



**The Country Fire Service
Volunteers Association**
"Representing the interests of CFS Members"

**Working together with
CFS REGIONAL
COMMITTEES**

BULLETIN

26 February 2015

PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO REVIEW EMERGENCY SERVICES SECTOR REFORM

Late yesterday, the Legislative Council of the South Australian Parliament voted to support a motion by the Hon Robert Brokenshire to form a Select Committee to inquire into the proposed emergency services sector reform.

The Committee will inquire into:

- a) The Government's establishment of The Commissioner to replaced Chief Officers
- b) The process involved in consultation and what consideration was given to matters raised during consultation in developing the reform proposal
- c) The Business Plan
- d) Cost-benefit analysis and probity regarding the proposed reform
- e) Consideration and consultation with volunteer organisations affected by the proposal
- f) The establishment of legal requirements for the Chief Officer and Chief Executive Officer of emergency services and SAFECOM and the SAFECOM Board
- g) Any other relevant matters

The motion received the support of Family First, The Greens, Dignity for Disability, the Liberal Party and Independents. The motion was not supported by the Weatherill Labor Government.

In presenting his motion Mr Brokenshire made the following opening statement:

"I move for this select committee because I believe that the very spirit and core of this state is built and based on volunteering, particularly so when it comes to emergency services. I believe that any reform, particularly radical reform like this, that any government proposes, irrespective of the colour of government, needs to be done with the utmost care and with strong consideration for all the concerns that particularly the volunteer organisations may have. I say 'particularly the volunteer organisations' because, first, without those volunteers we simply would not have the emergency services, be it the CFS, the SES, marine rescue or surf lifesaving, to protect life and property in this state. We simply could not afford to have a fully-paid service.

I highlight to the house that with this proposal, whether or not you think the minister and the government have good intentions, the reality is that by setting up this structure we will say goodbye to the current culture and the efficiencies and effectiveness of the CFS and SES as we have known them since they first evolved a very long time ago—well before the emergency fire service (EFS) was set up.

We have rhetoric in the house from the government at the moment whereby they are congratulating a broad range of organisations and services for the good work done at Sampson Flat. Brilliant work was done at Sampson Flat with the fires, but we need to do more than acknowledge the brilliant work there: we need to support those volunteers and listen to what those volunteers are saying.”

Mr Brokenshire’s full speech is available through Hansard - 11th February 2015

The endorsement of a Parliamentary Select Committee to review the Emergency Services Sector Reform indicates that the CFSVA is not alone with its concerns, and is appreciative of this opportunity to present matters raised by the majority of CFS volunteers’ directly to Parliament.

The CFSVA has continually made it clear to Minister Piccolo, that CFS volunteers support sector reform, however will not permit sector reform to compromise the CFS Chain of Command, CFS effectiveness, or volunteer culture and will not accept change for the sake of change. The Minister has consistently failed to deliver evidence to support such a radical reform, yet continues to actively progress Cabinet’s agenda.

In a media statement on Sunday 22nd February 2015, the Minister stated that time frames were an issue these could be looked at, and we quote: “The timeframes, we can look at that if that’s and issue. People might say we support the reforms but their a bit too quick for us.”, yet sources reveal that the process is in fact on fast forward, with more emergency sector staff seconded to ESRO to progress the Minister’s sector reform agenda.

Further, the Minister’s letter distributed through the ESRO office on the 24th February 2015, indicates:

“The three corporate areas I propose to begin progressively from **APRIL 2015** are:

- Capability and Support
- Volunteer Services and Community Resilience; and
- Strategic and Corporate Services”

This hardly indicates an intention to slow the process down.

The Parliamentary Select Committee will meet in the coming days, after which details for volunteers who want to provide evidence will be available. Over the last 8 months the CFSVA has heard some serious concerns raised by volunteers, which we will bring to the select committee’s attention. We will also ensure that this opportunity is used in the best interests of CFS volunteers and the South Australian communities they protect..

We ask all volunteers to continue circulating the petition and encourage all volunteers to sign and circulate to family, friends and communities. The petition can be downloaded at: www.cfsva.org.au and be returned to the CFSVA by the 2nd March 2015.

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