

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

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

My name is Jack Harbrow and I am a CFA Career fire fighter, stationed at Dandenong Fire Station. My rank is Qualified Fire fighter, with 5 years of experience, with the addition of 4 years of experience as a Volunteer fire fighter at Langwarrin Fire Brigade prior to becoming a Career fire fighter.

My specialist qualifications in addition to minimum CFA Career fire fighter qualifications include;

- Road Accident Rescue operator as both a Career fire fighter at Dandenong, and as a Volunteer fire fighter at Langwarrin.
- 42m Ladder Platform operator.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

As a fire fighter with experience as both a Volunteer and Career fire fighter, I believe I have a well-rounded view point of the current fire service and its flaws in its current form, specifically regarding the strain on volunteers in urban areas.

As a volunteer, I have seen that they will do whatever possible to help when required. But unfortunately sometimes due to unforeseen circumstances volunteers cannot always respond within required time frames, with appropriate number of crew, or with appropriately qualified crew. Better utilising career fire fighters can significantly help in fixing this issue.

In this submission I would like to express 2 specific areas of change that is desperately needed that this reform will provide, based on my experiences as a Volunteer and Career fire fighter.

-7 professional fire fighters dispatched to emergency incidents.

- Having a minimum of 7 fire fighters (2 appliances) dispatched within 90 seconds in urban CFA areas is essential for both community, but even more importantly career and volunteer fire fighter safety. Volunteers failing to respond is a reality that I regularly witness and previously experienced as a Volunteer, backed up by factual statistics. The proposed new fire service reform will simply relieve volunteers of the strain they currently face, by better utilising career fire fighters at already stationed locations at no extra cost.

-Career fire fighting pumpers to be fitted with Heavy Rescue equipment.

- With the proposed reforms will come the implementation of all career fire fighting pumpers being fitted with road accident rescue equipment. This will allow career fire fighters to commence rescue activities whilst awaiting the responded Heavy Rescue vehicle (up to 25 minute response). From my time as a volunteer, had this initiative been implemented years ago, lives would have been saved at incidents I attended that have been regrettably lost.

- I would like to share an incident I attended as a volunteer rescue operator at Langwarrin on 19 June 2012, demonstrating the critical necessity for this change. Fire report #423600
 - Frankston Pumper (Career) and Frankston SES Rescue (Volunteer) were paged to a car accident outside Karingal Hub shopping centre with 1 pregnant 26yo female trapped, unconscious and not breathing.
 - Frankston Pumper arrived on scene in 5 minutes from call being received.
 - Frankston SES Rescue initially failed to respond. At this time Langwarrin Rescue was responded, now 9 minutes after initial call.
 - I arrived on scene on Langwarrin Rescue 23 minutes after time of original call.
 - At this time the female was still trapped, having ineffective CPR being performed on her still sitting in her car seat, giving her near zero chance of successful resuscitation.
 - The female was eventually released from the vehicle but was unfortunately not able to be revived.
 - Had Frankston Pumper had the capabilities to perform an extrication, the female may very well have been given the opportunity to have effective CPR performed on her, giving her a far greater chance of survival.

From these personal experiences it is my strong opinion that we as Victoria must move into a modern fire service, where decisions are made and changes implemented that specifically improve community safety. These are changes that are currently unable to be made due to the current out-dated organisational framework.

Yours sincerely,

QFF Jack Harbrow

