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

1 attachment



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Please find attached my view on the proposed reform.  
Sincerely

[REDACTED]

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

**Inquiry into the Firefighters Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire services Legislation Amendment (reform) Bill 2017**

I am [REDACTED], a Station Officer (SO) within the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade. I have completed 12 years' service, and during that period have specialised in Hazardous Materials Response, Marine Fire Fighting, Heavy Rescue and am one of approximately 100 Long Duration Breathing Apparatus Specialists within the Brigade.

I live within the suburb of Officer and work predominately within the South Melbourne area, but have recently spent time within the Croydon area east of Melbourne.

I also have a volunteer background within the Country Fire Authority, of which I have responded with Rowville, Narre Warren and Officer Fire Brigades. I have been providing this contribution for approximately 16 years.

I would like to highlight that this submission only represents my personal beliefs of the reform and in no way constitutes the beliefs of the organisation with whom I am currently employed.

I would like to also have it understood that I write this submission confidentially.

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

My first point is that I am strong advocate for having a minimum number of skilled firefighters within fire incidents by a specified time. Having a minimum of 7 firefighters to attend a structure fire, an example of an incident which requires a time critical response for potential life rescue, is imperative.

Why?

Because it provides for a significant response capability as well as providing for a level of fire ground (area in which an emergency incident is taking place) safety that should not be compromised.

As a station officer the responsibility that I embrace is one of incident accountability, including the overall safety of the incident and maintaining a structured incident management system that focuses on managing the dynamics of a fluid environment such as a fire ground. Maintaining a minimum of 7 skilled firefighters, provides for a dedicated firefighter (an officer) to manage the incident without compromise to their

position, it provides for an initial breathing apparatus crew (2) commonly the first crews to enter the structure under threat of fire to have another crew (2) on standby in case they are requiring assistance or rescue. This allows the remaining 2 fire-fighters to manage medical response to those effected by the incident and to manage and maintain safe pumping and water operations for the emergency.

Currently the structure of the fire services doesn't cater for this necessity very well, as there is no minimum requirements for all CFA volunteer fire fighters (in urban areas) to be trained in structural fire fighting, have adequate breathing apparatus skillsets and be competent in search and rescue techniques. Consequently when I respond into some urbanised areas I cannot be assured as to what competency of fire fighting crews I will be working with. This alone compromises the safety on the fire ground and has the ability to delay vital rescue actions of fire crews.

As an example, to ensure that we can maintain a level of capability to ensure that such a response structure is delivered in urbanised or high risk areas, MFB with CFA career staff often will respond into heavily such areas, with multiple appliances. This is to ensure that there are enough adequately trained fire crews responding to the fire ground to instigate fire-fighting operations within an expedient timeframe. These areas are commonly not primary areas that are covered by a career staff, but are areas that are covered by a volunteers brigade and to their credit have requested that staff respond and have amended their assignment rules to demonstrate so.

The simple perspective that some volunteer brigades are assigning career appliances to turn out to their primary areas, and on occasions placing the response of the career appliances as priority over closer neighbouring volunteer brigades highlights to me that a staff response is not just seen as an asset, its viewed as essential to provide a level of coverage that the community would expect.

I don't say this lightly, as I admire what the volunteers achieve, but there has to be a point at which fire ground safety, accountability and capability with a minimum of 7 skilled firefighters (minimum) is the benchmark of service within highly populated, urbanised areas of the community.

I keep referring to skilled fire-fighters, so for the benefit of the review committee I recommend that an investigation into what the minimum skill sets are of both a CFA volunteer, to initially respond to emergencies and compare that to a career fire-fighter, and then please consider what the community deserve and expects in their community. Please also consider the response times that career staff can provide for the community and the added skillsets that these response times can accommodate, such as emergency medical response with Ambulance Victoria.

My second point is that under the current reform ideology, volunteer firefighters outside of the integrated staff areas (35 stations) will not be affected by the proposed Fire Recue Victoria (FRV) delivery model. This proposed FRV model is about providing career firefighters of 2 services a chance to amalgamate, to increase

cohesion and capability within the heavily urbanised and high-risk communities they care for. It is envisaged that FRV responses will not affect those CFA stations outside of the 35 integrated stations. In fact it is proposed that the remaining CFA stations will see no difference in their response model at all. Hence the ability for the CFA to provide surge capacity will not be affected, in fact their turnout requirements as they are today for local and support calls will not be affected.

I would also like to highlight the point of a standardised career fire fighting force and the benefits. Currently the two services are utilising different fire fighting appliances, fire fighting equipment and have been trained to different standards. As a result, the creation of FRV would improve the interpretability between all career stations and would provide for a cohesive and streamlined state resource in its time of need, it only seems logical.

Ultimately, in conclusion I would like to suggest the review of this Bill considers one key factor above all else. "What is the best fire service delivery and capability model for the community of Victoria? Could the state have better?"

**Personal Note:**

I would like to personally emphasise the effect the current enterprise bargaining negotiations has had on myself and my family. Through the current process, I have been personally insulted and felt that the profession I have chosen as a career is worthless. To be honest I feel that many aspects of the government think that we are simply a hindrance, that the fact that we are trying to improve our capability within the state and the conditions that we work under are not regarded as important. The fact that we have been labelled as thugs, money hungry and entitled has affected me deeply. The lies that have been published about our profession has also upset my wife and extended family. These agreements negotiations and the method of which my employers have managed it has been destructive and disappointing. I believe the only way forward for us as a brigade to move on from such a destructive organisational state is to start again. Hence the formation of FRV could not only be beneficial for the community but the brigade work place as well.

On a final note, the Bill and its ability to provide for presumptive cancer legislation is beneficial to both career and volunteer firefighters and should be considered as a vital care package to all firefighters that respond in the state of Victoria.

I appreciate your time  
to read this perspective,

Sincerely

