

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am Bradley Clarkson, a Qualified Fire-fighter based out of Mildura for the Country Fire Authority. I have been a Career Fire-fighter for 3.5 years and have been a Volunteer Fire-fighter for 10 years prior to making it my profession.

I have reached the rank of Qualified Fire-fighter, completing my 3 years of learning to be competent across all facets of our trade. I have also completed numerous Specialist Qualifications during this time. These are Aerial Pumper Operator, Steep and High Angle Rescue Operator.

I have also received the National Emergency Medal for my involvement in the Black Saturday Bushfires and have been awarded a 10 year Service medal.

I live in Mildura and work in Mildura.

I also assist the volunteers in my old community of Diamond Creek, where I spent 10 good years as a volunteer myself.

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

- Working in Mildura provides us with a lot of complexities, and one of those complexities is that we are it. The volunteers in the area mean well but cannot guarantee a response. This can make our working environment extremely dangerous as we could have no back up for hours. We only have 6 on shift at Mildura spread across 2 trucks. This is the under the recommended 7 to perform our duties safely. This could then be stretched even further as our support appliance can travel anywhere up to an hour away. Leaving us with 3 in town to fight any fire, backed up by and response system that is inadequate and unreliable at best.
- The community of Mildura and surrounds will be safer with an updated fire service that has a guaranteed a response and had sufficient numbers to fight these fires/incidents safely.
- Employing all Career fire-fighters under one organisation will not affect or diminish the good work some of our volunteers do in their community. It will however streamline the fire services into a modernised organised better equipped to deal with the urban sprawl. Mildura is now at the point where it can no longer grow; the population is now moving out further increasing the footprint we respond to. We also have to look after a major regional airport, playing host to 7 flights a day from Qantas, Virgin and Rex. There are also private aircraft that use this facility.
- During my time as a Career Fire-fighter all I have known is industrial dispute. This is not acceptable. The demonization of fire-fighters in the media has been deplorable, with little to no support from the leaders of our organisation. The actions of the Federal Government have made this structure unworkable and it needs to change.
- As a volunteer I always attempted to make fire calls, but I understood I could not make all of them. Family, work or having a social life as a teenager meant that despite my best intentions I could not respond. This seems to be the trend these days. The time required to gain and maintain your skills, provide an emergency response is increasing, but the average person is

becoming extremely time poor. As a Career Fire-fighter now I am required to give a guaranteed 90 second response. I see this is a positive for volunteers and the community in multiple ways. The local community has gained a reliable and rapid response which is maintained 24/7. Volunteers have gained a great training resource and having us in the area to deal with smaller scale calls keeps the volunteers with their families.

Yours sincerely,

Bradley Clarkson

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