

Submission to Fire Service Inquiry

My name is Linda Maree Quarrier and I have been the wife of a professional CFA firefighter in an integrated station for 37 years, and a CFA volunteer for 5 years. I reside at [REDACTED].

I write to express my support for the proposed fire services reform.

I have real concerns regarding the safety of not just career firefighters but volunteers working in urban areas of our Victorian communities. The number and diversity of call outs is ever increasing as areas currently serviced by integrated brigades become more densely populated. All Victorian integrated stations are in areas that are now classified as cities. Residents within these areas have the same right to a prompt service as those living in the outdated metropolitan designated areas of Melbourne, but sadly they often do not get this. Business and high density residential growth must be supported by a reliable and professional fire service. Country Fire Authority volunteers were never meant to replace professional teams of fire fighters responding to city based fires. They were designed to fight fires in true country areas and this is what they do exceptionally well.

I constantly listen to people in the community, in the media and in political arenas declaring that our volunteers are as professionally trained as our permanent staff of the fire service and those volunteers and career staff receive the same training. This is simply not true. I have completed Minimum skills over 5 nights after work some years ago and have supported my husband over all of his training and study over the last 37 years to reach the rank of Operation Officer – Officer in Charge. It is not only the height of arrogance and ridiculous to say the two are equally skilled, it is a huge insult to those career staff who study and spend months away from their families to hone and maintain their skills.

I have regularly worked over the past 5 fire seasons in District Incident Control Rooms as admin support for the Duty Officer and resources support officer for ICC teams. I believe the “surge capacity” will not be affected in any way by this bill being passed. It has always been and over recent years becoming more difficult to fill volunteer teams for firefighting duties. This is due to peoples work commitments, physical capacity, skill sets for tanker drivers, crew leaders, strike team leaders and sector leaders and capacity to sustain multiple tours. This has nothing to do with the number of paid or volunteer firefighters but more to do with physical and skills capacity of volunteers. Surge capacity commentators and analysts might do better to look at statistics of average age of fireground based volunteers and physical capacity of volunteers involved in manning surge requirements, capacity to leave paid work environments, interest once the media coverage frenzy has ended, and skill sets needed to meet an often unrealistic demand. As a non-operational volunteer myself, I think some true figures on the number of non-operational volunteers might be more useful than throwing a number like 60,000 firefighters around. I would suggest that there may only be a lot less than 10% of all registered volunteers available for “surge capacity” capacity firefighting. This reform will in no way diminish this group; in fact it will likely add more able bodied firefighters to the pool.

All Victorians, including professional and volunteer firefighters, deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities. I also request that you give consideration to my request to modernise the fire service along with the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect fire service employees. My husband is currently involved in the ongoing medical study of former Fiskville Training Centre staff. Although the presumptive legislation will not change the risk he was exposed to in his time there, it does provide some peace of mind for his future and the future of many career and volunteer firefighters.

The current anti staff media campaign has been horrific for not only career staff but their families as well. We have seen the morale and mental wellbeing of our career staff partners undermined at every turn. They have been used as political footballs by people with little understanding of what it means to go to work in an emergency environment, wait for support to come that often never arrives, make on the spot decisions about the lives of others and themselves, deal with loss and death, deal with abuse brought about by ill-informed people, and maintain a public confidence that they often do not feel. As a group, professional firefighters feel let down by their own organisation, their political parties and their communities in general.

Both fire service reforms are needed to be endorsed and implemented by Parliament before the commencement of the fire season. This is important to all firefighters and their especially their families. Let good people get on with what they have always done; given their all to their communities.

To ensure the safety of all Victorians - I ask you to please seriously consider your support for the proposed fire services reform.

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

Kind regards,



Linda Quarrier



4th July 2017

Position	Career Staff	Volunteer
Recruit Firefighter Selection	Short listing and screening interviews Beep test Physical ability and aptitude tests Senior panel interviews Personality profile (CPI) Medical check National police check Employer referee checks Must hold a valid Victorian HR licence.	National police check Vote by the majority members of a brigade.
Completion of Recruit Firefighter Course	PUAFIR201A Prevent injuries PUAOHS002A Maintain safety at an incident scene PUATEA001A Work in a team PUAOPE002A Operate communication systems and equipment PUAFIR204A Respond to wildfire PUAFIR309A Operate pumps Op Tanker (G) Operate tanker (Generic) PUAVEH001 Drive vehicles under operational conditions END ADV PUMP Advanced pumping endorsement PUAEME001 Provide emergency care PUAEME002 Manage injuries at emergency PUAEME 003 Administer oxygen in emergency situation PUACOM001 Communicate in the workplace PUAFIR208 Community safety activities PUAFIR206 Installed fire safety systems PUAFIR202 Isolated/remote structure fires PUAFIR207 Operate breathing apparatus (open circuit) PUAFIR308 Employ personal protect ion at a hazardous materials incident PUAFIR306 Render Hazmat incidents safe PUAFIR203 Respond to urban fires PUAFIR204 Respond to wildfire PUASAR001 Participate in a rescue operation PUAEQU001 Prepare, maintain and test equipment PUACOM005 Promote a positive organisational image in the community PUACOM006 Plan and conduct public awareness HLTAID001 Provide CPR HLTAID002 Provide Basic life support HLTAID003 Provide first aid HLTAID005 Provide first aid in a remote situation HLTAID006 Provide advanced first aid HLTAID007 Provide advanced resuscitation CFA186 Thermal imaging camera operation OP TIC Struct Operate TI camera in a structural environment OP TIC Urban Operate TI camera in an urban environment CFA042 Traffic management CFA076 Hazmat awareness CFA146 Equal opportunity introduction CFA174 Community education firefighter CFA340 Fire safe kids presenter CFA374 Operate enhanced forcible entry techniques.	PUAFIR201A Prevent injuries PUAOHS002A Maintain safety at an incident scene PUATEA001A Work in a team PUAOPE002A Operate communication systems and equipment PUAFIR204A Respond to wildfire PUAFIR309A Operate pumps END Tanker (G) Operate pump on tanker

Position	Career Staff	Volunteer
Leading Firefighter/ Lieutenant	<p>All of the above plus:</p> <p>PUAOPE010 Operate an automated external defibrillator in an emergency</p> <p>PUAFIR403 Assess building plans</p> <p>PUAOPE004 Conduct briefings/debriefings</p> <p>CFA065 Crew leadership</p> <p>PUAOHS001 Follow defined OHS Policies</p> <p>CFA40401 Into to AIIMS</p> <p>BSBCMM401 Make a presentation</p> <p>PUAFIR307 Monitor hazardous atmospheres</p> <p>PUAOPE003 Navigate in a rural and urban environment</p> <p>ICAU1128 Operate a personal computer</p> <p>ICAU1129 Operate a word processor</p> <p>TAEDEL301 Provide work skill instruction</p> <p>TAEDEL401 Plan, organise and deliver group-based learning</p> <p>TAEDEL402 Plan, organise and facilitate learning in the workplace</p> <p>BSBMGT401 Show leadership in the workplace</p> <p>PUAOPE001 Supervise response</p> <p>PUAFIR314 Utilise fire safety systems</p> <p>PUATEA002 Work autonomously</p> <p>Minimum of 4 years full time employment</p> <p>3 week full time development course</p> <p>2 months station development and personal study</p> <p>1 week of assessments including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Hours policy and legislation exams (CFA Act, CFA Regs, EBA) 1.5 hour Rural command and control assessment 1.5 hour Wildfire exam 1 hour In-tray assessment 20 minute short duration drill presentation assessment Human Relations role play assessment Command and control practical assessments. 	<p>All of the above plus:</p> <p>Demonstrated ability to lead and manage diverse groups in a changing environment. (subjective)</p> <p>Demonstrated high level of interpersonal skills and effective presentation and oral communication skills. (subjective)</p> <p>Vote by the majority members of a brigade.</p>

Position	Career Staff	Volunteer
Station Officer/ Captain	<p>All of the above plus:</p> <p>CFA3.07 Dangerous Substances 2</p> <p>CFA 3.10 Writing Workplace Documents</p> <p>CFA 3.12 Dealing With Conflict</p> <p>CFA 3.13 Negotiation Skills</p> <p>CFA 3.18 Wildfire Suppression 3</p> <p>CFA 3.21 Introduction to Law</p> <p>CFA 3.23 Wildfire Behaviour 3</p> <p>CFA 3.24 Meetings</p> <p>CFA 4.02 Pre Incident Planning 1</p> <p>CFA 4.03 Operational Management</p> <p>CFA 4.04 Incident Control Systems</p> <p>CFA 4.07 Fire Prevention 2</p> <p>CFA 4.10 Administration 2</p> <p>CFA 4.11 Communication 1</p> <p>CFA 4.15 Public relations A</p> <p>CFA 4.16 Leadership and Team Management</p> <p>Minimum of 12 months full time employment as a Leading Firefighter</p> <p>3 week full time development course</p> <p>2 months station development and personal study</p> <p>1 week of assessments including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Hours policy and legislation exams (CFA Act, CFA Regs, EBA) 1.5 hour Rural command and control assessment 1.5 hour Wildfire exam 1 hour Intrain assessment 20 minute short duration drill presentation assessment Human Relations role play assessment 2 x Command and control practical assessments. <p>Station Officers MUST be endorsed by the Chief Officer</p>	<p>All of the above plus:</p> <p>Demonstrated understanding and ability to implement management systems for business planning, finance, training and human resources (subjective)</p> <p>Minimum of two years as a Lieutenant</p> <p>Vote by the majority members of a brigade.</p>