

Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Jim Sharpe's submission on the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

I am a volunteer firefighter and fire warden with 7 years service, and have been awarded the Australia Day Achievement Award in 2024.

The level of disrespect shown by 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.

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.

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 poorly developed draft legislation is in conflict with the established AIIMS principles for incident management in Australia and New Zealand. AIIMS qualifications for incident control are regardless of incident type or the service that you belong to.

This poorly developed 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.

This poorly developed draft legislation 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” however the members of the Brigade should have this responsibility.

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.

Upon joining the fire brigade I was aware that I had to do courses in training which I happily did. We were also told we were covered under the Rural Fire Service with insurance if accidents occurred and now I don't understand if I am covered or not?

Other things have changed, more training and courses seem to be required. When I first started it was very practical and hands on, now it seems to be more political and theory based.

Knowing what I now know, I am finding it hard to recommend for others to join as volunteers.

Jim Sharpe

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kind regards

Jim