



5th July 2017

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

Dear Select Committee Members,

I have been a CFA volunteer for almost 39 years. I have fulfilled a variety of roles during these years from firefighter to Brigade Captain. I am currently Group Officer of Grenville Fire Brigades Group.

I would like to voice my concern about some of the proposed changes.

I am particularly concerned about how the proposed changes could *affect volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery*, because of the proposal to source CFA management staff through the proposed '*secondment model of staffing*'.

The 'secondment model of staffing' may have the unintended consequence of threatening the autonomy of the new 'all volunteer' CFA, by making the CFA subordinate to Fire Rescue Victoria and the working conditions of career firefighters.

The current situation to revise the Fire Services, has arisen because parts of the proposed EBA for career firefighters were incompatible with the requirement of the CFA act in relation to supporting volunteers. By moving all career firefighters out of CFA into one new organisation the Government will be able to deliver all aspects of the EBA to career firefighters including those parts deemed incompatible with a volunteer organisation like CFA.

Under the new arrangements, CFA must source all its operational management staff from Fire Rescue Victoria through a secondment process.

Staff seconded to CFA from Fire Rescue Victoria will be working within the EBA of Fire Rescue Victoria. This seconded staff will be undertaking operational management roles in CFA and they will be guided, influenced and directed by their EBA. Operational management staff will not be able to implement procedures contrary to their EBA even though these procedures may be what volunteers want and need! This will result in CFA not becoming an autonomous organisation, but an organisation under the direction of any EBA negotiated between Fire Rescue Victoria and the UFU. Is Fire Rescue Victoria management going to negotiate future EBAs with the welfare of CFA volunteers in mind? Very unlikely; so it will be possible for

future EBAs to contain more elements to further disadvantage volunteers.

As some of the elements of the current EBA are incompatible with the needs of volunteers, having operational managers guided by this EBA, will only create unwanted procedures and unintended friction, and will affect the ability of Volunteers to undertake their role, or perhaps even continue volunteering.

If the Government intends to go ahead with Fire Services Reform, **it is vitally important that an autonomous CFA is created.** For CFA to be a genuinely independent organisation working to support volunteers in their important work of protecting life and property in country Victoria, CFA should not be chained to Fire Rescue Victoria by having to source their staff from them, but be allowed to source the best staff from all possible sources.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Reinhard Pohl