

Name: Dominic Lunny

Employer: CFA

Rank: Qualified Firefighter

Work Location: CFA Pakenham Fire station

Time Served: CFA - 2 years, Scottish Fire & Rescue (formally Strathclyde Fire & Rescue) -8 years

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

My name is Dominic Lunny, I have been a professional firefighter with the CFA since July 2015 and previously a professional fire firefighter with Scottish Fire & Rescue (formally Strathclyde Fire & Rescue) for 8 years in the UK. I live in the suburb of Narre Warren North, one which has fire coverage from both volunteers and career firefighters.

I write to express my support for the current bill “INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS’ PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) 2017” that is currently being debated by the Select Committee.

I joined my first fire service, Strathclyde Fire and Rescue in 2006 as a professional firefighter. This fire service would later merge under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Bill 2012. Scottish Fire and Rescue was formed by the merger of eight regional fire services in the country on 1 April 2013. It thus became the the largest fire brigade in the United Kingdom, surpassing the London Fire Brigade, and the fourth-largest in the world at the time.

I would like to express the positive impact the transformation of an emergency service can have on its workforce, service delivery and its ability to protect the communities they serve. Some conclusions that can be drawn in support of a fire service merger are:

- Protect and improve frontline services for local communities against a backdrop of possible budget reductions by reducing duplicated servicers.
  
- Make communities safer by ensuring a more equitable access to specialist resources, expertise and State capacity across Victoria providing the right resources where and when they are needed most.
  
- Strengthen the links between the Fire Service and the communities they serve through the standardisation of service delivery and community engagement messages provided to the public.

- Deliver a streamlined command structure helping provide more standardised working relationship and work practises across one service.
  
- Establish a State focused approach to response and resilience emergency services and prevention and protection community safety activities designed to support the public to be safer from fire and other emergencies
  
- Provide the opportunity to embed the very best standards of training and practices to shape a new service that consistently delivers to the best of its capability,

The State of Victoria has a fire service model dating back to just after the Second World War. A State must adapt and evolve with the time to properly service the communities and populations it seeks to protect. The role of volunteers in our community is essential; they play an important part in protecting Victorians from the threat of fire, rescue accidents and disasters. Though they do a great job, they cannot be expected to be constantly on call or to be trained to the same standard as career firefighter; who are paid to be there full time in major urban areas. On many occasions, volunteers cannot respond to emergencies due to other commitments like work and family. Added to this, Victoria's vast population growth has seen areas previously defined as 'country' become much more densely populated. It seems time for the State government to focus on the growing population and make sure it, along with the emergency service, are properly protected.

With the rise of a millennial generation, that seek to travel more and aren't so community focused as their parents once were, it is only natural that we are seeing a decline in volunteer turnout numbers. Some of my colleagues have provided factual based evidence to show that in the Pakenham area fire trucks may be arriving at an incident, however they do not have the crewing levels to deal with incidents that are taking place. This therefor raises safety concerns due to the nature of the job and the man power that can be required to fight different fire types on the fire ground.

Studies have also shown that due to the nature of a firefighters job, they are more likely to get certain types of cancer at a higher rate, therefore leading the possibility of a shorter life span because of the great work they do to help the community they service. This thought, along with the financial burden and the emotional impact, plays deeply on the minds of volunteers and career firefighters alike. It can be a pit of great stress to think that because of the way we choose to make a living or just helping others could eventually lead to our lives being cut short.

In conclusion, I would like to stress my overall support of the above legislation as a firefighter that has already been through a fire service merger and only had a positive experience in the outcome. I feel this legislation will only improve the service that is currently offered within Victoria. Understandably, there will be many challenges faced throughout the process but these are challenges that have been faced before by other fire services around the world and have been overcome. Melbourne is a world class city and Victoria is a State that is constantly bettering itself, and as such the people deserve

proper resources and a united fire service to help protect and educate it, leaving behind an old model that has served the State for the last 60 years but is in much need of an update.

Regards,

Dominic Lunny.