

Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 43
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Publication: Public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

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To: [Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee](#)
Subject: Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024
Date: Friday, 15 March 2024 10:03:48 AM

To the Committee:

I write as an individual member of a Rural Fire Service Brigade, and the opinions expressed are purely my own.

Whilst I believe that much of the recent publication addresses many of the shortcomings of the existing Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 in regard to the provision of protections to Brigades, Officers and Members, there are certain clauses in the Amendment Bill which give rise for concern.

1. Amendment of s5 in Clause 25. Showing the eligibility to the role of Commissioner is only open to a person who has professional firefighting experience, incident control expertise, and fire prevention expertise. Surely the role of Commissioner is to be the leader of the Organisation covering multi faceted business, financial, HR, inter personnel and cultural issues amongst many other demands. If you consider many other successful organisations, their leader rarely has an in-depth knowledge of the day to day business requirement - that is why great leaders surround themselves by Subject Matter Experts to provide all the detailed support required. I suggest removal of the specific Incident Control requirements, in order to attract a far more diverse and capable applicant pool, which would truly take the new QFD forward as a united force.
2. Part 2 - Section 130. Whilst the establishment of an RFSQ advisory Committee is a massive positive, the composition if the committee will be crucial to ensuring that the 'voice of reason' who truly have the vision to create a Rural Fire Service which is 'fit for purpose' for decades to come will be critical. As a ten-year serving volunteer, I say, "we cannot continue to live in the past", we have to address recruitment and retention issues now-while building a more flexible and dynamic structure for the future.
3. Section 229 - Model Rules. I do not believe the Commission alone should establish the model rules for RFS Brigades - these need to be established through consultation with the true subject matter experts, these being the Brigade Executive, the RFS Senior Management and the Governance and Legislative Specialists to create a solid, yet workable provision - which does not involve the creation of even more work for the volunteers expected to uphold the 'model rules'.
4. The provision for the Commissioner to appoint a 'person in charge of operations' when no First Officer is available requires more context. Surely this

need to be relative to the size and scale of the incident initially? A local incident 'first response' would see an available crew mobilised - with that crew leader taking on the 'incident control' actions for as long as they felt capable to do so, supported by Brigade Officers, Area Operations Staff as the incident required. Handing over the 'incident control' would be managed 'on-site', in the best interests of all. Larger scale operations would follow standard 'chain of command' process - none of this would require Commissioner appointment action.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

John Ashby

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