

Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission on the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

The current Fire Act is out of date and does not empower Rural Fire Brigades and the volunteers. However, allowing only seven days for submissions to the draft legislation to be submitted is unrealistic for most volunteer firefighters (26,590 volunteers protecting 93% of the State) to allow them to meet with the brigade members and formulate a submission, is impossible for them achieve this set time frame. Unless this is a planned strategy to silence the majority of the fire service members to respond to the draft legislation? I request an extension of time so that meaningful and informed discussion can take place to formalise an informed submission.

This draft legislation as set out in the legislation is the opposite of what KPMG review was trying to achieve in the recommendation that they made. This current rewrite of Act, if passed by Parliament will actively disempower most firefighters in Queensland and ensure that their voice is not important or relevant to the service.

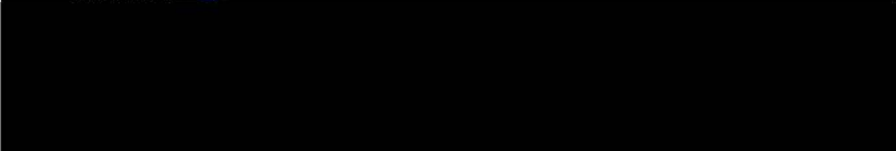
The proposal was to have an independent Rural Fire Service as a standalone department within the Fire Service department. Most Rural volunteers were expecting the Rural Fire Service to have its own Commissioner under the Minister not subordinate to and under the control of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Commissioner. Which is exactly the same current structure that the current Rural Fire Service is required to function at this time, it does not take into any consideration the KPMG review and its recommendations. The volunteer firefighters were expecting that the Rural Fire Service would have its own independent budget not one that was dependent upon the good will of the Fire and Rescue Commissioner. This means the status quo remains the same for the Rural Fire Service regarding command and control, authority, budget requirements are all subordinate to Fire and Rescue Qld. Nothing will change under this draft legislation.

This 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. Why have an advisory committee if it has no decision-making powers.

If this current draft legislation was passed by the Parliament it would enshrine in legislation the status quo and not improve the function, reliability, and the empowerment of the Rural Fire Service to protect the majority of the Queensland community.

We request that amendments to the draft legislation be made so that it fulfils the recommendation of the various reviews and the empowerment of the Rural Fire Service and their 26,590 volunteers to have a stand-alone service within the broader Fire Department.

Regards,



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