



Wayne Kneeshaw

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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Fire Services Reform select committee

Please find attached my submission for the Fire Services Reform select committee.

If you have any questions, please contact me.



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Protecting lives and property



cfa.vic.gov.au

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Assistant Clerk Committees,

Re; Inquiry into the Fire-fighter's Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Service Legislation Amendment (reform) Bill 2017.

My name is Wayne Kneeshaw, I have been involved with the fire service (CFA) my whole life. I was born into a household where my father was a Volunteer Member as well as being an employee with CFA in the Vehicle Manufacturing Plant. I was one of the fortunate members who were able to take my hobby to a career. I commenced my CFA service as an 11 year old (junior) serving 12 years as a volunteer before transitioning to become a career fire-fighter, I am about to complete 30 years as a career fire-fighter.

During my time with CFA both as a career and volunteer fire-fighter I have seen many changes, but none compare with where we find CFA today. I believe that the proposed changes to the fire service delivery in Victoria would benefit the Community at large. The current political situation is side-tracking the membership and community and seems to be about who can gain the most votes, compared to what CFA has held dear for so long and that is to serve the community.

The following, are a few of my observations as to where I see CFA is today.

Most Volunteer Fire Brigade areas are 'dormitories', where most members don't work in the area. This creates an issue where manning of vehicles is concerned. If you look at the 'staff' model who support some CFA brigades and their communities, you have a crew that have a level of competence that has been determined to achieve a safe outcome for the community (24 hours a day). This 'competence/skill' level has changed over time and includes the criteria/skill set of crew who can perform the tasks most commonly encountered. To undertake promotion there are modules to complete before you progress, including assessment by peers to see if you are capable of performing the expected roles you are trying to achieve. With the 'volunteer' model (respond when available), there are no set parameters (other than 'endorsed' driver and 'minimum skills') as to who is on vehicle/s prior to responding to an incident. In most cases a Lieutenant or Crew Leader will respond in the vehicle, but many times there are no Lieutenants or Crew Leaders available and the crew will respond the most senior member there (no skills predetermined) undertaking the responsibility for 'crew leader'. It is expected that the volunteer leadership group will have the required skills to undertake the role, but this is not always the case and there are no pre-requisite skills mix before undertaking the role of Lieutenant only that they will acquire the guidelines for skill of that rank.

All brigades have a required 'turnout time' to respond to an incident once they have been notified. This is to endeavour to have a vehicle and crew are responded, if a brigade 'fails' to respond another can be notified to respond ensuring a brigade will turn up to an incident. This reporting structure is broken, with a brigade who does not respond at all, not getting recorded to this effect. The only time that is recorded is the time it takes a brigade to 'get out the door', this is the only time anything gets recorded. This system allows false data to be recorded showing that a brigade who regularly fails to show good response when they respond.

After spending some time within the CFA training department (2 years), I found the level of some members out there to be in need of encouragement and guidance. Therefore I joined my local brigade. With my background, I believe that the members and community could benefit from my experience within CFA. During my time there, my experience and guidance was used and reflected upon, especially in the area of training as well as at incidents. From the current situation, some members have created a tension that I found detrimental to my health and therefore tendered my resignation. This was with regret to my community, that I found myself in this position.

Support to other Brigades (Rosebud Area);

1. While supporting a local Brigade in a crew of 3 (minimum crewing at this time) arrived at a going house fire behind the local primary brigade. The request was made to us (supporting brigade) for '2 in BA', when we arrived at the job we found a crew of 3 on scene. This being an OIC, pump operator and 1 BA operator. Our standing orders require a minimum crew of 2 to enter a building for safety. As we were the only additional crew responded, there were a total of only 6 members on scene total.
2. Local call to a 'house fire persons reported' this means that it is highly likely that the house on fire has residents inside. We were lucky this night as we had a minimum crew of 4 with one member just graduated from their recruit course as an extra (5 total). We were able to gain access to the house, find the resident and remove them for Ambulance Victoria crews to revive them. The first additional supporting crew took 16 minutes to arrive on scene. By this time the resident had been removed and the fire 'knocked' down.

Response Rosebud –

Staff –

Guaranteed qualifications of members responding, as well as an Station Officer has undertaken 2 assessable qualifications and a Leading Fire-fighter who has undertaken 1 assessable qualification, with all fire-fighters undertaken a 19 week recruit course (current time required) then ongoing structured 'modules'.

Volunteers –

Captain and Lieutenants have had no formal set of qualifications to undertake position only guidelines. Members responding could be comprised of only members who have undertaken a 'minimum skills' course, therefore have no structural (internal, i.e. rescue from inside a structure) fire fighting capacity.