

Dear Committee,

My name is Mark Gardner and I am a Leading Firefighter with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade with 32 years of service. In that time I have been station in and around Melbourne's South East and operating on the fringe area between the current MFB/CFA boundary.

I would like to submit my submission in favour of the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

Having read the draft legislation I believe there will be significant advantages to Victoria.

I would like to address two main points being the impact on fire service delivery and the short and long term cost related to the fire service provisions.

a) Costs related to Fire Service Provisions.

- The urban growth and expansion in outer Metropolitan Melbourne in particular has seen a large increase in infrastructure and property values, all directly contributing to the Fire Services Levy through rate payments. This means that the expansion of FRV resources into these areas can effectively be fully funded – bringing with it improved response times and community enhancements such as Emergency Medical Response.
- Streamlining of Recruitment and Deployment of Staff  
The consolidation and unification of Career Firefighting Resources within the state will mean greater efficiency, flexibility and cost savings in the recruitment, training, management and deployment of Career Firefighting personal. The duplicitous nature of having parallel organisations effectively doing the same role will be eliminated. A larger pool of personnel to draw from will also result in a greater efficiency in filling vacancies in regional areas which we know to have been difficult in the past.
- The expansion of FRV will have a flow on effect of reducing some of the work load on the ambulance system in outer lying regions, particularly in relation to cardiac arrest and time critical emergencies that are included in the Emergency Medical Response dispatch criteria. This will also generate cost savings to the State.

b) Impact on Fire Service Delivery

- The expansion of FRV should actually improve and increase Victoria's firefighting surge capacity. Currently vehicles and crews are drawn from areas around the state and dispatched to the fire areas – leaving fewer personnel and at time vehicles to protect the "home" communities. If FRV are utilised as the primary firefighting workforce for day to day local incidents and emergencies, then that will mean more CFA resources from that region may be deployed (or rotated through) to meet surge capacity requirements.
- Volunteer "burnout" will be reduced at busy brigades as FRV personnel will attend to day to day tasks including automatic alarm activations, bin fires, cars fires and other low level emergencies. Volunteers can be reserved by when there is a definite need for work and personnel numbers. This will allow volunteers to maintain a better work/life balance and should promote greater long term retention as they are used when they are really needed.

Regards,

Mark Gardner  
Senior Leading Firefighter (Oakleigh Fire Station)

