



Chris V [REDACTED]

07/07/2017 01:39 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Firefighters presumptive rights
compensation and fire services
legislation amendment (reform) bill
2017 submission

1 attachment



Fire Service Reform.docx

Good afternoon,

Please find attached my submission in regards to the firefighters presumptive rights compensation and fire services legislation amendment (reform) bill 2017.

Regards

Chris Van De Ven

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

Re: Inquiry into the firefighters' presumptive rights compensation and fire services legislation amendment (reform) bill 2017

My name is Chris Van De Ven and I have been a Volunteer firefighter for the Country Fire Authority for the past 17 years in the following fire stations;

- Toolangi F/B – 9 years holding positions of firefighter, 4th Lieutenant and Group Delegate
- Healesville F/B – 5 years holding position of firefighter
- Mt Evelyn F/B – 18 months holding position of firefighter

My professional career has also mainly comprised of emergency services including;

- 8 years as a forest firefighter with Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- 4.5 years as an Emergency Response Team Leader for a mine site in Western Australia

I am currently employed as a career firefighter for the Country Fire Authority at Patterson River Fire Brigade for the last 18 months.

I am writing this submission in support for the proposed fire services reform for the following reasons;

Training and knowledge – By bringing all career firefighters together under one organisation, will enable vast knowledge to be utilised in developing better training packages for all firefighters in Victoria.

There are many areas in Victoria that have a vast variety of environments and different hazards in which firefighters are well equipped with the knowledge on how to respond, ie; high-rise firefighting in metropolitan areas and wild fire firefighting in rural areas. With the 'urban sprawl' continuing to increase into the 'country areas' of Victoria, bringing together the knowledge from both agencies, would increase knowledge to all firefighters, thereby making themselves and all Victorians safer.

The proposed reform allows personnel to transfer between agencies whereby creating a broader knowledge base, that can be applied to the volunteer firefighters of Victoria.

Firefighter Retention- Presently it is only available through an exchange program that firefighters, leading firefighters and officers, transfer between CFA and MFB. If a firefighters circumstances change ie; their partner has a job opportunity in rural Victoria, relocating yourself to be with your partner and family is almost impossible as the exchange program between services are only temporary and open to certain ranks, thus resulting in the possibility of firefighters leaving the aforementioned organisations prematurely. If the proposed reform is successful, this would allow more opportunities for firefighters to transfer from metropolitan Melbourne to rural Victoria and visa versa, thereby promoting a more family friendly work environment and higher retention rate of well trained firefighters.

Cost - At present the two fire services run mostly independently from each other. I believe with the proposed reform, possible areas that could potentially be looked at for future cost saving measures include;

- Stronger bargaining powers in relation to future maintenance and building tenders regarding stations and appliances

- Stronger bargaining power in relation to supply of equipment, uniform and consumables
- Only requiring one enterprise bargaining agreement negotiation
- Administration/development/review of process and documentation will only have to be completed once for career staff

Volunteerism – Volunteers are an integral part of the firefighting capabilities of Victoria by responding to all emergencies in country Victoria and allowing large rapid response to emergencies, also known as surge capacity. In the current proposed reform, this response of surge capacity in my opinion, would not be compromised as there will be no alterations to volunteer brigades, except for the integrated stations, that will only have the staff element removed.

Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) – At present there are two EBA's in Victoria's public sector for the same job, one for the CFA and one for the MFB firefighters. The two EBA's require intense negotiation during the renewal process and costs all parties substantial funds. If only one EBA is required to be negotiated, funds will be saved and at incidents where both agencies are attending, there will be less confusion as to the policies and procedures that are applied at the scene, which results in a more coherent approach to firefighting.

Thank you for the opportunity to table my opinions on the proposed fire services reform and I hope this helps the committee.

Kind regards

Chris Van De Ven

