



[REDACTED]  
07/07/2017 03:06 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF  
cc  
bcc  
Subject Fire Services Reform Select  
Committee Submission

To whom it may concern,

Please find attached my submission for Fire Services Reform Select Committee. I ask that my private details within this submission remain confidential.

Regards



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Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am writing to express my support of the proposed reform of the fire services in Victoria and ask that my private details within this submission remain confidential.

I am a Volunteer and Career Firefighter with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and I work at Morwell Fire Station as a Station Officer.

My involvement with CFA started in 2002 when I joined as a Volunteer at a brigade in the Dandenong Ranges where I spent four years as an active member responding to both local emergencies and major campaign type fires around Victoria. During my time at this brigade my passion for delivering an emergency service to the state of Victoria grew and in 2006 I was given the opportunity to pursue a career in this field as a Career Firefighter for CFA. Throughout my career I have worked at many stations including major outer metro stations and regional stations in provincial towns. I have also spent time at Fiskville and VEMTC Craigieburn as an instructor on Career Firefighter recruit courses.

In 2009 I was rostered on as part of a Ground Observing crew for the day of 7<sup>th</sup> February, later to be known as Black Saturday, and was deployed to the Kinglake area. The experiences of that terrible day will always stay with me and like many other firefighters both Volunteer and Career we pray we never have to experience those conditions again.

Since Black Saturday the Emergency Services Sector has undergone significant change, with the fire services being impacted the most. There have been many inquiries into what we do and how we deliver our service; there have been changes to funding models, new rules and regulations, and changes to Standard Operating Procedures that have impacted both Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) and CFA. We have also seen the introduction of Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) who now oversees and guides emergency management within the state of Victoria. This sector is under constant change.

Up to this point the fire services have adapted to the challenges of change that have been brought upon them, and as community expectations grow and as the population increases in Victoria we, as fire services, must continue to embrace that change. This Bill put before parliament to reform our fire services is the next step in this evolving change. It will deliver a modern service, by all agencies, to the community of Victoria who expect nothing less. As the urban fringe rapidly expands, a guaranteed response to emergencies is expected by the residents who reside there. As provincial towns and cities increase in size the same expectations apply. As a Station Officer who responds into these areas, safety of my crew is paramount in delivering the service demanded by the people we protect.

Unfortunately the trend of hard working volunteer brigades unable to respond within these areas is ever increasing and brigades who ten years ago were able to respond to many of their fire calls now struggle each and every day. This is no fault of volunteers themselves, but is largely due to the pressures of society today. A regional integrated station I recently worked at has a base hospital which services a large area and population. An emergency response to fire alarms at this premise

should include three brigades, however the supporting brigades had indicated that they are unable to respond to every fire call as they have limited numbers for response both at night and during the day. It is daunting as an Incident Controller to be told that at a major facility with such high life risk, on any given day, the supporting brigade there to back you up cannot be relied upon to respond. Evidence of this is seen every day in the heavily populated areas around the state. I believe this Bill being put forward will assist in allowing a guaranteed response of fire trucks within these urbanised areas to provide not only safety of my crew but, in situations like this, the protection of the people we serve.

Please do not view my example as an attack on hard working Volunteer firefighters. As a Volunteer myself I understand the pressures to commit time to train and respond to emergencies, I know the feeling of wanting to do more for my community, but realities of life itself dictates what time I can spend volunteering. That being said, I believe this Fire Services Reform Bill will not affect Volunteers ability to respond to emergencies. It will however complement the service given by Volunteer and Career firefighters within the 35 response areas around the state that are currently covered by the integrated model.

Friends I have who Volunteer and live outside these 35 response areas acknowledge that there will be no effect on how they respond from their brigade, they have told me they see it as business as usual. They know that when the pager goes off they will still be able to get on a truck and respond, whether it be local emergencies or as part of a surge capacity to major incidents. Even friends who volunteer at integrated stations admit there will be no great change, responding as they have always have whenever they receive a fire call.

An opportunity to come out of this reform is the standardisation of training, response and equipment of Career firefighters under one service. In 2014 I had the privilege of being an instructor on the first joint Career Firefighter recruit course held by MFB and CFA at VEMTC Craigieburn. This was a great opportunity to see firsthand the differences between agencies on how we trained for and delivered the same service. There were variances in equipment and techniques and I often thought how simpler it would be if there was a common approach. I completed my time there with one question; "how long until someone realises the benefit of having one Career service?" I believe this Fire Services Reform Bill has answered that question. Even though the finer details have not yet been finalised I am confident that having one Career service will deliver a more refined, better equipped and state of the art Career service to the Victorian people which they can be proud of.

In conclusion I see this Bill as not about destroying the good work or reputation of the fire services we currently have, but is designed to deliver a modern service to the state of Victoria where both Volunteer and Career firefighters continue to work side by side for the betterment of all Victorians.

Yours sincerely,

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[REDACTED]  
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