

Ronald Clarence Cole



The Chairman

Hon. Gordon Rich-Phillips

Inquiry into the Firefighter's Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Via eSubmission /email

Dear Sir / Committee persons,

Re: **Fire Service Bill**

Thank you for this opportunity to address and state my concerns regarding these pieces of legislation.

It is my opinion the two pieces of legislation should be introduced and voted on as two separate bills, as they clearly have two different purposes.

**Presumptive Rights Compensation Bill 2017**

This bill undermines and in fact reduces volunteers' compensation that is currently available.

- CFA volunteers, under the new legislation are not deemed emergency service personnel and are not covered under the OH&S Act 2004
- CFA has a moral obligation to assist their members but not a legal one.

Minister James Merlino has repeatedly stated at CFA volunteer briefings that this bill is identical to the Queensland model, but under scrutiny is vastly different.

Under this bill there are benefits and conditions afforded to career fire-fighters but not to volunteer fire-fighters.

- Volunteers could be subjected to 3 separate committees to determine eligibility for compensation, whilst career fire fighters are immediately referred to Work Cover for determination.

### Fire Service Legislation Amendment Bill (2017)

The legislation for this bill was announced without any consultation and input from agencies, UFU, VFBA and the Community, with no detail. Briefings held across the state by Parliamentarians and CFA Officers have been unable to answer questions with the standard reply we don't know.

Powers of the Chief Officer – are they truly independent or again subject to a higher authority?

Will CFA hierarchy have the ability to discipline staff not in their employ?

Splitting of the fire service has not been recommendation of any of the recent or past fire reviews. Why is this Government determined on destroying a well-respected, world class volunteer emergency fire service?

No costing's are available as to how much it will cost to transition the two services and how much will it cost CFA for seconded staff from FRV.

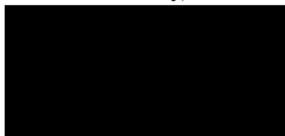
Surge capability must be severely degraded, given the evidence of volunteer resignations from previous and current integrated brigades.

In summary, my views are:

- The two bills must be treated as separate items
- The total lack consultation with any of the major stake holders has to tally undermined the credibility of this government. Where is the openness and transparency they promised at the last State election?
- Both bills should be rejected, new bills drawn up with all stake holders being consulted.
- Presumptive Rights Compensation bill needs to be fair and equal across fire-fighters, be they volunteer or career.

Again, thankyou for the opportunity to make my submission.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Ronald Clarence Cole.

Ronald Clarence Cole

Volunteer Fire-fighter 1094041