

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

My name is Matthew Carty, I am a career firefighter employed by the Country Fire Authority for the past twelve months, and hold the rank of Firefighter. I work out of the Geelong City fire station on A platoon, and have done since I marched out from recruits.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services. Although my time in the CFA has only been brief so far, it has become apparent to me already of the need for the proposed fire service reforms to be implemented as soon as possible. I believe these reforms will offer immense benefit not only to the community which we are there to serve, but also to the Volunteers and Career staff alike that do their best to serve this community despite obvious limitations. I believe they will assist in addressing several key areas including

- Providing guaranteed response of 7 adequately trained firefighters across two crews within 8 minutes in the FRV brigades primary area. The speed of response has been proven to be vital to the ability of crews to contain fires to the room of origin, and the presence of 7 professionally trained firefighters has been demonstrated as the minimum required to safely allow BA crews to enter a structure and have the required backup to perform support and rescue roles. Due to the fact that every job we attend has the potential to involve this scenario, it is necessary that this is the minimum response to all calls we receive. Currently in the greater Geelong area we are required to respond our Geelong City Pumper 2 to all jobs on the Bellarine Peninsular Monday-Friday during business hours to ensure coverage for this area as many of the local volunteers work out of town and are unable to respond. This is a large area (up to 40mins from Geelong City area) and can lead to long times on scene where only either Ocean grove pumper (4 staff) or Geelong City pumper 2 (3 staff) are the only appliance on scene, compromising the safety of the community we are protecting, along with firefighter safety. This can also lead to long periods of time where both our primary area and our other support brigades are without the backup of our Pumper 2 and its crew as well, creating further potential to compromise safety. The fire service reforms will help address the shortcoming with the implementation of the Fire district review panel which will make decisions based upon statistical data and facts about the need for more staffing into certain areas due to increases in risk and demand, thus guaranteeing adequate response and coverage are provided to these critical areas.
- This will also be addressed through the additional funding and volunteer training provided to the CFA through the reform package. This will allow for extra training services to be provided to local volunteers as well as extra resources to help focus on volunteer infrastructure and volunteer

firefighter retention. This will ultimately benefit the entire region as well as the state as it will enable current volunteers to be even better trained than they already are as well as focusing on recruiting and retaining even greater numbers to provide local coverage as well as surge capacity for larger emergencies.

- The reforms will allow a greater management and uniformity of resources and training across all Career staffed stations. This will allow for better response coverage and capability for all Victorians, not just those in the MFD. The creation of the one emergency body of FRV with the focus on urban fire and rescue support allows the efficient and effective use of resources across one body with a greater focus on the urban environment, whilst also allowing the CFA to focus on its legislated role as a volunteer based rural firefighting authority.
- These reforms will provide long awaited Presumptive rights cancer compensation legislation to all firefighters. This legislation has been implemented across many other states across the country and is well overdue here in Victoria. This legislation transfers the burden of proof for the 12 nominated cancers away from firefighters, which have been proven in studies to be caused as a result of their involvement with both training and emergency response.
- The urbanization and increased risks present across all of the areas covered by the 35 integrated stations which are still classed as 'Country' areas. The greater Geelong region is home to some 240,000 people and is the second largest city in Victoria. It is also one of the fastest growing regions, with the population set to increase to 320,000 in the next ten years. This presents an ever growing risk that must be accounted for, and is shown in the increase in callouts for the four integrated brigades throughout the region. Over the previous ten years callouts have almost doubled from 2796 calls in 2006 up to 4971 in 2016. These statistics serve to demonstrate the need for urgent modernisation of our fire services to allow both Volunteers and Career staff greater support and a modern framework to enable them to best serve and protect their communities, not only in our region here of Geelong, but across the whole of Victoria.

I hope that you can see through the highly politicized and unnecessarily confrontational nature of this debate and recognize the facts for what they are, and provide your support for these reforms to enhance community safety and support all firefighters across Victoria

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Carty

