

**Kirra Vanzetti**

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**From:** Neil Loft [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 6 July 2017 9:07 PM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Fire Service 'Reform'

To  
*Fire Services Bill Select Committee*  
*Parliament House, Spring Street*  
*EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002*

As an active CFA volunteer for nearly 30 years I would like to express my concern about the legislation currently before the committee.

But firstly I would like to say that I strongly support the paid members of what is currently the CFA and appreciate the support they have give to the state over many years. I also appreciate that there are a great may dedicated and decent career firefighters.

I also support that fire boundaries for areas like Dandenong should have been moved decades ago – some changes are necessary.

BUT

For the presumptive cancer legislation I find it damming that the proponents of the bill are so desperate to ram through the so called reform that they are willing to blackmail the parliament, and the citizens of Victoria, with the promise of this long overdue legislation.

Having read the report from QC Jack Rush I find it disturbing that once again career personnel are treated as special citizens and volunteers are left to the vagaries and whim of a committee probably stacked with UFU delegates.

I find it down right dishonest for the minister and the premier to claim that the 'reform' has been prompted, or even suggested, by any of the recent Royal Commissions or enquiries.

The bill is a blatant attempt to circumvent the federal 'Fair Work' legislation – where the UFU and the premier at no stage actually put their case to the test.

It is also telling that the EBA proposed for the new FRV gives the UFU everything that they wanted and more.

There has been much talk from the minister and the premier about the 'lies' being told by those that disagree with them – On reviewing their own statement I have found many of them to be either blatantly untrue or deliberately misleading.

They have state on many occasions that either there will be no impact at all or that the impact is limited to the current 35 integrated stations.

What about the stations that were listed in the proposed EBA that were flagged to become 'integrated' in the next 5 years?

If the minister or the premier believe that moving all operational staff to FRV will have no impact on CFA then they are either totally naïve and incompetent or lost in their own spin. (If there is to be no impact then why are they doing this?)

Once all FRV personnel are under one organization there will be an inevitable move to standardize equipment, operations, procedures – and who will set the agenda for that standardization? It certainly won't be the commissioner – it will be the UFU.

Once that happens then either the FRV will be a isolated islands with the state or the CFA will be forced to play catch up.

Is standardization a bad thing – no – but where will all of the money come from? The only place it can – the tax payer.

In the past there has been many cases where paid and volunteer members have worked together and co-operated extremely well (and I have also witnessed a few where both paid and volunteers have made asses of themselves with arguments over who has control etc.)

Once FRV is established no volunteer will be able to ride or work on a FRV truck – and paid personnel will certainly not attend an incident on a CFA truck. The whole mentality is polarizing us and them.

I am concerned that training for volunteers will become unworkable. If the training is designed and developed solely around the needs of FRV then over time it is inevitable that training will become inaccessible to volunteers. As we are already seeing signs of that on the ground.

In many cases it has taken years, or decades to get access to appropriate training in a format compatible with being a volunteer. Unlike the premise of some not all of us want to become full time fire fighters. Running courses over weekdays – I just don't have that much leave.

The way the whole process has been handled stinks of a poor political solution to a political problem. It is insulting that the Volunteer Charter has been blatantly ignored, from all reports even the CFA and MFB were not consulted until they were given a fait au compli days before the announcement. Claims from the minister that he had 'consulted' with the VFBV before the announcement have been strongly refuted by the VFBV.

How will the funding model for the CFA and FRV be modeled and varied as more and more areas, brigades, zones come under the banner and control of FRV? Will CFA funding be cut as each brigade is 'co-located'?

The assumption that the volunteers will always be available for surge capacity is a false one.

While I do not expect mass resignations as suggested by the opposition over time the impact of the contempt and disregard by the government will have an impact. There are already indications that the UFU want to model FRV to push CFA out of day to day operations and then hope for us to take up the slack when it suits them.

It is worth remembering that for many area CFA is the emergency service available and that to wait for career people from 100 k's away to come to a bin fire is a nonsense. The UFU response – have paid fire fighter in every town – I am sure that the tax payers will love that.

Regards

Neil Loft



Confidentiality requested