

## Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

**Submission No:** 28  
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Harry Kirk's submission on the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

I am a volunteer firefighter with 28 years service, and I am 1<sup>st</sup> Officer of Black Mt RFB and currently Group Officer of the 9 Rural Fire Brigades in the Noosa Shire.

The current level of disrespect shown by the new Emergency Services Minister, and the Acting Commissioner and this Government to all volunteers is quite disturbing. Firstly presenting this rehashed version of existing legislation that is so biased against rural firefighters, and then coupled with the need to respond to this committee within 7 days of publication, is typical of how we are being treated disrespectfully.

This bad draft legislation gives all the money, almost \$1 Billion, to Fire & Rescue, with no guarantee of how much the Rural Fire Service will receive.

This rehashed version of existing Legislation if passed by Parliament, will actively disempower the majority of firefighters in Queensland and ensure that their voice is never heeded nor heard.

This poorly developed draft legislation in Section 130 specifically states regarding the RFS advisory committee: "(5) To remove any doubt, it is declared that the RFS advisory committee is not a decision-making body." It is a long way from the empowering Rural Fires Board that was promised by the QFES in the structure projected across Queensland in February and March 2023.

The creation of definitions for incident control expertise and rural incident control expertise in this bad draft legislation will create confusion and fracture the command and control process at the inception of an incident. This is in conflict with the established AIMS principles for incident management in Australia and New Zealand. AIMS qualifications for incident control are regardless of incident type or the service to which you belong.

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. It also 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.

This bad draft legislation reaches well outside of Fire & Rescue and the Rural Fire Service as it creates the definition of Professional Firefighting Experience which can only be gained by training provided by Fire & Rescue Queensland to employees of Fire & Rescue Queensland.

This new definition of Professional Firefighting experience in the poorly developed draft legislation completely alienates volunteer firefighters. It also says that all executive positions with true legislated power must be only drawn from this small clique of Fire & Rescue senior officers, even though they represent the smallest section of the former QFES.

This bad draft legislation enables the Commissioner to dismiss “the office bearers” of brigades, however the members of the Brigade should have this responsibility. This bad draft legislation also states that the new position of Chief Fire Officer does not have to be a member of either fire service but he is under direction of the Commissioner. It states that he will be responsible for providing advice to the Commissioner on matters relating to service delivery, operational culture, best practice and innovation and research across the fire services. To preserve independence between the fire services, the Chief Fire Officer is not a member of either service, however, the position is subject to the direction of the Commissioner in performing the Chief Fire Officer’s functions.

This poorly developed draft legislation does not give firefighters, whether Officer or not, the complete legislative protection of a paid officer when controlling an incident. It also overlooks local knowledge for the fire, availability of neighbouring brigade 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Officer and the delay of them getting to the fire to take charge.

New South Wales, Victorian and South Australian volunteer firefighters have greater protection than Queensland volunteer firefighters, and their Commissioners don’t come from Fire & Rescue.

Queensland RFS should be a stand-alone Fire Department not answerable to the Fire & Rescue commissioner.

All members of Parliament please **vote NO** to this bad draft legislation and stand by your volunteer Rural Fire Fighters.

Harry Kirk

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