

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Mark Sheehan [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 7 July 2017 12:36 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Submission to Fire Service Review

To whom it may concern,

Please find below my submission to your committee's review of the proposed Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

As a volunteer of some 20 years with CFA I have some concerns regarding the proposed bill.

General

Tying two entirely separate matters (presumptive cancer legislation and massive changes to the fire services) is not an honorable way of conducting legislation. The bill should be split into two so that each matter may be considered on its merits.

The CFA act and Volunteer Charter clearly require consultation with volunteers on matters that affect their fire service. The CFA act also establishes VFBV as the representative body for Volunteers, and all volunteers elect their representatives to for VFBV. Make no mistake. Volunteers hold VFBV dear and they are the representative body that must be consulted in these proposed changes. To date the members of the Government have wantonly ignored VFBV, favouring instead to initiate piecemeal contact with whomever they please and calling it "consultation". Proper meaningful consultation with VFBV must be established as a matter of priority.

Presumptive Cancer Legislation

Presumptive legislation is a welcome move but, volunteer and career firefighters should be treated equally as "firefighters" and subject to exactly the same pre-qualifying conditions. This would include determination of whether any "firefighter" has attended sufficient fires.

When determining qualifying period, attendance at training should have equal weight to attendance at fires. Exposure to carcinogens at CFA Fiskville is a prime example of why this is a reasonable request.

Fire Service Reform

In parliament, members of the Government have stated that one of their major reasons for introducing this bill is to allow the passage of the CFA EBA thanks to its being held up at Fair Work. This is not a valid reason to make such far reaching changes. The correct way forward is to separate the EBA dispute out of these proposals. The proposed changes must be analysed based on their merits and the EBA go through its own proper process in line with the laws of this country. Let's analyse if this proposal is truly necessary and weigh up the costs and benefits of the proposal on their own merits.

The cost of implementing the proposed reforms is an unknown and should be fully determined before any decisions are made.

Given the proposed changes to the fire services result in absolutely no increase in service to the majority of country Victoria, the Fire Service Levy paid by country Victorians should be permanently locked down to current levels to prevent county people funding the proposed changes, including future increases in career firefighter numbers. The cost of implementing changes in this bill and ongoing running of FRV should be borne entirely by the section of the community covered by FRV (i.e. the city people).

It is my opinion that Volunteers will not continue to persist in any meaningful way in 5 or 10 year's time. Introduction of FRV at currently integrated stations along with ongoing requests from the UFU that additional career firefighters are dispatched to all incidents will result in Volunteer firefighters never "getting at run". Over time this will result in a loss of interest and hence a loss of firefighting capacity in the State. Losing the integrated model will harm CFA's surge capacity in the outer metropolitan regions.

Locking CFA into a monopoly of contracting staff from FRV will in no way benefit the Authority nor result in value for money for the Victorian Taxpayer. CFA must be free to employ its own staff from wherever the best candidates are available. Depending on the role, this may include interstate or overseas fire services, but equally the most suitable candidates may be found in other sectors. To obtain the best value for public money, CFA must be given the freedom to recruit and select the best candidate for and every role.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mark Sheehan

Volunteer Firefighter at Springfield CFA

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