



Stephen Fankhauser

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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject SUBMISSION FOR THE FIRE
SERVICES REFORM SELECT
COMMITTEE

Please find attached submission regarding the proposed fire service reforms.

Regards



Stephen Fankhauser Leading Firefighter

CFA Mildura – 326 San Mateo Ave Mildura Vic 3500

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Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

My name is Stephen Fankhauser and I have been a professional CFA firefighter for 6 years. I am currently based at Mildura fire station and I write to express my support for the proposed fire services reform.

In Mildura there are currently 6 full time firefighters rostered on shift 24/7, split into 2 crews of 3, to service the greater Mildura area with a population of around 50,000 and to support our surrounding brigades. Our regular initial response area is anywhere within about 40km of Mildura (and frequently up to 100km), and it's not uncommon to arrive on scene 3 up and be the only ones there. The next nearest guaranteed response is 4 hours away at Bendigo.

This is of great concern for two reasons. Firstly our initial support area response of 3 firefighters is not sufficient to safely manage all but the smallest of incidents. This places firefighters in a predicament where they may have to choose between their own safety and attempting to rescue or assist a person in need. Secondly Sunraysia community residents pay a hefty sum in Fire Service Levy, but receive a far lesser benefit for their investment compared to metropolitan areas. Areas such as Mildura are continuing to grow but volunteerism in general is on the decline and the current fire services arrangement is failing to keep up.

The proposed reform will go a long way to improving the emergency response in Mildura and surrounds by adding extra resources to the initial guaranteed response, while also boosting the volunteer brigades capabilities and sparking renewed interest with a significant injection of funding for training and resources. Giving the CFA its volunteer identity back I hope will also be the first step to rectifying some of the damage that has been done to the relationships between volunteer and career firefighters over the last four years.

The proposed change will have no direct impact on the response area, capabilities or role of any station outside of the 35 integrated stations, except for the availability of extra support to the brigades immediately surrounding them.

The proposed reform will also force the standardisation of equipment and procedures of the Victorian fire services. At present in many metropolitan locations MFB and CFA support each other, yet the two have different trucks, breathing apparatus, radios, hoses, training and procedures.

Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this out-dated system, 35 areas are wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and Geelong are just some of the 35 'country areas'.

These areas need to be modernised as they are highly urbanised areas as part of the reform of the fire service. A rapid 8 minute response, with 7 professional career

firefighters on two fire trucks is the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas.

All Victorian public, as well as professional and volunteer firefighters, deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities.

To ensure the safety of all Victorians, including me as a firefighter, I ask you to please seriously consider your support for the proposed fire services reform. Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of your constituents, and all communities in our growing state. Additionally, it will ensure the safety of our firefighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer firefighters because of the enormous urban growth resulting in increased emergency calls.

I also respectfully submit 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. Both are needed to be endorsed and implemented by Parliament before the commencement of the fire season. This is important to myself and my colleagues.

Sincerely

Stephen Fankhauser

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