

Trevor Collins



2nd June 2017

Fire Service Bill Select Committee
Department of the Legislative Council
Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Fire Service Bill Select Committee:

My name is Trevor Collins, I am a Leading Fire fighter currently working at Sunbury Fire Station for the Country Fire Authority (CFA). I joined the CFA career ranks in August 2011 where I trained as a recruit at Fiskville. I also Volunteer in my home town of Newbridge and have done so since I joined as a Volunteer when I turned 18 before this I was introduced to CFA as a junior bridge member in 1994 where I competed in fire brigade running competitions with the Tarnagulla Urban Fire Brigade.

I have been involved with both urban and rural brigades and in the past few years I have also seen the impacts of the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) Dispute, how this has impacted on career staff and volunteers alike.

Where I live, everyone joins the CFA because it's either your farm on fire or your neighbour's farm, there is no politics, no bullshit, and everyone stops what they are doing and helps out. That's what my community does and that's what my community will always do. There is no care what colour the truck is, what badge it has on the side, or who sits in the truck all that matters is that someone is coming to help.

I talk to other members and they feel the same, the hype about changes to the fire service are non-existent to rural Victoria, if anything they are looking forward to increased funding and increased training opportunities.

If my parents farmed the way their parents did 100, 50 or even 20 years ago we would be broke, bankrupted and homeless. I cannot believe that it has taken so long to review Victoria's fire service arguably one of the most fire dangerous regions of the world.

I have worked at various different CFA fire stations across the state of Victoria, when I started the crewing on shift was three, a Station Officer, Leading firefighter and a firefighter. With only three staff on shift we consistently were required to work outside of our own CFA Standard Operating Procedures and Standing Orders, which the CFA stipulate

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“Shall not be broken”. Which is a major safety issue, with the assistance of the United Firefighters Union (UFU) we are gradually improving our work practices, minimum crewing schedules, Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) just to mention a few.

If the Government, CFA and UFU work together in a consultative process with calibration of all party ideas; will see my employment, my working relations with all stakeholders and my volunteer role change towards a community needs approach to bring this old model of fire service into modern times that can cope with the changes in our cities, country towns and the growing rural/urban interface that is forever expanding around the major infrastructure that is invested by government, private industries and housing our community members.

I ask that you consider my following points:

- Give the community reliable service, guaranteed service to a set standard.
- Look into the future of Victoria and deliver a service that can evolve with the growth and increased risk.
- Look at trends of volunteer service and pressures associated with increased call rates.
- Consider factual response time/rates to establish where volunteer systems require improvements.
- Consider my work, my contribution I make every day, support my need for a EBA and give me confidence in my management for the future 30 years I intend to work and support my communities.
- Take away the emotional connections and work on securing a world class fire service for Victoria.
- Increase in specialised response capabilities, including infrastructure, plant and equipment and training that Victorian fire fighters receive.

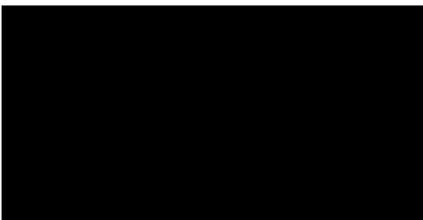
With regards to presumptive legislation I believe that any honest person would welcome the fact that in the unlucky event, my role as a firefighter protecting lives and property is a risky profession. Although if I were to contract cancer in doing my job as safely as I can I should receive some protection and support, even know this will not cure me but it can assist me or my family in our time of need. I cannot stress enough the angst and disappointment I currently have, that if I contract cancer as part of my job in saving the lives of strangers, I then need to prove and fight to gain any support. This needs to change. I have and will continue to be personally exposed to fellow colleagues and firefighters that contract cancer. I see firsthand the constant worry that we face each and every day. You can help us by supporting the firefighter's presumptive rights compensation. So I plead, please do.

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In summary I believe that as a Victorian citizen, a volunteer and career firefighter we desperately require your action. Your assistance to bring reform to our fire services and include presumptive rights for firefighters will increase support in my work place so I can perform my role, lifesaving or otherwise to the highest standard I can.

I will not accept a second grade fire service with hidden misrepresented flaws that could cost the community their lives, my shift mates or heaven forbid my own life. Please put an end to the harsh dispute over my conditions at work, and take away the political agendas. You can create Victoria's fire service to meet today's risks, overcome tomorrow's limits and ensure the health and safety of all firefighters in Victoria. Please set the standard that I can be proud of.

Sincerely,



Trevor Collins