


Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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I have been a Volunteer firefighter with Ilkley & District RFB in the Sunshine Coast since September 2013 (This time) and have been Chairperson, and 4th and I am currently 3rd Officer and am trained to Crew Leader level.

I have been an active volunteer fire fighter in NSW and Queensland for at least 20 of the last 30 years, joining the Warringah Pittwater Headquarters Bushfire Brigade in May 1993, completing my Basic Firefighter training in November 1993 and participating in my first bushfires in the 1993/94 Summer fires around the Northern Sydney. In later years I also assisted with STARG deployments including to Lowanna / Nymboida area.

After moving to Tamworth in 1997 I joined the Tamworth City Headquarters RFB Where I was vice President and for the last year a Deputy Captain. I also spent time as the Rural Fire Service Association (RFSA – the equivalent of the FRBAQ) representative for the Oxley Region of NSW.

I was there for the transition from “Bush Fire Brigades” under the *Bush fires Act 1949* through the preparation for the Rural Fire Act and separation from reporting to Local Government and The RFS Commissioner.

Let me say that I was initially disappointed with the announcement of the proposed announced as a separate Rural Fire Service changes to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) which I think was working in delivering the objects of the Act and what Members of all services want to do prevent and respond to serve and protect the our communities as a combined Queensland Emergency Service with significant levels of cooperation.

Some of the amendments that have appeared in this Bill appear to be contrary to commitments by the then Minister and have re-emphasised the pre-eminence of one Service.

I sincerely hope and will work every day to ensure the RFSQ works cooperatively and with mutual respect with QFR as one Queensland Fire Department.

Detailed comments

I generally support of the proposed amendments to the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 and Fire and Emergency Services Regulation, particularly:

- The express statement of ongoing operational and strategic collaboration between the QFR and RFSQ [clause 22- new 2A] – this is unambiguous – but later sections and caveats may interfere with the achievement of this objective.

- Express recognition of volunteers (if not RFSQ volunteers – but it is acknowledge that there are other volunteers in QFES/QFD – (scientific, Chaplains) [clause 22 – new 2A]
- Increased protection of RFS volunteers – in response to the incident on the Gold Coast a few years back – the onus is still on the QFD to ensure the CQFD endorsement / notification of Brigade Officers is in accordance with the approved legislation. This is still critical should a matter need to go before the Courts [clause 68 S151I].

However I do have concerns with several proposed clauses

- I question the need that 3 of the 4 most senior executive leadership positions must be Fire & Rescue [Clause 28 CQFD, Chief Officer QFD and DC QFR and CO RFSQ], In what is meant to be a QFD that consists of 2 Services they should be of equal status.
 - CQFD – must be –and...AND .. AND) The Commissioner does not need to be a qualified FRS firefighter if the responsibility is for the administration of culture and co-operation between the services – a person with Rural fire fighting experience or with significant senior executive experience – e.g. from another Local, State or Federal Government department. The ability for the responsible Minister to choose someone independent of the 2 services may be required
 - CFO [clause 28] new part 2 s7c(2) – the Chief Fire Officer should be able to be appointed with urban or rural firefighting experience e.g. from NSW or Victoria where “RFS and CFA both undertake urban are trained equipped and attend urban/structural and bushfires.
 - Nothing in the Bill appears to preclude the RFSQ taking on “village protection” roles and capabilities such as BA and internal structural firefighting roles like in other Jurisdictions - especially if Auxiliary Stations are no longer able to attract sufficient firefighters.
 - This position is the opportunity for the balance in the Senior Leadership team – not for stacking with urban firefighters -
 - Deputy Commissioner DC QFR – Yes should have experience as stated in [clause 28] part 3 7K(2) but is no longer essential at this level.
 - CO RFSQ – must have rural fire experience
- This will mean that 3 of the 4 Senior Leadership team will be from QFR or other FRS background against 1 RFSQ representative – representing 6 -7 times the workforce of the QFD (4000 Fire Officers & Staff: 26,000+ RFS Volunteers and approx. 200 staff)
- The very specific requirements for appointment to the CQFD and QFD CFO positions should be open to a person with relevant experience in either urban or rural fire operations or Emergency or Disaster management.
 - This will also allow the Minister to appoint an external candidate to the Commissioner position to better achieve their responsibility to management the culture of the QFD and the Services
- Paraphrasing the words of former PM “they are not holding the hose – they need to be People and Departmental managers as well as the talking heads on media during major events -m generally campaign bushfire seasons.

- Experience in other Emergency Services or Departments may be valuable – E.g. to bring an alternative ‘independent approach to an issue – especially as the CQFD and CO QFD are responsible for the culture of the QFD and the 2 services.
- The difference in the language in specifying the experience for the 4 Senior executive positions appears to be deliberately restrictive and is inconsistent with the use of ‘or’ for the Chief Officer RFSQ.
 - Commissioner QFD –AND .. AND)
 - CFO (2)(a) ;AND (b) ; AND (c)
 - DC QFR – (2)(a) ;AND (b) ; AND (c)
 - CO RFSQ – (2)(a) or (b) or (c)
- Consistency in specification of experience will also allow for temporary acting arrangements between members of the Senior Leadership team, for leave overseas travel etc.
 - All causes should use or rather than AND
 - Clause 25 s5(1A), clause 28 s7C(2), 7K(2) Omit and insert or as per 7(Q)(2)
- [Clause 62] new Chapter 4 Rural Fire Service Queensland
 - supported
- [clause 69] - Amendment of s 152B (Use of unregistered vehicle on road by rural fire brigade)
 - Amendments are supported to allow unregistered farm vehicle to be used – if reasonably maintained – for fire-fighting purposes. This acknowledges the reality for a very large proportion of the State where this has been and will continue to be the primary response.
- [clause 83] - Amendment of Schedule 6 (Dictionary)
 - (2) Schedule 6
 - *Building* - (a) – the items described are generally “structures” rather than building under the building framework and classification of buildings. Please review and clarify with relevant Department (DDLGPW) therefore use in this Act may be confusing.
 - *Fire prevention expertise* – this is way to urban fire focused with the use of AND with (a) building fire safety; and. for (a) Omit and insert or ;
 - *incident control expertise* – again this appears to be overly restrictive to F&R experience especially with nationally accredited incident controller and Sector/Divisional controller courses under the AIIMS system being purposely adaptable across incident types.
 - (a) – (d) Omit and insert or.

Part 5 Amendment of Fire and Emergency Services Regulation 2011

- The requirement for smoke alarms in caravans and motorised caravans is supported. [clause 85]

Your Respectfully

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(Robert) Bradley DINES

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