



Wally Rava [REDACTED]

10/07/2017 02:42 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Fire Service Reform

1 attachment



Fire Services Review Submission.docx

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

Dear all

My name is Wally Rava and I want to give you an insight into my view over my time as a CFA Protective Equipment Technician, a Volunteer Firefighter and a member of the public/community. I have 11 years of volunteer firefighter experience and have been employed by the CFA for the last 10 years and currently hold a grade 4 Technician level classification.

I live in Manifold Heights a small suburb in the west of Geelong with my wife and two young daughters. I work at the CFA State Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing Management Centre in the neighbouring suburb of Corio which is north of Geelong.

I volunteer with Geelong West Fire Brigade and have held a number of rolls in the past 11 years with over 250 fire calls ranging from Motor Vehicle Accidents, Structure Fires, Assisting Ambulance Victoria, Hazardous Materials, Bushfire Campaigns, Grass and Scrub to list just a few.

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

My view from a CFA Protective Equipment Technician perspective.

As a CFA Technician our role is to support the operational body of the fire service state-wide. We provide expertise in regards to the servicing of equipment, calibrating gas detection and after hour operational support during and post incidents. We assist in providing/delivering training to both staff and volunteers and hold a very strong relationship and trust with all operational firefighters around the state. We service station by station, district by district and visit many fire stations both staff and volunteer. We also offer our expertise services to our emergency services partners MFB and SES.

In my time as a technician visiting volunteer stations, I have had the opportunity to speak to a number of volunteers and engage in the standard cfa/fire fighting chit-chat and have noticed the similar concerns around the state. Aging members who want to slow down and a non-availability or very small number of younger generation members wanting to join. This becomes more obvious when you look at the brigade annual members photos on the station walls and you fear for the future of some stations. Other conversations have been based around the very equipment I service and the very reason for my visit to these stations.

- Breathing apparatus left to go mouldy in lockers of trucks and nobody is any the wiser of how long they have been like that. Posing health risk to themselves and my work colleagues.
- Medical equipment such as defibrillators with flat batteries and out of date heart start pads. This is not the ideal situation you would want if the matter this was going to save someone's life.
- Non CFA approved Oxy Vivas stowed on trucks that have no service history and verification as to whether they are operating as to manufacturers specifications.
- Gas detectors have left to go flat. Left unchecked.
A disastrous situation when a you are putting your own members at risk on the fire ground.
- Organising a brigade training night and get acknowledgment from 10 to 20 members available, then drive 2 – 5 hrs. and preparation only to have 2 members show up.

These are just a few of the issues we deal with day in, day out.

These have all got the same reasons;

- We just don't have the time like we once had
- Getting to old for this
- I'm not trained in this equipment
- We only train once a month
- No Instructors available
- District have no money for training

We cannot have emotions decide the service the community demands and pays for.

My View from a Volunteer Perspective

I have been volunteering for the past eight years in the very busy town of Geelong. With Geelong ever expanding and fire calls have been forever increasing it has always been an exciting adventure. My first 5-6 years were all about gaining qualifications, turning out to fire calls and constant training. We train 2 Mondays a month, check our truck inventory every 3rd Monday and brigade meetings every 1st Monday of the month. If I had to be honest we refresh our qualifications at best 3 times a year. This is mainly because of budget constraints or equipment availability. We support both our staff brigades in our patch and equally they support us.

I can understand why the staff are seeking '7 firefighters dispatched to fire calls' I too would like to have the confidence that assistance would be there when I needed it and the right qualifications during any fire call I may be at.

I wish we had ample qualified trainers at our brigade to offer the same standard of training week in week out, but these are not always available or limited.

Enter my first born and volunteering had slowed down considerably. My availability for fire calls was spasmodic and training suffered too. I became too unreliable and could not guarantee my availability. Enter my second born and my brigade activity has almost stopped. I now only attend brigade meetings once a month if that! Most if not all my

qualifications as a volunteer no longer are important, yet if I was to respond today, I would most probably be expected to use those without any one questioning anything. Unfortunately it's how it is. We don't always get a full truck, we don't always get the right qualifications on board, and depending when/what time the fire call is, we don't all ways respond to fire calls. This is not bashing my brigade, these are unfortunately facts. Most have young families, others are now aging and looking after grandchildren. I wish it could be different.

Why I believe we need this reform

We need this reform to standardise the emergency services. We have 3 emergency services in Victoria. CFA Staff, CFA Volunteer, MFB Staff. Two of the Three have strict standards in training and accreditation the other has not.

Cfa Volunteers do not all have the same training as I do as a staff technician or as the CFA or MFB staff. This is fact.

These concerns are being raised by a number of volunteers I have the opportunity to speak to and it is not 'Volunteer bashing' and I am sick of this being used by a minority seeking to distract from facts.

Having the CFA as a 'Volunteer only' service will allow CFA to focus on addressing how to better improve volunteer training as at the moment all the focus is on the staff and whatever time/money is left over the rest is for the volunteers.

The Scaremongering by the political parties and VFBV has to stop.

- 7 staff firefighters on the fire ground before any volunteer can commence fire fighting. Absolute rubbish and has some towns living in fear.
- CFA will not be able to implement 'Surge Capacity'. Again absolute rubbish.

Large/Longer duration fire calls are classified from Level 1 – 3. Level 1 is run directly from the incident controller at the incident if he requires extra manpower he will directly ask Vic fire via the radio to page the next supporting brigades.

Larger Levels 2 & 3 are usually run from the from the IMT's set up around the state and these are normally teams consisting of Corporate Staff, Volunteers Operational Staff and other partner emergency services i.e. Vic Pol, SES and Parks. This is where it is determined whether 'Surge Capacity' is determined based on need. Has nothing to do with the Reform or UFU. Members will simply be paged requesting there availability.

- No Training available for Volunteers. Again Rubbish. Volunteers have a number experienced members able to deliver accredited training. If there is a gap CFA can establish opportunities to address this.

Fire calls are increasing significantly year after year. Population has gone through the roof and is set to increase even further putting more strain on the emergency services our community in Geelong. Geelong itself deserves better, more reliable fire service. We pay our levies no different to those in metro Melbourne, yet we don't get the same reliability. I want my family safe at all times. I don't want to wait that extra 5-10

minutes for my volunteer brigade to turn up because they are waiting for drivers or BA wearers.

The Herald Sun through its disgraceful play on words and biased scaremongering has destroyed the Victorian emergency services and this has to stop. I no longer am able to wear my uniform in public because of the Verbal bashing I have received, assuming that I am a unionist thug. I am viewed differently at my own brigade now most of the time sit there answering the concerns of my fellow members to correct the wrong or explain why the Politicians have chosen to destroy the Victorian emergency services for cheap votes. Bloody Disgraceful. I am ashamed of our political system. I nothing more than childish behaviour at an adult level.

We need to move to modernise our Emergency Services as has our other states before our next disaster, we cannot continue to drag this out any further. This is people's lives at risk, it's not a game.

Yours sincerely,
Wally Rava

