

**Prue Purdey**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 28 June 2017 9:21 AM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** SUBMISSIONS TO UPPER HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO FIRE SERVICES RESTRUCTURE PROPOSAL

**Sensitivity:** Confidential

**Categories:** CONFIDENTIAL REQUEST

Confidential – for use by committee only. Not to be provided to any person or entity outside the committee and its immediate staff.

Good morning

I attach my commentary on the proposed fire services legislation. I also attach a snapshot of my experience and qualification to speak on this matter.

I believe that implementation of the fire services split will negatively impact fire and rescue protection in regional areas. There is no logic at all to making small satellite stations that may still be surrounded by volunteer brigades. These communities need to work together in an integrated way (as envisaged by the Bushfire Royal Commission and the Emergency Services Commissioner in his submission to that inquiry. They should not be separate organisations with duplicated overhead and management structures. The cost of this latter to the State is enormous and unacceptable.

This issue has already resulted in the loss of too many good firefighters. If it continues as the current Labour government seeks, then many more will be lost at great cost to this State and its people.

**Role of volunteers in Victorian fire services**

The UFU has consistently worked to understate and undermine the role of volunteers, and this is clearly evident at integrated stations.

I am a CFA volunteer with almost 20 years' experience and I respond with Bendigo Urban Brigade. Out of the last 380 turnouts I have attended with Bendigo only approximately 220, or just over 50%, have been entered into the CFA fire reporting system. This is despite donning my PPE and presenting to the Senior Station Officer at the incident in all cases. I believe that this is typical in integrated stations and significantly understates the role of volunteers and need for a volunteer surge capacity in "urban" areas.

**Limiting lateral entry**

The general tone of many clauses in the disputed EBA that will be implemented if the untried and untested legislation is passed will serve to limit lateral entry to the fire service.

One of CFA's biggest issues in my view is that so many of its middle management (Operations Officers, Operations Managers etc) are former career firefighters who no longer want to turn out (respond to incidents). These are the management staff who will be seconded back to the CFA.

Career firefighter recruitment cannot ever be expected to recruit the best practical, strategic and commercial minds to the organisation. These employees are rarely the best candidate for a management role, even with some operational responsibility, that involves people and commercial decision making. .

It is critical that middle level operational decisions can be made by people who have commercial (and people) skills and respect and recognise the role and responsibilities of volunteers.

Restricting virtually every decision making role within CFA to past paid firefighters creates a nightmare of a legacy that we will probably never recover from.

**Preventing daytime only staffing of fire stations**

This cannot be agreed to and it directly affects volunteers every day, right across the state. It will continue to impact volunteers as the stated intention is for

The proposed legislation, and the EBA that will flow with it is clearly not in the State's best interest as it effectively prevents day shift only operation of fire stations. The cost of 10/14 operation is unwarranted in many regional areas especially when combined with the staffing and manning schedules to the agreement which also need to be removed as they impeach on operational decision making.

The use of staff firefighters may have merit in some cases in daytime (0900 – 1600 hrs) but is rarely justified outside those times.

**Road Rescue**

The move to road traffic crash rescue in staff appliances fails to recognise that the SES provide RAR service in Victoria (and reasonably so). The additional cost is unjustified.

**Cancer compensation legislation**

I believe that the VFBV has commissioned a review of the proposed compensation legislation and it is highly critical of the structure and inequity of that legislation. I do not quote that review but instead refer the committee to that work and the conclusions of one of our most senior and respected legal minds. I strongly oppose the compensation legislation, and the fact that it is tied to other divisive legislation.

**Defining career firefighters as professional firefighters**

I believe that defining (and continually referring to) career firefighters as professional firefighters is highly divisive. It has no relationship to employee wages and conditions and serves only to divide and demean the role of volunteers within Victoria's fire services.

I see this also as highly offensive and defamatory. It distresses and demotivates me and many other CFA volunteers.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

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