

Assistant Clerk Committees  
Department of Legislative Council  
Fire Services Bill Select Committee  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
East Melbourne Vic 3002

6 July 2017

### Submission to the Fire Services Bill Select Committee

I am very concerned with the rushed reform to the Fire services.  
Where is the facts and rigour behind the reasons for the proposed reform?  
Where is the consultation with the executive of the CFA, MFB, DELWP Forest Fire Management Victoria, Emergency Management Victoria, where is the consultation with the VFBV as required under the CFA Act, where is the discussion and opportunity for feedback from the public?

#### *a) impact on fire service delivery across Victoria*

I thought all reviews into the CFA had commended the integrated model. I note that an article in The Age has reported New Zealand is adopting an integrated model. I fail to see how the FRV CFA split and dual responsibility will be workable, effective and an improvement.

I support the detail written in the CFA Volunteer Leadership Group - D23 submission about the weakness of the secondment model for staffing CFA.

I query how regional towns such as Wangaratta and Wodonga proposed FRV satellite stations will be interactive and cooperative with surrounding CFA brigades, with a resultant poorer fire service delivery.

If there is need to reform the MFB/CFA legislated boundary in metropolitan Melbourne due to suburban and city expansion then that should be the sole area of reform.

#### *b) effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery*

The way the proposed reform has been introduced is negatively impacting on my engagement as a volunteer. Any loss of engagement will feed into reduced future participation. The disrespect the Premier and Minister Merlino have shown to volunteers and the VFBV, and the lack of truth in their public comments has been the most demoralising.

Reform that comes from government AND the fire services, which has been openly developed and discussed is most likely to take the fire services forward with the greatest volunteer engagement and participation maintained.

#### *c) short term and long term cost impact on fire service*

I am very concerned about the cost impact of the fire service reform. There has been no business model presented. A weak guarantee of no FSL increase for two years and an injection of \$100 million to CFA have been offered. Yet the cost of potentially

duplicating equipment and infrastructure across the 35 currently integrated brigades will rapidly consume available funds. What happens in the future as existing CFA stations are deemed to be converted (and duplicated) to FRV stations?

*d) underlying policy rationale.*

There seems to be so many questions:

How come the Fire Services review emphasised the Integrated Model, yet months later Mr Andrews is splitting it?

Where is the facts and rigour behind the reasons for the proposed reform - has the proposed reforms been costed, how can having two organisations working out of the one location but with separate resources be efficient let alone functional?

How exactly will this improve service to Victorians?

Where is the failed service delivery the Premier is implying when he says Victorians deserve a 24/7 fire service? Is that not what the volunteer and integrated brigades have been delivering? How does changing an integrated CFA brigade to an FRV brigade improve service?

How will the Fire Services levy be affected by the proposed change? How will the FSL be divided and attributed to the proposed FRV and CFA?

To many CFA volunteers the proposed reform is solely designed to keep faith between Premier Andrews and the UFU. It is a way for the UFU proposed EBA to be accepted. I find the Premier's and Minister Merlino's track record on this whole CFA EBA tragic. The Premier has lost a Minister, the CFA Board, CFA CEO and CFA Chief Officer in pushing through this EBA. The MFB has issues with their proposed EBA. So much concern, yet the Premier keeps pushing ahead.

The story was that the EBA had no effect on the volunteers, then the Federal Government changed the Fair Work Act limiting the adoption of agreements which affect volunteers, and now the Premier refuses to take the EBA to the Fair Work Commission and says he cannot implement the EBA because of those changes.

The government has a legal requirement to engage with the volunteers association (the VFBV). They say they recognise the Volunteer Charter, yet totally ignore it now.

**Presumptive Legislation for certain cancers**

I support the concept of Presumptive Rights Compensation, however not as presented in the Fire Services Reform Bill, as the presumptive rights for volunteers seems to be restricted. All firefighters should have the same requirements to be eligible, with no differentiation between the career and volunteer firefighters. The Queensland legislation presents the standard for fairness and equity to all members.

Finally it is outrageous that this is a reform hatched in the Premier's closest confidantes, where was the consultation with the fire agencies and Emergency Management Victoria? This bill should be withheld. A discussion paper highlighting problems and possible improvements to Victorian Fire Services should be circulated

and a proper consultation process undertaken.

Yours faithfully,

David Minifie

CFA member, citizen concerned for future fire services and landholder concerned for future cost of the FSL

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