

Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation  
Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Submission by:

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To Select Committee Chairman, Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips.

I have been a CFA volunteer at Bacchus Marsh Fire Brigade since 1994. In my time as a volunteer at Bacchus Marsh, I have held many leadership positions including, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Lieutenant, Treasurer, Group Officer of Bacchus Marsh Fire Brigades Group and I currently hold the position of Brigade Executive Manager.

Firstly in respect to the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation part of the proposed legislation, I believe this legislation is long overdue and should be introduced as a matter of urgency. I am disappointed that it has been included as part of other proposed legislation.

- **Effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery.**

The new legislation proposes that all Career Firefighters currently employed by CFA and MFB, will be employed by the new organisation, Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV). Then a number of these employees will be seconded back to CFA, to fill the positions of Operations Managers, Operations Officers, Instructors and other paid positions who currently support CFA Volunteers. These employees will be subject to the terms of a new Enterprise Agreement, negotiated by their representative body and FRV.

My concern with this arrangement, is that there may be terms and conditions negotiated into the new Enterprise Agreement which directly or indirectly have an effect on these employees supporting and delivering services to CFA Volunteers.

As I have spoken to my fellow Brigade members and have attended briefings on the new legislation, this is a common concern held by many CFA Volunteers.

I believe a better solution would be for these employees to be directly employed by CFA, as they currently are, and a new Enterprise Agreement negotiated for these employees. As these employees are not day to day performing Operation Firefighter duties, I believe that many of the contentious issues in the previous proposed Enterprise Agreement would not apply.

- **Impact on fire service delivery across Victoria**

Under the proposed legislation, the MFB fire district and 35 locations across Victoria will now be covered by FRV Fire Stations and FRV Career Staff. The roster at these Fire Stations consist of a minimum of three Career Firefighters serving a 10 hour day shift and a 14 hour

night shift, 7 days a week all year round. I support this model in busy Metropolitan areas and busy Regional Cities and towns. I also support the minimum manning increasing from 3 Firefighters to 4.

I believe there needs to be more flexible model available for CFA Volunteer Brigades to be supported by Career Staff at certain times of the day, and days of the week.

For example a CFA Brigade on the outskirts of Melbourne, where a percentage of the volunteers commute out of town for work, and are unavailable to respond to fires and incidents during normal working hours, but are available outside of normal working hours and on weekends. In this scenario, the total number of callouts attended by the CFA Brigade would not justify a full 10 / 14, 7 days Career Firefighter roster.

I would like to see a model where, for example, 2 Career firefighters could man the CFA fire station from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday – Friday, and assist the volunteers still in town to respond to fires or incidents during these hours. Outside of these hours there would be enough availability from the volunteers to attend the required call-outs.

My final comment is that over the past 18 months, I have been extremely disappointed that my role as a CFA volunteer firefighter has become politicised, and that Governments, political parties and representative bodies seem more intent on political point scoring, bowing to internal factions and repaying favours and promises, rather than focusing on what is the best for the Fire Services in Victoria, and ultimately the best for the Victorian Community as a whole.

I hope that after the issues around the proposed legislation are settled that all the involved parties can put their differences aside and begin working collaboratively, respecting each other and focus on delivering the best Fire service to the Victorian people.

Regards

Jason McMillan

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