

PETITION

Number: 735

Sponsored by: Nick McGowan

Directed to: Emergency Services

Tabled on: 3 March 2026

Grievance:

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the catastrophic fires experienced by firefighters and the community. These fires have already resulted in loss of life and injury to people with nearly 1,000 structures, including more than 220 homes, damaged, destroyed and lost, and 1,100 farming properties damaged. In addition, over 15,000 livestock perished, over 400,000 acres burned and there has been significant detrimental impacts on agriculture and infrastructure, including communications towers down, powerlines down and impacted drinking water, sewage treatment plants, cool-store structures and railways.

Victorian fire services should have had the funding and resources to be better prepared, but they were not provided with such. The Victorian Government has ignored calls from career and volunteer firefighters and not provided firefighters with the funding needed for replacement of fleet and equipment. 800 CFA tankers are out of date and unreliable and of those, 230 are over 31 years old. 65 per cent of the Fire Rescue Victoria fire trucks are out of date and unsafe. The new Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund raises questions about how funding has been, and is being, distributed to fire agencies.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council establish a Select Committee to inquire into, consider and report by 28 July 2026 on fire services funding and resources, including (a) CFA and Fire Rescue Victoria fire appliances; (b) the distribution of the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund and its predecessor to fund fire agencies and expenditure on matters other than operational; (c) mandatory requirements on the Government to provide monies to fire agencies; (d) the effectiveness of, and transparency around, current budget setting processes for fire agencies, additional funding, grant request processes for fleet replacement; (e) compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*; (f) the mental health impacts from fires; (g) the impacts on livestock, farmers, industry and insurance; (h) implementation of recommendations from the 2009 Royal Commission and other inquiries; and (i) recruitment and retention of volunteers.

Reply:

I thank the member for submitting this petition. The establishment of a Parliamentary Inquiry is ultimately a decision for the Legislative Council.

The Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee is already inquiring into the 2026 summer fires across Victoria.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Vicki Ward'.

Vicki Ward MP
Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery
Minister for Equality