

## Dear committee,

I have had thirty years operational employment in CFA, am currently a volunteer and formerly a member of UFU. I have extensive emergency management and incident management experience. I offer the following input.

### Impact on fire service delivery across Victoria

The proposal to create Fire Rescue Victoria will create legislated **boundaries** across Victoria will enable a barrier to **cooperation** between fire services in and around regional cities. This situation was in place with Country Fire Brigades Board and Bush Fire Brigades prior to Royal Commissions that followed 1939 and 1944 bushfires prompted the formation of CFA.

In many areas it will **add to complexity** in emergency management planning by adding a third fire service to local areas CFA, FRV and DELWP.

The future effectiveness of emergency management will be **highly dependent on personalities** and their willingness to cooperate. A lack of cooperative approach by individuals will be able to use the newly created boundaries to hamper cooperation and the fire service delivery to the community will suffer.

Staff in a structural focussed service such as FRV may or may not set the same priority on deployment into **incident management teams** which mostly deal with bushfire.

Paid firefighting staff can more reliably respond quicker but there is a limit on the response to the number on shift. Integrated stations with volunteers boost the numbers that respond. New arrangements will degrade the response numbers to fire calls. My volunteer brigade regularly responds 10 to 20 members to calls.

### Effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery

Immediate fire service delivery is likely not to have change, as promoted by the Government, but the separate agency arrangements could see **incremental changes** to increase response areas of FRV. Reduced volunteer call outs will likely see volunteers leave which adversely impact fire service capacity.

The separation of agencies will reinforce the position of paid staff not being in a position of **reporting to a volunteer**. This includes a volunteer crew leader not having a career firefighter in the crew, a career crew leader not reporting to volunteer strike team leader or a career strike team leader reporting to a volunteer sector commander. This type of restriction will complicate resourcing fire fighting, adversely impacting fire service delivery.

For years, **parochialism** has impacted fire service delivery in some areas around the MFB boundary and between CFA and DELWP although in many areas it has improved or been eliminated. This approach will support parochialism between groups that currently have stress between them as a result of the protracted dispute.

### Short term and long term cost impact on fire service provision

The willingness of **local government** to continue to contribute to emergency arrangements may be impacted by the lack of the **saving of liability** that is provided by S94 of the CFA Act.

The funding announced for building **infrastructure** is likely to be absorbed by the transition arrangements separating staff and volunteers. There will be a corresponding void in funding of infrastructure for the remaining volunteer brigades in Victoria.

The new **infrastructure agency** has the potential for significant improvements and reduction of duplication unless it is hampered by bureaucracy. Unless major recurrent funding is provided, it will still see fire services not being on a sustainable financial footing.

The variable component of the **fire service levy** currently differs between CFA and MFB. The CFA levy factors are around double those for MFB. Within the funds currently sourced for CFA, the densely developed outer metropolitan CFA areas hugely support the remainder of Victoria. The expanded FRV area will take more funding dense areas.

Will the levy reduce in new FRV areas like Warrnambool and Portland after 30/6/2019 due to the inherent density of funding source in FRV district that they will be part of?

Will the levy increase in the remaining CFA area after 30/6/2019 due to the loss of the dense funding source areas to FRV?

### **Underlying policy rationale.**

The sole rationale for forming Fire Rescue Victoria is industrial relations. Using past reports to justify this “reform” is simply twisting things for political outcomes. If that were not so, the bill would have ensured that a fire danger period could continue to be declared in the current CFA area after transfer to FRV and fully addressed the outdated nature of the fire services legislation.

The UFU is a very strategic organisation with long term vision that they achieve piece by piece, regularly out-maneuvring the employers and government. Fire services have been politicised recently like environment and agriculture have been for a long time, resulting in numerous restructures and name changes. It is likely that the separate existence of CFA and FRV will not be long term, potentially to be replaced by a single state-wide agency, causing more turmoil.

Bruce Farquharson

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

July 6 2017