

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees
**INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017**

My name is Kenneth (Ken) Houston and I have been with the Country Fire Authority since 1999.

I first joined as a Volunteer and then joined as a Career Firefighter in 2001 and maintained my volunteer membership until 2005/2006. Whilst as a Volunteer at Plenty CFA I was trained as a Heavy Rescue Driver/Operator and had responded to many various types of callouts for entrapments as far away as Kinglake West to free critically ill patients from motor vehicles.

These incidents first highlighted to me the glaring gaps in response to Motor Vehicle Accidents outside the Metropolitan Fire Brigade area and as such had delayed injured people to be treated at a hospital within the referred to the "Golden Hour". (The Golden Hour is determined by medical trauma units as giving the increased likelihood of survival).

After graduating from CFA Fiskville in May 2001 I was appointed to Springvale Fire Station and was soon transferred to Dandenong Fire Station to be utilised for my Heavy rescue skills for their Heavy Rescue. Since then I have achieved the following;

Chief Officer Commendation 2002- for reviving a severely burnt female removed from her burning home and treating her from the scene to Dandenong Hospital with Ambulance crews.

Leading Firefighter Promotion 2005

Fire Officer Promotion 2009

Senior Station Officer 2013

Operations Officer Level 2 Qualification 2015.

During my time as a Leading Firefighter at Dandenong, Hoppers Crossing and Greenvale I have responded to numerous House Fires, Motor Vehicle accidents, Hazmat Incidents and even a McDonald's Restaurant Fire 2 up (1 Fire Officer & 1 Leading Firefighter or even at as a LFF Dandenong with 1 Firefighter)

Meeting with CFA Chief Officer

My Platoon and I were fortunate enough to have a visit from Chief Officer Euan Ferguson back in April, 2015. During this visit we were able to discuss areas of concern to response to the north side of Craigieburn. In particular Craigieburn Staff 3 up responding to structure fires during week days when there is no Volunteer response during these times. The Chief's response was that this was less than ideal but when I pushed the Chief for a directive as I am unable to perform an internal attack and a search for any occupants until I have minimum of 4 on the fire ground, his shrugged his shoulders.

I also raised the issue of the rapid growth to the North of Craigieburn in Kal Kallo area.

I was able to provide documentation of this growth of where it was, the time frames and the expected numbers of buildings and residential numbers. We then played him a video that the Melbourne Growth Authority had released along with the media release with the Victorian premier turning of the sod ceremony.

To our surprise the Chief Officer of the CFA had no idea that this was occurring within The Country Fire Authority's area.

"This was totally visible on the Chief's face"

This development has been described as being "The new city for Melbourne"

When the Chief was asked what resources, he would be able to allocate to this major development to determine what CFA's plan would be for this area to ensure that it would be suitably protected including for the projected high-rise development, commercial and industrial zoning, his reply was that he would speak to DCO John Haines.

To date there has been no planned strategy for CFA to adapt its Fire Service response from its current Bush Fire response being 2 Wild fire appliances at Kal Kallo Brigade to being able to respond to High Rise Office buildings or to Industrial Factories or to High density housing. I have to mention that in this industrial area is the new Australian Federal Quarantine Facility which is 1km x 1km in size.

Fire Service Response

I have worked in the outer metropolitan CFA area for over 17 years and have seen issues with the inadequate response to structure fire during this entire period.

They range from inappropriate appliances being responded to the type of call: CFA responding to a Factory Fire where Pumpers are required.

Urban house fires where there are insufficient skills mix on the appliance to perform an internal attack, perform a rescue of persons trapped inside and then not having the skills to provide first aid once someone is rescued from the building.

I was a witness to this exact thing in November last year in Wollert where my crew where delayed entering the building because of skills and once my crews located a causality and removed from the house was delayed in receiving first aid due to local crews not having the skills. I am able to provide further details if required of this incident.

I am able to provide further examples if required.

Recent example of CFA / MFB boundaries issues- EMR event- 4-week-old baby dies 5th July, 2107.

Yesterday I responded to an EMR event to a 4-week-old baby, not breathing not responsive.

I was working at Boronia CFA Fire Station for the day. I responded with myself, one Leading firefighter and 2 firefighters, 2 of which are EMR qualified (minimum requirement for EMR response). We arrived at the address in Bayswater North right behind Ambulance MICA 8, CFA crews were first to enter the house and start CPR.

Unfortunately, the baby did not survive!

On reflection, back at station I mentioned to my crew that I thought that MFB FS 26 Croydon might be closer. After looking up google maps it shows that Boronia CFA Station was 5.9km from the house and MFB FS 26 was 4.7km.

MFB FS 26 was 1.2 km closer!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

MFB FS 26 would have definitely beaten the Ambulance crews on scene and started CPR much sooner than we did!

Why weren't MFB 26 responded? CFA/MFB boundary determines which appliance/crews are responded not who is closer.

I am sure that the parents of this poor baby or the coroner would like to hear this evidence?