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To Consultation/DTF@DTF  
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Subject Inquiry into the Firefighter's  
Presumptive Rights Compensation  
and Fire Services Legislation  
Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

5<sup>th</sup> July 2017

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### **Inquiry into the Firefighter's Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017**

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

I am currently a firefighter with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), working at Newport Fire Station in the Western Suburbs of Melbourne. I have been an employee for approximately 2 ½ years, however I have been a public servant for over 11 years. In this time I have acquired a range of experience and qualification varying from a Cert II & III in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations), but also the tertiary qualifications of a Bachelor of Health Sciences (Nursing) and also a Post Graduate Certificate of Critical Care (Emergency).

Although I work in Melbourne, I live in a rapidly growing town in country Victoria of Torquay, which is supported by volunteers in the Country Fire Authority (CFA). Torquay had a growth rate of over 67% over the last 12 years, making it the 4<sup>th</sup> fastest growing area within Australia as per the State of Regional Australia 2015 Report. Unfortunately with rapid expansion and growth, this places an exponential increase in the demand for a fire service, which the current service as it stands is simply unable to provide. An example of this is that Torquay Brigade has an unacceptable failure rate for attendance on scene within the required time frame (as per the key performance indicators). As a resident, this concerns me tremendously. I am aware of how critical the prompt attendance can be in saving life and property of local residents, but also in providing safety for fellow firefighters. The MFB & CFA mission statements are both in line with keeping the community safe and protecting lives and property, and at present it is suboptimal for places where there is rapid population growth. In it's current form, the service is clearly not meeting the expectations to keep the community safe. Therefore, given the population of Torquay is still growing rapidly and will become a more highly dense residential area in coming years, it is simply not possible that it will be able to protect the community (including my own family) if no changes are made.

Alternatively, the Emergency Medical Response (EMR) service that is now provided by career fire services is vital in assisting and maximizing chances of survival for community members experiencing medical events. My experience and expertise in this field has made me only too aware of the critical timeframes required to receive expert medical intervention, and delays in it have catastrophic ramifications, including death. It scares me to think that if it were my loved ones or children involved in a drowning event, or a cardiac arrest, that this essential service would not be available for them in a prompt timeframe, all because my hometown has outgrown its current service provision.

As a firefighter, as well as a resident of Torquay, I am therefore writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

- A reform will provide an improvement in safety not only for the community, but also the employees and volunteers of both the reformed CFA and proposed Fire Rescue Victoria.
- A reform will assist the standardization of career training/specialist response/response standards and equipment across the current career fire services, further enhancing our interoperability.
- The reform will also assist volunteers as it has included a package to assist recruitment and retention within the CFA, including CFA station upgrades
- Operational staff will maintain volunteer support, and the strain that the current disputation in the workplace has caused will be lifted, recreating the positive culture that the fire service once had in the past.

I would like to also note that I wish that my name and identity to remain confidential.

Yours Sincerely,

