

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017 [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 6 July 2017 4:54 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Mr Norman English
[REDACTED]

SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Dear Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017 Committee,

The establishment of Fire Rescue Victoria appears to be a reaction by the Andrews Government to appease the UFU and Peter Marshall. Politics appears to have been put ahead of safety. The original EBA proposals were rejected by the CFA Board and the MFB Board, so not wanting to negotiate the terms of the EBA's a new organisation covering both MFB and CFA has emerged splitting the CFA volunteers from the Career Firefighters. This new organisation appears to have been orchestrated between the UFU and the Labour Government with no consultation - breaking the CFA Volunteers charter (which is part of the law) and announced before any work has been completed on costing, chain of command or any regulations on how the new FRV group will operate.

This Bill cannot be pushed through Parliament until the work has been done to establish the cost of the reform. Initial set up costs and ongoing costs. The addition of new paid firefighters is only a small part of the ongoing costs. MFB and CFA have stated the costs would be at least \$2 billion dollars. How will Victoria afford this?

The impact on service delivery must be investigated thoroughly as a reduction in surge capacity will have a huge impact when major fires occur such as The Black Saturday Fire. Fires on the fringe of Melbourne are possible and with huge populations in these bushy areas, the more resources available the better the outcome and hopefully reduction in life and property loss. I have been in the CFA for 20 years and I thought we had a great model. The full time staff work the majority of the year attending incidents and the volunteers back up the career fire fighters when required. With much smaller numbers of career fire fighters, when large incidents occur the volunteers can relieve career firefighters to maintain 24 hour firefighting ability. If the CFA is split I don't imagine that a CFA volunteer will be allowed to drive or crew an FRV vehicle. The same as CFA do not drive or crew MFB vehicles now. This will have a huge impact on the resources

available to fight large fires in the future. The outer metropolitan stations will have a reduction in staff as they will only have the paid staff. Volunteers will not be welcome at these stations as they would need separate equipment and their own trucks. An assessment on how the government and the UFU are planning to man the Integrated Stations is needed before this Bill is passed. Will the volunteers be allowed to drive FRV vehicles? Will volunteers be allowed to use FRV equipment? If the answer is no then there will be no volunteers in the 35 integrated stations and our great surge capacity will be lost forever and the community will be in danger. Jack Rush QC who was part of the Victorian bushfires royal commission has stated "The ability of the CFA to mobilise tens of thousands of volunteers to meet the threat of catastrophic bushfire as was done on Black Saturday is severely threatened by this legislation".

Volunteer morale is very low. Most of the volunteers I know feel very disappointed with the government particularly James Merlino who our local minister. We live in the most fire prone area on the planet so Mr Merlino should be aware of how important it is to have a strong and united fire fighting service. We had this already. Why are they trying to fix something that isn't broken?

The UFU have a media campaign at the moment scaring people living in outer Melbourne. Why has this campaign been endorsed by the government when what is being said is untrue. There are already paid firefighters at these integrated stations.

Fire Rescue Victoria is politically motived so that the government can give Peter Marshall complete control of our Fire Services. I don't understand why? Anyone who has opposed the unions EBA has been pushed aside or sacked including Jane Garrett a Labour Party member. If the EBA was acceptable it would have been passed last year and this split of the CFA would not have occurred. This new Bill has nothing to do with the safety of the community. It is to appease the UFU.

What will happen to CFA resources (assets, property and cash) that have been paid for through fund raising? Will trucks and equipment that currently belong to the CFA be taken away from the CFA? Volunteers at integrated stations are confused about what will happen to their equipment and assets.

Why did the government tie the Presumptive Rights Compensation to this Bill. The Liberal Party said that they would pass the Presumptive Legislation if it was separated from the Bill. The Labour Party refused. Why? The only reason would be that they thought they had a great chance of passing the Bill if the cancer legislation was included. This is political only and not in the interests of any fire fighter. This has put a great division between paid and volunteers as some of the paid staff believe the volunteers have stopped the Cancer legislation going ahead. It is not the volunteers that stopped it but the Labour Party themselves. The two need to be separate issues. James Merlino promised to deliver the presumptive legislation within 100 days of forming government. it is now well over 580 days. The Bill also leaves many firefighters without cover. The government keep quoting the QLD model. The Victorian model is not the same as the QLD model. This legislation needs to be looked at in consultation with all parties including the VFBV and volunteer brigades.

There are many issues that need to be addressed and logistical decisions that should be made prior to this Bill being passed through Parliament. Proper consultation needs to occur between all parties so that the MFB and CFA can move forward in a positive manner and with all of the information required to make an informed assessment.

Kind regards,
Norman English

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File1:

File2:

File3:

