

Timothy R. L. Cotsell

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Tim Cotsell and I am a firefighter with the MFB, where I have worked for 10 years and hold the rank of Station Officer.

However, I am writing to you as a concerned resident of Ballarat and the views expressed within this letter are my own personal view and in no way represent the MFB.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, I believe the Select Committee should endorse the proposed Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

I would like to express my support for the proposed fire services reform by way of response to your Terms of Reference:

- a. impact on fire service delivery across Victoria

Fire service delivery across Victoria should be understood as inclusive of:

- Emergency Medical Response
- Fire Education (Prep and Y6)
- Multicultural fire awareness
- Workplace and Warden training
- Community engagement programs
- Dangerous Goods inspections
- Road rescue
- Fire Investigation of suspicious events
- Urban Search and Rescue
- Marine response
- High Angle Rescue
- Community resilience programs; and
- Building essential safety measures compliance inspections (important given the recent London fire)

My belief, from experience, is that pooling Victoria's fire service resources and removing boundaries can only improve and enhance fire service delivery.

- b. effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery

I don't understand this argument? The CFA remains. Volunteers remain. I live in Ballarat and I welcome an integrated Victorian Fire Service.

- c. short term and long term cost impact on fire service provision

What is the cost of a life? What is the cost of a home or property? What is the cost of environmental damage?

Many Victorians are paying for a full time service they don't actually receive!

Don't all Victorians deserve a professional fire service?

- d. underlying policy rationale

I have a number of questions in response to this:

Over the years haven't there been numerous enquiries and independent reports recommending fire service reform?

Are lightweight, composite and non-compliant construction materials in homes and taller buildings all across Victoria resulting in fires that burn quicker than ever?

Doesn't it make sense to use hard data, such as population statistics and call numbers to determine the real requirements for full time, professional service delivery across Victoria? And to review these periodically?

We have had one ambulance service in Victoria for years now, isn't it time for the fire service to do the same?

Much scientific literature and legal opinion across the globe supports the fact that firefighters are exposed to toxic and hazardous environments. Isn't it time that firefighters were protected by Presumptive Rights Legislation?

I respectfully request your consideration to modernise the fire service along with the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect fire service employees.

I would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to talk further about my personal experiences as a professional firefighter and why this reform is so important.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Cotsell  
Ballarat Resident