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07/07/2017 04:50 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF  
cc  
bcc  
Subject SUBMISSION INTO THE ENQUIRY  
INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS'  
PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS  
COMPENSATION AND FIRE  
SERVICES LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017

1 attachment



Assistant Clerk Committees submission 2017.docx

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,  
Please find attached my submission into the presumptive rights compensation and fire services legislation amendment (reform) bill 2017.

I request that my submission remain confidential. This is due to the fact that I live in a CFA volunteer area and I do not wish to suffer any more, or have my family suffer any more, due to being a member of a union who supports fire services reform in this state. I am happy for any parts of my submission to be reproduced as needed, but not published publicly with my name attached.

Regards

[Redacted]

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Dear Assistant Clerk Committees.

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

**I request that my submission remain confidential due to the fact I live in a CFA volunteer area, I am happy for any parts of my submission to be reproduced as needed but not published publicly with my name attached.**

My name is [REDACTED], I am a MFB employed Leading Fire Fighter based at Fire Station 5 (Broadmeadows) During my seven year career I have also been rostered at other stations including F.S. 1 (Eastern Hill), 6 (Pascoe Vale), 7 (Thomastown), 9 (Somerton), 10 (Richmond), 12 (Preston), and 16 (Greensborough). Across the course of my employment I have attended many and various incidents and worked alongside CFA staff and volunteers, DWELP fire fighters, Police and Ambulance. I have fought all types of fires, attended car accidents, hazmat incidents, industrial/workplace accidents and incidents, rescued animals and saved lives through the early intervention after heart attacks by doing CPR and using a defibrillator at EMR calls.

I live in Hurstbridge where people that I used to count as mates will no longer talk to me as a result of this ongoing dispute. I have been in heated arguments with members of my extended family over this dispute. I have also been yelled at by members of the public whilst out and about in my suburb. I no longer attend my local football club where I had previously played football and volunteered my time for over 25 years due to this dispute. The way this has been handled from day one has been a disgrace and I feel I am not alone in looking forward to it ending.

I am writing this submission in the support of the proposed reforms to fire services as I believe they are in the best interests of all Victorians. How can any increase of funding and support for paid and volunteer fire fighter be a bad thing? Indeed, the 35 stations which are currently CFA staff and will join the proposed Fire Rescue

Victoria will not lose their volunteers, and volunteer stations will get additional funding. The volunteer staff will also get a state of the art new training facility to replace the toxic cesspool at Fiskville (which by the way, I also trained at and believe would still be operating and making people sick if it were not for UFU intervention). If any volunteers leave the service due to this reform it will just show how little regard those volunteers have for the safety of Victorians, and how for them Firefighting is instead about stoking their own egos. As far as I can see there will be no change to the roles and duties of CFA volunteers in this state and if anything they will be better looked after by these changes.

This dispute was started by the Napthine government's concerted attack on my conditions of employment and the safety of Victorians. Their efforts to take away my EBA entirely, by declaring it illegal, were thankfully defeated at Fair Work however they also stripped \$66 million of funding to fire services in this state. In doing so I believe they could have irreparably damaged fire services in this state. The reason that their attack on fire services failed was due to the efforts of fire fighters and union members who not only gave up our time but our money (union fees and litigation levy) to fund this fight. Furthermore, I think it is disgusting that as a home owner I have ended up funding both sides of this dispute, as my fire services levy has been used to pay the legal fees of those wanting to attack the UFU. It is a shame to think of all this wasted money that could have provided so much more to the Victorian community in terms of equipment, training and more fire fighters to protect us all.

I want this dispute to end not just for financial reasons and not just for the health and wellbeing of my colleagues and I, but to help improve fire services in this state. Currently people that live in outer Melbourne suburbs get an inferior service to those who live in inner Melbourne. The introduction of a panel to assess where the staff/volunteer boundary should be is one of the best ideas to come from this reform. Everyone pays a fire service levy, but some people don't get a guaranteed 8 minute response time, and some don't get E.M.R. certified responders so if the local ambulances are tied up, you are on your own. With volunteer crews, there is no guarantee that those who turn up to a fire will even be qualified to don a breathing

apparatus and conduct a primary search of a burning building. If there is an occupant trapped inside, they are on their own. That is what I put up with where I live in Hurstbridge. My family, my wife and children don't get the same level of service I provide to other people.

I have witnessed Epping CFA volunteers book 'on scene' at a Fire Alarm at St Monica's College Epping without actually being present (to ensure the job was 'theirs' to control). This was discovered because Pumper tankers 11 and 9 were actually on scene and investigated, but when they tried to provide a false alarm wordback, they were told by the Vic Fire (CFA radio operator) that the wordback from the scene had to be from the CFA officer on scene, as they were the controlling agency. This was a bit hard to make happen as they had yet to arrive.

I have witnessed Plenty CFA volunteers turn up at another Fire Alarm at the Nillumbik shire offices after a stop word back had been given by the incident controller (my station officer). They still proceeded lights and sirens endangering other road users for no good reason, and when questioned as to why they would engage in such dangerous behaviour they justified it by stating that they need to get to calls otherwise "they will not be issued with turn out gear" and also that "the driver needed the practice". I am still, a couple of years later, shaking my head at both those statements. It always seems to professional fire fighters that volunteers can engage in activities that put the public at risk but they are never taken to task as they are "just volunteers". That attitude unnecessarily puts lives at risk. Also why shouldn't they get all the training and turn out gear they need?

When stationed at Fire station 9 (Somerton), we often turned out to Craigieburn with Staff CFA. Often that appliance would be unavailable and we generally had to ask for another MFB appliance to attend these calls to ensure if there was an incident there would actually be 7 on the fire ground. This number is very important as if I enter a burning structure to either extinguish a fire or perform a rescue I know that a crew will be outside ready to rescue me if that need arises. That is not to say we

don't work with less than seven on the fire ground. We get to work regardless, but it is always reassuring to know back-up is on its way. This luxury isn't currently extended to all professional fire fighters in Victoria.

I was involved in a burn over of my appliance Water Tanker 5 at Epping during a large bush fire in January of 2016. Ourselves and Pumper Tanker 7 were fighting the fire, the Senior Station Officer on board PT7 was requesting more trucks via Vicfire only to be told only the CFA incident controller can make that call. The CFA incident controller wasn't responding to our requests so our SSO tried to get some more trucks via VKN8 (MFB radio operators) only to be told as it was a CFA job they couldn't do this. As a result a fire that two more appliances could have knocked down quickly and safely got very large and after a wind shift turned quickly back towards us, if it wasn't for the burn over protection system sprays on our appliance this incident could have had fatal consequences.

This isn't an exercise in bashing volunteers. There are also plenty of occasions where I have worked with them and had a positive outcome. If they truly cared about the safety of the public though they would welcome these reforms as a more integrated fire service working within the same operating procedures with matching equipment and one Fire Service Control Centre is better and safer. Specialized urban firefighting training and equipment where all responders have the same qualifications and training. There is still a role for volunteers, but why should densely populated areas in my area like Doreen, South Morang, Diamond Creek, Research and many other suburbs further afield have a second rate service. They don't need to lose their volunteers, but having more paid staff will lift the pressure on these volunteers. The guarantee of two truck turn outs also helps guarantee my own safety on the fire ground. Volunteers will always have a role in firefighting in Victoria and their selfless input should be celebrated, but why does this discussion always turn in to 'how they are going to lose out to a greedy union' rather than 'how can we best ensure the safety of all Victorians?' As a very proud member of the MFB I am more than a little disappointed that the MFB as a proud organization with 125 years

of history will cease to exist, but accept that this is what needs to happen for the safety of Victorians.

I hope I have shed some light onto what has been a stressful time for me and my family and that I have helped move this dispute closer to resolution

Regards

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