

**Attention; Fire Services Bill – Select Committee 2017**

Submission made by:

Jesse Parkinson

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I am currently employed as a professional firefighter with the MFB and have been for over 10 years. The majority of my career has been spent in the eastern suburbs of the Metropolitan Fire District.

I was previously a CFA volunteer in the Dandenong Ranges area, and served there for 7 years.

I also was previously employed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment as a Seasonal firefighter and worked out of the Olinda Depot.

Fire Service reform in Victoria is well overdue and I believe all stakeholders finally agree on this matter. I am sure you are familiar with the issues such as; underwhelming daytime response figures from the CFA volunteers in many built-up urban areas; the complicated response boundaries that have failed to move with urbanisation and population growth; and so on. I don't want to go over these issues I sure you will hear enough on these topics during your review.

What I would like to focus on is that as you move forward through your review of the bill that you pay detailed attention towards how this bill will remove the confusion, remove the duplication, remove the division and provide greater integration of our Fire Services. Of the eight reviews into the Fire Services that have been conducted in the past decade, all of them have called for modernisation that results in removing the confusion, removing the duplication, removing the division and providing greater integration.

I am fearful that without due consideration we will end up with two very separate Fire Services that do not work together in harmony. The proposed Victorian reform looks a lot like the NSW Fire Service model which has been operating now for a number of decades. However two years ago in 2015, Jim Casey the secretary of the NSW branch of the Fire Brigade Employees Union, told the ABC's *Background Briefing* that 'Because of the turf war which exists between the two agencies, we have a situation where the right hand doesn't know what the left is doing,'. This is what concerns me with this bill; division.

Ideally I would like to see the MFB and CFA amalgamated under a single Fire Commissioner with a single chain of command. However from what I have heard this would be almost impossible to implement under Prime Minister Turnbull's Fair Work Act changes.

In regards to 'surge capacity', look at the NSW Rural Fire Service, they are widely acknowledged as the largest volunteer fire service in the world, yet they work under a structure singular to the proposed Victorian model. Sure, this proposed restructure may result in some hard line volunteers leaving the CFA, but with funding, support and education campaigns Victoria has an opportunity to recruit new firefighters across the state.

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