

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2017

Chairperson Fire Services Select Committee  
Hon Gordon Rich-Phillips  
Parliament House  
Spring St, Melbourne

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Stewart Matulis. I am a Country Fire Authority (CFA) Volunteer Firefighter. I have served the Victorian Community for 13 years at three brigades, Hastings, Bittern and currently Keysborough and have received a National Emergency Medal for my service during the Black Saturday Bushfires.

I writing to the committee today to urge you to recommend that the House should not pass the proposed reforms. I outline my arguments below.

## Objection to Proposed Fire Services Reform Legislation

### Basis for Opposition

#### **NO RATIONALE | NO RECOMMENDATION | NO CONSULATION**

1. There are no substantiated recommendations to change the CFA.
2. Proposed reforms are driven by EBA negotiations and Industrial Union agendas.
3. Volunteers have not been included in the reform process nor consulted regarding the reform.
4. No detail has been provided regarding how the reform will be implemented.
5. The reform will reduce volunteer capacity in our communities.
6. The reform does not have a rationale.

#### **1. There are no substantiated recommendations to change the CFA.**

Not one review or royal commission has recommended the model proposed in the current legislation. In fact, in last Fire Service Review issued by then Minister Garret in 2015 and conducted by David O'Byrne recommended a continuation and expansion of the integrated service delivery model used by the CFA.

#### **Recommendation 2:**

The Review recommends that: a. the fire services introduce new service delivery models to better meet community needs in a given location, including joint operations in the gMa, day staffing, and hub and spoke integration. The fire services should consult with both volunteer and paid firefighters and their representative bodies on the most appropriate model to adopt in a given area, with the ultimate decision to be made by the Chief Officers

**Recommendation 5:**

The Review recommends that the CFA develop a leading practice model for integrating brigades, drawing on the successful processes adopted to date. The model should cover the initiation and planning of integration, implementation, and continued support. The leaders of integrated brigades should be selected for leadership, management and technical skills and provided with ongoing high-level assistance.

**THE BUSHFIRES ROYAL COMMISSION OF 2009 STATED THAT:**

Continued urban growth does not necessarily mean that the MFB ought to be responsible for emergency response in those areas

In addition, expansion of the metropolitan fire district boundary would probably decrease the critical surge capacity of the CFA through a reduction in the number of volunteers available to deploy elsewhere in the State.

(Chapter 10 section 2.2)

## **2. Proposed reforms are driven by EBA negotiations and Industrial Union agendas.**

Not one report or royal commission has recommended the changes proposed. The current reforms proposed were designed with the assistance of the union to allow the successful completion of EBA negotiations with the UFU. They were designed also to bypass federal laws put in place to protect volunteer's rights. Reform designed to bypass laws is not good reform.

## **3. Volunteers have not been included in the reform process nor consulted regarding the reform.**

The current reforms were made without any input from volunteers or volunteer representatives. As well as this, no avenue has been provided to volunteers to add or be included in designing the reforms. How can the current reform package be the best it can be if it excludes the opinions or ideas of the majority of the people affected or involved.

## **4. No detail has been provided regarding how the reform will be implemented.**

Why should reforms be passed when the practicalities of the reforms or how it works have not been explained or developed. Will they even work? The burden of prove is on the developer to provide the details. Why should we wait and see? Is that safe or best practise?

## **5. The reform will reduce volunteer capacity in our communities.**

How will co-location of CFA brigades work? Will stations be split down the middle? Will CFA members be pushed into the back shed? Will CFA brigades move from their current location and staff take over the CFA station? How will this increase or encourage volunteer retention?

The Fire Risk Review Panel has the power to reassign an area regardless of the capacity and response performance of the brigade in question. Is this a good thing? What happens to brigades in the future? Will they lose their station? Will they co-locate? More detail should be provided before this is supported.

#### 6. The reform does not have a rationale.

If the Premier, the Minister and the Emergency Management Commissioner are all saying nothing is changing, then why pass and implement these reforms? They will cost millions of dollars for the State and continue to cost more every year due to the increase in staff and effect every fire station in Victoria but achieve no change? Why are these reforms being proposed?

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No one is against good reform. Good reform is inclusive, well developed and explained, in the best interest of the community and has a clear plan for how it deals with future challenges. The proposed reforms fail this test. I hope that the Committee recommends that the proposed reforms are not passed by the House.

If you wish to contact me about my submission, my contact details are below.

Mr Stewart Matulis

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Yours Sincerely

Stewart Matulis