

**Kirra Vanzetti**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 4 July 2017 11:38 PM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Fwd: Submission on the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Resubmitted with removal of "confidential"

We advise that we find the reform bill noted above has left us with the feeling that our democratic rights have been trampled as we do not like the level of secrecy, what we see as the heavy involvement of UFU and the damage already done to our hardworking CFA volunteers.

We thank this committee for the opportunity to present our opinion. It may do the committee good to go out to the stations to talk to volunteers without union representatives and members present. From previous experience in two businesses, we can attest to the influence they have over others in a supposedly "open" forum.

**For that reason we ask to remain anonymous as we've received threats from union officials and members in the past.** However, we are happy to discuss with you and have the submission published.

We submit the following problems with the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

Please confirm if this submission is in correct format for your enquiry as I require notice to relodge if it is not. It has taken us about 30 hours to research so please understand that this is an issue we feel very strongly and very angry about. We note we are not CFA members, nor have relatives in it, nor members of any political party and are now retired. We have lived in Melbourne, regional areas and country now for 2.5 years. We have, however, become concerned at the way Victoria and, in fact, Australia is governed.

1. CFA is a volunteer organisation that has served country people well over many years. It is the very fabric of many communities. The old adage says "If it isn't broke, don't fix it". We do not understand what gives the Government the right to change the CFA and in this way ignore the CFA Volunteer Charter of the CFA Act 1958 which is enshrined in law and which we saw handed to the CFA only a few years ago. We feel this legislation for volunteers now only a few years old will be broken and has been completely disregarded by Andrews Government. While trampling over this, the

Government failed to properly consult the CFA or the communities they protect. We understand the only consultation was with Peter Marshall and this is totally unacceptable to us as the Charter requires consultation with any public sector affected. An impact statement has not been done to our knowledge. We understand from CFA members that they believe the Government is playing politics by, for example, including cancer legislation in with this reform.

2. Decrease in volunteer firefighters is expected in the thousands in addition to a drop in recruitment which ultimately reduce Victoria's ability to mobilise enough firefighters to major emergencies while at the same time maintaining adequate local coverage in metropolitan and regional areas. This decline in numbers will put lives and property at risk. I draw your attention to a conversation we had with a firefighter who took us to the "city-side" of Black Saturday where we looked over a not very large gap for the fire to cross in to the Hurstbridge, Lower Warrandyte, Eltham, areas which are now heavily populated and will require massive resources if it happens again!

Morale has dropped and will drop further in the CFA if you allow this divisive legislation to proceed. We now have less volunteers due to departure and falling recruitment which means we lose community education; emergency response capability; fuel reduction burns and mitigation measures; fire equipment maintenance; junior members; fund raising; community morale. CFA are often required to turn out to accidents to assist SES and we feel the additional services have not been addressed. We hope Andrews has not the same plans for the SES!

3. Confusion of the chain of command at the co-located stations by this legislation for volunteer firefighters in emergencies in FRV districts and this confusion risks compromising communications, wasting time during emergencies when literally seconds count putting firefighters at risk. One of the concerns which came from the inquiry in to the Black Saturday Fires and of which we know first hand was involved in Ash Wednesday fires is that communications were a problem. An entire brigade was almost lost in the bush in Macedon area! It appears our CFA volunteers who are so experienced in the bush will have no authority to make decisions in the event of a fire unless at the control or request of FRV firefighters. Does the Government understand just how quickly fires spread?

4. Unsure how but there is a fear that many volunteer firefighters are without cover for one specified cancer that MFB will be covered for. Surely this discriminates and is unfair re the onus of proof being on volunteers?

5. Changing fire district boundaries will provide the Andrews Government with greater powers to change the fire district boundaries with little scrutiny and approval at a much lower level. Some districts left off the list!

6. Establishment of Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) rids the MFB and CFA of any previous opposition to the Andrews Labor Government’s EBA proposals. The establishment of Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) abolishes the MFB Board and MFB Chief Officer adding them to a long list of members forced out and replaced.

Members forced out or sacked under Daniel Andrews, losing hundreds of years of emergency services experience, already include Former Minister, Jane Garrett; CFA Board; CFA Chief Officer, Joe Buffone; CFA CEO, Lucinda Nolan; MFB Chief Officer, Peter Rau; MFB Deputy Chief Officer, David Youssef; MFB CEO; Jim Higgins; MFB Acting Chief Officer, Paul Stacchino; MFB Deputy Chief Officer; and MFB Board.

In other words anyone that spoke our was dispensed with.

7. There is confusion in this bill about the assets of CFA brigades and how these are dealt with. This bill legislates powers to seize CFA brigade assets, such as, vehicles, property and cash, until 1 July 2019. Many volunteer stations have acquired property portfolios, vehicle appliances and significant sums of cash savings through fundraising and fire equipment maintenance services. These surely belong to our own communities?

8. The Enterprise Bargaining Agreement is to be replaced with a new EBA. We can expect many veto clauses to the advantage of the union and basically handing control to the UFU, a range of new allowances, and a huge bill for what is to be a costly EBA. An MFB source once said the CFA demands were close to identical to the MFB claims, which together would cost at least \$2 billion over the life of the agreements. If the list of claims is extended, this can only mean Victorians will be picking up an even bigger bill!

9. What will the Fire Services Levy be required to cover and what will it cost? Who will pay it? Will it fund the services fairly? How do we know Country areas will be looked after? Will FSL be indexed?

Finally, we see this legislation becoming the subject of legal action by community members now and in to the future. We can only hope that this Panel reviews this flawed legislation and apologises to the CFA.

Regards,

[Redacted signature block]