

## Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

**Submission No:** 7 and Supplementary  
**Submitted by:** Steven Daw  
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**From:** Steven Daw [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 12 March 2024 3:33 PM  
**To:** Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee  
**Subject:** Submission - Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Steven Daw, my submission in regards to the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 is as a private individual. My mailing address is [REDACTED]

The proposed Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 as it currently stands is an insult to all RFS Volunteers in Queensland. Where we had wanted more say, more budget, and more control over our incidents, the opposite is what the bill provides.

The RFBAQ are the RFS Brigade elected representatives, as outlined in the RFBAQ letter to the Premier and Minister on 25 Jan 2024, their "initial conversations and meetings with Deputy Police Commissioner Stephan Gollschewski and the Legal Director / Office of Special Coordinator were positive in intent to empower Rural Fire Brigades and volunteer firefighters, and to increase brigade capacity and functions in achieving a higher level of community defence across the 93% of Queensland that the 1,400 Rural Fire Brigades defend. Since the departure of the permanent QFES Commissioner Greg Leach in late 2023 and the appointment of an Acting Commissioner from Fire and Rescue, the draft legislation has substantially and drastically changed". I am dissapointed to report that the majority of RFS Volunteers of various brigades I have spoken to see the drastic change in recent months as being now nothing less than a power grab by Fire and Rescue!, also supported by the Ministers photo op with several Fire and Rescue Union Officials holding up the legislation when it was tabled in Parliament. No one from the RFS was invited or present despite looking after 93% of Qld when it comes to fires.

The Minister responded to the RFBAQ letter, essentially saying that she will take advice from QFES, while she seems to have closed ears to 28,000 plus volunteers, despite her ministerial charter signed by the Premier requiring she "listen to Queenslanders".

The Government completely disregarded the voice of the largest stakeholder in fire. This bad draft legislation gives all the money (almost \$1 billion) to Fire & Rescue in the hope that some will trickle down to the Rural Fire Service and Rural Fire Brigades.

This bad draft legislation means that forever more the only person who can ever have control of Fire & Rescue, as well as the Rural Fire Service and Rural Fire Brigades must come from Fire & Rescue.

This bad draft legislation means that forever more the person who will be in charge of reporting and making recommendations on service delivery, integration, innovation, research and culture must forever more come from Fire & Rescue.

The Minister says that this will give greater protection to brigades and volunteers. New South Wales volunteer firefighters have greater protection than Queensland volunteer firefighters, and their Commissioner doesn't come from Fire & Rescue.

Victorian volunteer firefighters have greater protection than Queensland volunteer firefighters, and their Commissioner doesn't come from Fire & Rescue.

South Australian volunteer firefighters have greater protection than Queensland volunteer firefighters, and their Commissioner doesn't come from Fire & Rescue.

Volunteer firefighters in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia are also able to defend their communities to a higher level than volunteer firefighters in Queensland because they have never been restricted and dominated by a smaller service. This is akin to legislation stating forever more the head of Army must come from the Air Force - how utterly stupid would that be? Yet here we are with this flawed bill.

This year the budget is \$940 million. While the Minister says in the future the Rural Fire Service will have control of its own budget, the bit that is being missed out is that Rural Fire receives its money from the Fire & Rescue Commissioner. Trickle down fire economics has not worked in favour of Rural Fire Brigades previously in Queensland and under this bad draft legislation it's not going to get any better.

New South Wales, Victorian and South Australian volunteer fire services don't receive their funds through Fire & Rescue control, and neither should Queensland Rural Fire.

There is much more in this bad draft legislation that restricts community defence, but I have much better things to do than waste my time spelling it out here all because [REDACTED] failed to do their job in consulting stakeholders properly, indeed I would state Qld Govt and QFES have clearly breached their written and signed charter with the RFBAQ/RFS - a serious matter indeed.

Where to from here, well after the nonsensical blue card requirement debacle caused by bureaucratic incompetence lost the RFS thousands of volunteers, this flawed process of recent months, this useless piece of legislation impacting RFS brigades in a multitude of unacceptable ways will, if passed, see mass resignations by brigade members or, brigades simply handing the keys to their trucks and sheds to QFES and let the union and red truck crews respond to everything.

We are volunteers, protecting our communities, we are not a plaything for Brisbane based paid bureaucrats and union officials to try and grasp control of. It seems those involved in drafting this flawed legislation have no idea about the volunteer ethos, being part of a regional community etc and spend their time talking over us, using management babble to make things sound pretty, instead of listening.

The consequences of this flawed bill if passed, will be profound, and likely deadly, those responsible for it, and those who support it, will bear the liability for it, as the consequences are utterly foreseeable and predictable - which I am sure a future coronial inquiry will find.

Send this bill back for a total redraft (after extensive consultation and gaining support from our representatives the RFBAQ).....their is no reason the current legislation cannot continue for several more months until a new bill supported by ALL stakeholders can be presented.

Kind regards  
Steve

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**From:** Steven Daw [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 27 March 2024 10:03 PM  
**To:** Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee  
**Subject:** Addendum to my submission

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Steven Daw, I understand the committee is accepting late submissions. Please accept this addendum to my earlier submission in regards to the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

[REDACTED]

It has now been advised that as of July 1st rural fire brigades will no longer be unincorporated associations, instead we will become part of a state government entity, namely RFSQ. No such arrangement was ever discussed with brigades, it undermines the entire community nature and origins of the Queensland Rural Fire Brigade and its volunteer ethos, instead QLD Govt expects that Queenslanders will volunteer to provide services free of charge to it. Whilst you may argue that it still will be a volunteer brigade in the local community, you cannot get away from the fact that it will no longer truly be able to moderate its membership, it can have members imposed on it, the brigade money post 01 July 2024 will be held by RFSQ not the brigade, being a state govt entity if they want to procure something larger, instead of a discussion and a vote at a brigade meeting to acquire it, and do so, to meet state procurement rules a business case will likely be needed when thresholds are reached.

Volunteers in Qld Rural Fire Brigades do so for their communities, not for Qld State Govt. Even though volunteer numbers are slightly above those last year, there is significant discontent amongst volunteers I have spoken to about this whole process since earlier this year when the direction changed 180 degrees (see previous submission). A lot of volunteers are considering potentially not responding or resigning come 01 July 2024 due to the reasons outlined in my submission and this addendum. Volunteers have lives outside the RFS, not many will be interested in having to waste time writing business cases, or raising money and seeking donations for what will be a Qld Govt entity. The RFBAQ executive group had 7 days to review and respond to the draft legislation in Jan 2024 and were NOT able to distribute it to rural fire brigades by direction of QFES. On top of this, brigades recognise a myriad of issues including not fit for purpose vehicles, overweight vehicles, significant training issues, difficult terrain, the complexities of managing volunteers, risks with severe bushfires leading to high risks. Given all of this, and this process since the start of 2024 having been such a mess, that brigades have significant and genuine concerns, particularly after the aforementioned turn around with what had been agreed with the RFBAQ prior to 2024 as outlined in my submission. Most volunteers are not interested in responding to politics or this process as they already have too much on in their lives without wasting time on poorly managed processes and reading draft legislation (a trip to the dentist is more enjoyable) - they feel like this whole process is simply being steamrolled with tight timeframes and that their voice and concerns do not matter, thus if the legislation is passed as is, and it proves to be a mess (which it likely will be), they will simply say, see you later - and you cannot blame them, and if this occurs, there is no Plan B - that leaves all involved, exposed.

To simply say there is disinformation or misinformation causing issues is naive in the extreme - what there is a poor process as outlined in my submission and this addendum, poorly drafted legislation on a document that is in desperate need of a total rewrite and far too much smoke and mirrors in emails and announcements that when read by volunteers do not stand up to scrutiny as to what occurs post 01 July 2024, or there is an utter lack of information or process as to what will occur post 01 July 2024, and now we find out brigades status as an unincorporated association.

The legislation around incident control in the draft is very poorly written - one should not have to cross reference other sections, it should be clear, concise and plain English so all understand it readily - if everyone keeps having questions about it - it's simple, it's bad. If this legislation proceeds, I do believe community safety will be at risk, hence why I stated in my submission that those responsible for it, and those who support it, will bear the liability for it, as the consequences are utterly foreseeable and predictable - which I am sure a future coronial inquiry will find. Rushing bad legislation through is poor judgement - just because some people want it done by a certain time, doesn't mean it must be done by then. If you have doubts - park it up, send this bill back for a total redraft (after extensive consultation and gaining support from our representatives the RFBAQ).....there is simply no reason the current legislation cannot continue for several more months until a new clean freshly written legislation supported by ALL stakeholders can be presented.

Kind regards  
Steve