

## Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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**Submitted by:** Abbot Point Rural Fire Brigade  
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**From:** Bruce Smith [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 15 March 2024 8:23 AM  
**To:** Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee  
**Subject:** Submission on the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 - Abbot Point Rural Fire Brigade

To Whom It May Concern,

We do not support the new bill in its entire capacity. There are a lot of people outside of the government this affects and there has been no reasonable consultive period. The introduction of a bill with no consultive period will see volunteer number decreases across 1400 Rural Fire Brigades in Qld.

The current Act is out of date and does not empower Rural Fire Brigades. It is however preferable to an unprecedented legislative power grab by a small clique of Brisbane-based senior Fire and Rescue bureaucrats.

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.

The new draft legislation for the first time stipulates that the only person qualified to become Commissioner of the new Queensland Fire Department (QFD) that comprises both the Fire and Rescue Service and the Rural Fire Service, must be from Fire and Rescue. This is like legislating that the only person who can be the head of Queensland Health is a surgeon.

This Fire and Rescue Commissioner will for the first time be able to directly sack a member of a Rural Fire Brigade and decide who can or cannot be a brigade chairperson, treasurer or elected office bearer.

This is completely unacceptable and is not legally supported, as brigades are unincorporated associations that moderate their own membership.

The QFES has been adamant in their pursuit of being able to sack a brigade member since the botched introduction of Blue Card and previously attempted to amend the legislation to achieve this end.

The draft legislation has a new role of Chief Fire Officer. This person reports directly to the Commissioner on service delivery, integration, best practice, innovation and research. Again, this person's qualifications can only come from Fire and Rescue which is a flawed view.

The draft legislation states that an incident controller in the future can only come from people with expertise in large scale structural fires and bushfires, specialist and technical rescue, response to disasters and hazmat. This means that going forward all incident controllers can only come from Fire and Rescue; not Rural Fire, where most large incidents happen.

This one section completely disempowers landholders and brigade members who understand how fire moves through the environment.

One of the commitments to the RFBAQ from Minister Mark Ryan MP was a Rural Fires Board. This has also been watered down to an advisory committee. More significant changes made by Kedron since the departure of Commissioner Leach.

There is much, much more in the draft legislation that clearly identifies a power grab, and this will be to the detriment to the defence of all communities across Queensland.

The current out-of-date Fire Service Act 1990 is far preferable to this draft legislation. This draft legislation will lead to upheaval and discord similar to that fracturing the Fire Services in Victoria.

This current rewrite of a much-rewritten Act, if passed by Parliament will actively disempower the majority of firefighters in Queensland and ensure that their voice is never heeded nor heard.

We support the RFBAQ requests that this Committee recommend that all amendments to the current Fire Service Act 1990 be dismissed ahead of a full legislative rewrite following the 2024 Queensland state election, and the Parliamentary Committee acknowledge and support the AgForce call of the 13th February 2024 for a State Parliamentary Inquiry into the 2023/24 fire season and an investigation into the mistakes that were made.

*Kind Regards*

*Bruce Smith*  
*Secretary*  
*Abbot Point Rural Fire Brigade*

