Cancers should be protected and supported just as thoroughly as the Career Firefighters demand.

The proposal to split the fire services into Career and Volunteer ‘Streams’ seems to be an abstract idea that flies in the face of the past Twenty years of Victorian Emergency Services coming together to work in unison for the benefit of all Victorians. Indeed the past Ten years has seen Eight Fire Service Reviews and Commission Reports that all indicate that the Fire Services need to be brought together into one organisation. This would indicate to us that the Metropolitan Fire Brigade should be absorbed into the Integrated Model of the Country Fire Authority and that Forest Fire Management – Victoria become a division of the larger State Wide Fire Service. **The proposed bill instead seeks to cause division and harbour mistrust between Volunteer and Career Firefighters.**

Address correspondence to the District Council Secretary – C/o 149 Grano Street, Ararat, Vic, 3377

All opinions expressed in this letter are the views of the VFBV District Council No.16 ONLY

President	State Councillor	State Councillor	Secretary
Peter Hannan	Mick Nunweek JP	Greg Fithall	Tameeka Cann
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]

The Members of VFBV District Council No.16 are deeply concerned at the continued push by the Premier of Victoria and the Minister for Emergency Services to support the aims of the United Firefighters Union, to satisfy an industrial agreement and force through a flawed Enterprise Bargaining Agreement that has been shown to be discriminatory towards Females and part time workers. It has also been shown that it would infringe upon Volunteers rights even if the services were split.

The Members of VFBV District Council No.16 are outraged that the Premier and the Minister should choose to ignore the CFA Volunteer Charter and continue to refuse to engage in meaningful discussion and consultation with the VFBV as laid out in that Charter and enshrined in the legislation of the CFA Act. The Members are also disgusted at the lies and innuendo that they have chosen to perpetuate in the media to attack those who do not share their views.

Of late the Minister has attempted to engage Volunteers by conducting a series of forums to dispel disquiet and bolster support for the split of the Services, however these 'briefings' have been extremely short on detail about how any of the proposal will work, stating "we'll work out the details as we go along". To date the Minister has yet to meet with VFBV for any meaningful discussion.

The Members of VFBV DC.16 see this legislation as detrimental to the safety of Victorians and a drain on the Treasury; it shall cause a deeper rift between Volunteer and Career Firefighters and discriminates against Volunteers Cancer Compensation. None of these outcomes will benefit the Communities and Citizens of Victoria and we urge the Select Committee to consider an alternative approach in this matter. Above all we urge the Committee to reject Union interference in Fire Service Operations and Administration.

The history of the Fire Brigades of Victoria covers over 160 years of service to the Communities of Victoria with many Volunteer Brigades involved as the cornerstone of the early development of their Communities being the first public institution in many areas after local government was formed. Many community groups and public institutions can trace their history and roots either directly to those early Volunteer Fire Brigades or to the assistance and drive provided by those Brigades in their formation. Volunteer Fire Brigades, and their fellow Emergency Service Volunteer Organisations, shall continue to nourish and build their Communities whenever possible.

The Members of VFBV District Council No.16 highly regard the protection and support of all Volunteers as essential to the framework of Victorian Communities as without the support of Volunteers the daily aspects of life for some Victorians would be drastically diminished, let alone those who would be severely impacted if not for the response of dedicated and committed Fire and Emergency Service Volunteers.

The Brigades and Volunteers of District 16 shall continue to serve their Communities and lead their Communities with Confidence in all aspects of Fire and Emergency operations to keep their Communities safe and assist their Communities in every way possible to strengthen and grow.

Yours respectfully,

Peter Hannan

**President
VFBV District Council No.16**

Ararat Group

Ararat Fire Brigade	Buangor & Middle Creek Fire Brigade	Great Western Fire Brigade	Langi Logan Fire Brigade
Moyston Fire Brigade	Pomonal Fire Brigade	Warrak Fire Brigade	

Pyrenees Group

Amphitheatre Fire Brigade	Avoca Fire Brigade	Barkly & Frenchman's Fire Brigade	Burnbank Fire Brigade
Crowlands Fire Brigade	Elmhurst Fire Brigade	Landsborough Fire Brigade	Lexton Fire Brigade
Navarre Fire Brigade	Redbank Fire Brigade	Warrenmang & District Fire Brigade	

Stawell Group

Callawadda Fire Brigade	Dadswells Bridge Fire Brigade	Glenorchy & Riachella Fire Brigade	Halls Gap Fire Brigade
Joel Joel Fire Brigade	Marnoo Fire Brigade	Stawell Fire Brigade	Wallaloo East Fire Brigade

Beaufort Group

Beaufort Fire Brigade	Brewster Fire Brigade	Crossroads Fire Brigade	Langi Kal Kal Fire Brigade
Lake Goldsmith & Stockyard Hill Fire Brigade		Raglan Fire Brigade	Snake Valley & District Fire Brigade

St Arnaud Group

Beazley's Bridge Fire Brigade	Carapooee Fire Brigade	Coonooer Bridge Fire Brigade	Gre Gre Village Fire Brigade
Gooroc Fire Brigade	Kooreh Fire Brigade	Rich Avon Fire Brigade	Slaty Creek Fire Brigade
St Arnaud Fire Brigade	Stuart Mill Fire Brigade	Traynor's Lagoon Fire Brigade	

Westmere Group

Bornes Hill Fire Brigade	Carranballac Fire Brigade	Chatsworth Fire Brigade	Dundonnell Fire Brigade
Lake Bolac Fire Brigade	Maroona Fire Brigade	Mininera Fire Brigade	Narrapumelap South Fire Brigade
Nerrin Nerrin Fire Brigade	Pura Pura Fire Brigade	Skipton Fire Brigade	Stoneleigh Fire Brigade
Streatham Fire Brigade	Tatyoan Fire Brigade	Westmere Fire Brigade	Wickliffe Fire Brigade
Willaura Fire Brigade	Woorndoo Fire Brigade	Yalla Y Poora Fire Brigade	

District 16 Headquarters Brigade