

Prue Purdey

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 30 June 2017 9:41 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Submission for enquiry into Fire Service Reform
Categories: CONFIDENTIAL REQUEST

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

Firstly I request all details of this email remain confidential.

I am a career fire fighter for the CFA and have been employed since February 2016 and are stationed at Pakenham Fire Station.

Although my time with the CFA is relatively short the constant debate and fear mongering associated with the proposed reform has taken its toll. Previous to becoming a fire fighter I had no interaction with any fire service. This naivety soon resulted in constant instances that left myself, family and friends shaking my head. Had I not been in the position I am in now I would probably have read the newspapers and believed the mistruths spoken.

In spite of what you may have heard of the relationship between career staff and volunteers I have generally always had positive experiences with the volunteers I deal with on a day to day basis. My concern lies with those who represent the volunteers; these people no longer have the communities interests at the top of their priorities; either knowingly or simply because they are blinded by self-interests and resistance to change. Change is needed. And urgently.

The resistance to change is putting the community and my fellow fire fighters at risk. I will use a simply example to demonstrate; one that is unfortunately all too common in our field of work.

At Pakenham, our fire station (approximately 3 years old and houses both career and volunteers) is situated on the 'outskirts' of town (a second satellite fire station, volunteer only, is situated central to town). Nonetheless, the response boundary remained unchanged even with the new station. This meant that if a fire occurred on the opposite side of Princes Hwy, directly in front of the fire station, we would be dispatched as a support brigade. Although not ideal, this had limited impacts on the community. However, when EMR (Emergency Medical Response) was introduced, it was done for only for our primary response area. This meant that if someone had a heart attack at Bunnings Warehouse, in full view of the fire station on the other side of Princes Hwy, we would not be paged. Rather the poor person would have to wait for Ambulance Victoria to arrive who would be responding from the centre of town.

This person pays the same fire service levy as everyone else, but because a local brigade doesn't want to lose their 'patch', their life is put at risk.

This arrangement took some time to change. All because emergency response in the fire industry is based on boundaries; not response time.

I could name hundreds of other instances similar in nature, talk about lack of support we at Pakenham receive from volunteer brigades, the wasted money at these brigades, etc, etc, etc.

But rather I would like to ask one simple question; if you or your family members were faced with a life threatening emergency, would you rather the closest brigade to respond, or are you happy to wait. And if that brigade is volunteer only, are you happy to wait and potentially for them to fail to respond or arrive with a lack of personnel, training and resources?

This is not about criticising volunteers, they do the best they can, this is about the person of whom is having the emergency.

Thank you for reading my email.

Regards

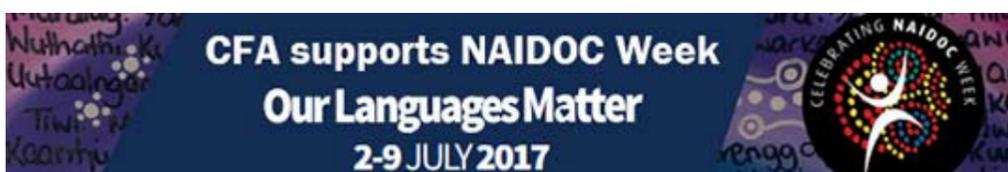


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