

Stephen McKinley

6 July 2017

Assistant Clerk Committees
Department of the Legislative Council
Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Sir/Madam,

As Captain of the Langley-Barfold CFA I am tending this submission to inform you of the deep reservations I have in relation to the proposed restructure of Victoria's fire services.

In January 2014 and again in January 2015 major fires broke out in the Langley brigade area. You wouldn't have heard about it in the media, but it was the volunteers from the integrated brigades on Melbourne's fringes – the ones this Bill undermines and seeks to get rid of - that played a significant role in fighting these fires, thus enabling local brigade members to get back to their jobs and businesses as quickly as possible. It angers me to now see these dedicated and loyal people being tossed aside in a scandalous attempt to circumvent the provisions of the Fair Work Act to implement an EBA to benefit the United Firefighters Union. Our rural communities deserve better than this, surely we have a fundamental right to security and peace of mind knowing this backup, or surge capacity, from integrated brigades is available when needed.

I have been a member of the CFA for over 20 years. Up until the appointment of the current CEO and Chief Officer I have never seen it run so well. To replace the current model with one so inherently flawed beggar's belief; this Bill is outrageous and contravenes the Volunteer Charter, CFA Volunteer Code of Conduct & CFA Values. No one is opposed to change, provided it can be demonstrated that the change will benefit the communities we serve. At the moment this is not evident and in fact the reverse is likely. Without doubt this proposal in its current form - if passed - will place Victorian's in danger next summer.

Contrary to the Governments claim, none of the recent major reviews, and certainly not the 2009 fires Royal Commission, recommended splitting the world-renowned CFA model. Jack Rush QC has called this proposal 'nonsense'. He confirmed that the 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission applauded the CFA model as being 'the nations pre-eminent firefighting organisation'. He also confirmed that the 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission recognised the importance of maintaining and strengthening the existing CFA model that fully integrates volunteers and paid firefighters. The 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission and other recent reviews recognised the absolute importance of the existing CFA model as the best way forward for Victoria.

A clear motivation underpinning the proposed change is a blatant desire by those pushing it to avoid a simple test that now sits with the legislated Fair Work Commission umpire – the very same umpire that Victoria's Premier Daniel Andrews said we should all listen up to. The so called Fair Work barriers to any industrial agreement are only about ensuring industrial agreements don't restrict or limit how a body such as CFA supports, equips, deploys or respect volunteers. These tests are not only common sense; they essentially already exist in CFA legislation.

Finally, the inclusion of presumptive cancer provisions within the proposal should be seen for what it is, a cynical attempt to encourage the passage of a contentious and divisive change by embedding a popular and well supported measure within it on a "take it all or take none" basis. The matters are separate and should be dealt with as such.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen McKinley
Captain
Langley- Barfold CFA