

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

From
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I request full confidentiality for fear of retribution from Career Staff and the UFU.

I have been a volunteer firefighter for 20 years and I am disgusted with the antics and bullying tactics used by the UFU and the State Government.

At no time has there been any discussion with the volunteers regarding the EBA, the Reform or Presumptive legislation.

The concept that none of this will affect Volunteers is a sham. No consultation is an affect along with being told this is what is going to happen so accept it.

The CFA hierarchy have instructed the Volunteers to be non-political, be professional, get on with the job and don't rock the boat.

In other words, be quiet and accept what is to happen.

The CFA Hierarchy are career firefighters and UFU members.

Regarding the Presumptive Legislation.

The legislation is discriminating and should be totally separate and not tied in with the Reform.

Career firefighters are covered for all cancer types listed and do not have to prove their case.

Whereas a Volunteer is only covered for some cancers and is obligated to prove his or her case.

In most situations, Career firefighters wear breathing apparatus on the job and a set is available for each member. The only time they don't is in a wildfire situation. In Wildfire, they are usually tasked with asset protection and not exposed to smoke toxins.

The volunteers on the other hand do not have a Breathing set available to each member and will tackle structure fires from an external attack with only a filter mask.

The volunteer is always on the front line for Wildfires and is constantly subject to smoke toxins put out by the bush, sheds, barns, homes, vehicles etc.

We are supposed to be equal. There is no equality in any of this. The Government and the UFU should be ashamed for their degrading of the Volunteers.

Regarding the Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

The Union claim Victorians are at risk because the Volunteers cannot be relied on to respond and therefore the 35 Stations need to be career staffed.

Each of these stations is already manned by paid staff and are supported by volunteers.

An emergency rarely has a single station response but vehicles from several stations will attend. The response system as such will always ensure adequate coverage.

Changing to the reform will not enhance the service delivery nor provide greater protection to the community.

Should these stations be fully manned, what happens to the Volunteers?

They will be ostracised by the career staff and over time be forced to resign.

At present paid career staff (union members) fill important roles within the CFA.

Such as Area managers, Operations Officers and Deputy Chief Officers. These members will be encompassed by the FRV. If they are seconded back to the CFA should the reform go ahead then we have Union members running a Volunteer organisation again.

The only way the reform can work is if there is a total delineation between the 2 organisations.
Let the Government and the Union have their power grab but they must have no further influence on the CFA, a volunteer Organisation.
Career Staff cannot be seconded from FRV to CFA.

Over several years now the Union influence within the CFA has been growing.
Many highly-qualified volunteer members have been forced out of office.
Lex de Man, Manager for Training and Volunteerism, David Baker, D13 Area Manager.
Why? Because they did not come up through the career firefighter ranks.

The formation of the FRV has at this stage little substance and there is no definite plan on how it will be implemented. It is simply a power grab by the Union and a placation on the part of Daniel Andrews.

There is a very dark cloud over the CFA since the start of the EBA and it is only growing darker with the threat of this reform.
Volunteers are resigning and the number of new recruits is diminishing.
Who wants to join an organisation in turmoil?

What is the cost of this reform to the State?
It will be enormous.
35 stations to be upgraded to career staffing. More career staff to be employed.
Newer trucks and equipment at each of these stations.

Are we going along the lines of the NSW model where Volunteers are paid to attend training and for attending an incident?
Victoria cannot afford this.

The one thing the committee should do is to talk to the Volunteers directly. We are being silenced via the Government and the Union by CFA hierarchy who fear losing their jobs. Many have fallen already.

Please get out there and talk to the true Volunteers at their stations and not integrated stations as Andrews and Merlino do whilst being surrounded by career staff.

I am angry and I detest what this Government and Union are doing to a Volunteer Organisation.
Volunteering is an Australian institution and there is no place for Unionism.

I truly hope the committee can see beyond the smoke and mirrors and step forward to protect the Volunteers and the community they serve.
There are many a fine women and men who are distinguished firefighters and know their job.
We continually serve our communities professionally and with diligence.
A Career firefighter is no better than a Volunteer firefighter regardless of the innuendos from the UFU and our own State Government.

It is a shame the current Government does not hold itself accountable with the Volunteer Charter.

I thank you for this opportunity.