

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Ross Male [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 2 July 2017 3:21 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Submission for Firefighters reform Bill Inquiry.

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

My Name is Ross William Male; I am a Senior Station Officer at Morwell Fire Station. I have been a career firefighter with the Country Fire Authority for 30 years. Prior to this I was a volunteer firefighter with the Mornington brigade for approximately 3 ½ years.

In my area of Morwell we are fortunate to have Traralgon career firefighters support us to emergency call outs in Morwell and vice versa. However when we respond north, south or west of Morwell we are relying on support from volunteers and unfortunately there are many times when that support is lacking. This is not the fault of the volunteers, they have other life commitments such as family and work; it is the fault of the current system.

In Morwell I've seen first-hand what happens when volunteer support is lacking. It is very difficult it is to manage an incident with only 3 career firefighters on scene, especially when these scenes can be quite chaotic. I've also seen how effectively an incident can be managed when you have a second career truck arriving shortly after you with another 3 - 4 career firefighters on it.

As a station that has career firefighters, we also provide support to our neighbouring volunteer brigades to alarms and fires. Our neighbouring brigades have admitted that that at different times they do have difficulty getting enough members to respond to emergency calls due to work and other commitments. This is not a lack of commitment by these members but a reflection of modern life for volunteer members that have other priorities at different times. I have been part of a responding crew attending structure fires in our surrounding areas and travelled 10 – 20 minutes and still been the first appliance on scene with little or no further support coming. With minimum crewing on our appliances this can be dangerous having firefighters working internally within a burning building with no further support coming. With 7 career firefighters dispatched to events such as this, safety concerns will be greatly reduced. If sufficient volunteer crews attend then the additional career support can be cancelled and returned. If volunteers are unable to respond then the career crews can manage the event safely.

When asked by friends, relatives and members of the public about the current events within our fire service, I use the following example of how out dated the current Volunteer response is in Victoria's outer suburbs and regional centres: - 50 years or so ago when my father was alive, he was a Volunteer Fire Fighter as well as being a self-employed Carpenter in the community of Mornington where I grew up.

Back in those days, if there was a fire call; my father would drop his tools in the front yard of his client for the day and go and deal with whatever the emergency was. He would then return a couple of hours later to continue his work, his client would generally not complain, Dad would finish his work and the town would continue to operate. Considering that back in the 1960's the population of Mornington was approx. 7500 and the local brigade would handle approx. 100 odd fire calls per year, the system of the local CFA brigade worked quite well. Fast forward to today, the same town has a population of approx. 145,000. Mornington Brigade handles approx. 500 to 600 calls per year. The brigade is now an integrated brigade with a crew of 4 professional firefighters on duty, but still reliant on volunteer response. I don't think the local self-employed carpenter would have the same reception when he returned to his tools after attending a call out!! (If his tools were indeed still there!!). To this day the system by which CFA operates has remained largely unchanged from 60 years ago.

These reforms should in no way effect CFA volunteers in the way that they respond and train in their communities. CFA as an organisation will remain with its proud history and dedicated membership. Volunteers will still respond to everyday events in these communities and when major emergencies happen, CFA Volunteers and career firefighters will all respond and work side by side as they have always done. The surge capacity of CFA volunteers will remain unchanged.

The only change will be for the 35 communities that have out grown the current CFA integrated system in place. Fire services reform will provide a safer community for these areas.

Yours sincerely,

Ross Male

Ross W. MALE



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