

Assistant Clerk Committees
Department of the Legislation Council
Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
East Melbourne Vic 3002

Dear Select Committee Members

I write to you as a volunteer member of a rural Fire Brigade where I have been a member for 18 and a half years. I'm passionately involved in CFA and am disheartened by the proposed reform.

I appreciate the opportunity to send you my submission in response to The Firefighters' presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

I believe what is being proposed under the guise of fire service reform is causing grave concern. Yes, change is needed to keep any organisation vibrant; but not change imposed bureaucratically without consultation.

The Victorian Government is proposing major reform to the fire services without due and proper consultation with the stakeholders and fire agency leaders.

The fact that this reform was raised in secret by a secret sub-committee of cabinet is deeply disturbing. The lack of transparency goes against the democratic process generally attributed to legislation and good governance in Victoria.

My concern is based on the lack of detail in the legislation thereby leaving the actual implementation of the legislation open to the possible whim and interpretation of the appointed manager/s. If there is no clear detail how do we know what will eventuate.

Will it be possible for the Parliament of Victoria to pass such legislation? Wouldn't this be likened to signing a blank cheque? Don't we need public scrutiny and an analysis of the impact this will have on the fire services themselves, on the community of Victoria and on the financial impact when the proposed restructure is underway?

The fact that two pieces of unrelated legislation are tied together is not appropriate. Each needs due diligence and study so that the facts of each are clear. I don't believe that the presumptive rights of career and volunteer members is equitable – has this been assessed independently?

I am concerned too that current legislation in the CFA Act and the Volunteer Charter has not been adhered to by this process. What faith therefore am I to have in proposed legislation – especially when not supported by a proper examination of the facts?

I ask you to firmly reject this reform Bill and ask for a proper process, undertaken with full consultation and engagement of legitimate stakeholders, to consider the reform of the fire services which will best enhance the protection and safety of the Victorian community.

I offer my services for the protection of the people in my community. I'm asking you to commit your services to protecting the CFA.

Thank you.

