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07/07/2017 10:24 AM

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To Whom it may concern.

Regarding the restructuring of Victoria's fire services as contemplated by the [Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment \(Reform\) Bill 2017](#).

Please find attached my submission to the committee.

I am happy for my submission to be made public on the proviso I remain anonymous.

Please note, this submission is to replace my eSubmission (which I withdraw) that was lodged earlier 03/07/17.

Regards

[Redacted signature block]

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that we work on and pay my respects to them, their culture and their Elders past, present and future.

The MFB is committed to minimising its impact on the environment. Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.

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

CONFIDENTIAL

I am a professional Fire-fighter of 28 years experience employed by the MFB, I hold the rank of Senior Station Officer. I have been a volunteer for most of my adult life, mostly in Surf Life Saving but I have also volunteered for my local CFA and Coast Guard. I make the following submission in support of the Fire-fighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017 incorporating the establishment of Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) for the following reasons;

1) FIRE-FIGHTER SAFETY

I don't like the safety of urban fire-fighters being put at risk by systems that obstruct them from implementing well established, globally accepted, Breathing Apparatus (BA) procedures.

It is well accepted and encompassed within the procedures of both the MFB and CFA, that in order to commit a BA crew to enter a structure in a fire situation there must be as a minimum:

1. An incident Controller
2. A BA Entry Officer/Safety Officer
3. A BA Crew consisting of a minimum of 2 fire-fighters
4. A standby BA crew consisting of a minimum of 2 fire-fighters dressed in BA ready to enter
5. A pump operator

This is achieved at all times within the MFB area where two MFB appliances are responded to a call. The Incident Controller is assured that two fire-fighters dressed in BA will get out of the second appliance responded as back up to the first crew.

This is not the case if the backup appliance is CFA volunteer crewed. Not all volunteers are BA trained. Not all volunteer appliances respond 100% of the time when paged. In this scenario the current system puts great pressure on the Incident Controller to disregard safety procedures and commit crews without assured backup.

If the Incident Controller is not assured of BA backup, procedurally he/she should not commit crews to enter a structure. This is difficult to do if the home owner is in the vicinity watching everything they own burn or worse, they know a loved one is inside the structure.

Restructuring the fire services as proposed will provide assurance that long standing, globally accepted BA procedures can be implemented by any Incident Controller attending a structure fire within the urban FRV area. This provides the means of efficiently and safely confining a fire to the room of origin and/or conducting any necessary search and rescue operations where structure fires are concerned. This is what the Victorian community expect and this is what should be provided by our fire service. These procedures provide our fire-fighters a safe means of performing their duties in the most hostile of workplaces.

Fire-fighters 'Presumptive Rights Compensation' should be a right for obvious well documented reasons. It now has bipartisan support and should be implemented.

2) DISPATCH ISSUES

I don't like the potential for confusion and delay in dispatch of fire crews in urban Victoria caused by having an illogical boundary drawn through urban Melbourne and built in, systematic dispatch delays in relation to volunteer fire-fighter response. The swiftest response in all cases is a community expectation. The current practice in some cases of delaying responses of the quickest available crews and having different methods of calculating response times in Victoria's urban areas to justify this delay is totally unacceptable. Introducing FRV as the combat agency for urban Victoria will remove the current dispatch inconsistencies and confusion caused by the current two fire service configuration.

3) INEFFICIENCIES

I don't like the inefficiency of having two fire services performing the same task in the same demographic areas and in some cases the same actual areas of urban Victoria. Two fire services with different Breathing Apparatus, Fire Appliances, radio's, radio stations, radio language, organisational structure, rank structure, fire ground structure, operating systems, reporting systems and even different hoses and hydrants working in the same area causes unacceptable inefficiencies. These inefficiencies impede Victorians getting the best value from their Fire Service Levy. A lot of needless effort is put into interoperability when a single service is the obvious solution in the case of urban fire-rescue for Victoria.

4) COMMUNICATIONS

I don't like the potential for confusion and miscommunication caused by having fire-fighters in the urban areas of Victoria operating on two different radio systems and using different radio language in the same area.

5) SUSTAINABLE RURAL SERVICE

As a resident in a rural area, I like the restructuring of our fire services to provide country Victoria with a well-resourced and funded volunteer fire service. Country communities need control of their own independent fire brigade. This control and independence is essential to a rural brigade's success and to the resilience of the community it services. Applying the workload of incidents involving road traffic incidents, structure fires and frequent automated alarm systems calls associated with an urban environment to a rural volunteer Brigade creates pressures on that Brigade to maintain its membership and response times. As country areas become urbanised boundary adjustments between FRV and CFA will alleviate the stresses currently being placed on CFA volunteers to service fully urban areas. The proposed regular review of the country/urban boundary will assure the success of our rural CFA Brigades.