

By email: [LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am Marcel van Elmpt a Leading Firefighter with CFA stationed at Hallam Fire Station. I have been a career firefighter for 17 years and have been a volunteer as well since 1993.

I have a 25 year service badge

National medal

Trench rescue

Heavy rescue

Heavy Hazmat

Driving instructor

**2.** I live in Macclesfield which is a rural locality serviced solely by a volunteer brigade and work in Hallam, being a heavily built up and industrialised area serviced by CFA integrated brigade (Hallam).

**3.** I also volunteer in my community, being on the local School council and up until recently a volunteer with the local fire brigade.

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

Working in an area serviced by career staff and volunteers we are often called out to situations where we support or are supported by volunteer brigades. This can often leave us with uncertainty in regards to the resources responding to the same emergency, such as not knowing numbers of personnel on volunteer appliances and what qualifications they have. We don't find out how they can be utilised until they arrive on scene. This often leaves us with an extended work load and an unsafe workplace due to the lack of qualified personnel on the fire ground. **This is why the proposed seven on the fire ground is so important as it is a confirmed number and suitable qualifications at least responding and on arrival to keep all fire fighters safe and provide the best service delivery to the community.**

**The community in these areas will benefit greatly as it guarantees a confirmed adequate response by suitably qualified personnel.**

Fire service reform will not change surge capacity of volunteers as has been stated in the media, if anything it will assist it. Volunteers will still be called upon and responded the same way they are now when a state emergency occurs.

With fire service reform I see the potential to broaden the opportunities for surge capacity across the state, by giving the community in urban areas the opportunity to volunteer during the fire season and respond as a group rather than a brigade.

Even with fire service reform, volunteers will play a crucial part in emergency response across Victoria as they do now, with no change to what they do and how they operate. The only difference is that they will be in a volunteer only organisation. CFA volunteers have actively partitioned for no union or career fire fighter interference and fire service reform will fulfil this as we will be separately legislated entities.

However, the two organisations will still work cohesively to maintain service delivery to the community by operationally supporting each other to emergencies, as happens between MFB and CFA now.

Most disputation during EBA negotiations has been caused by volunteer representative bodies interfering and politicising the problems.

Having been a professional fire fighter for 17 years I can't remember ANY EBA bargaining period that hasn't been a fight, and having to justify our conditions and clauses regarding safety of our workplace. The ironic thing is that most of the clauses regarding protective clothing, safe appliances, fire ground standards, training standards, among others, have all flowed on to benefit the volunteers.

The constant justification and ill feeling between the groups has taken its toll, for all the trauma and bad things we see as part of our job, the stress caused by this turmoil especially in the last 2 years has given me more stress and anxiety than anything I come across in my job. I have seen counsellors on a number of occasions due to anxiety caused by ill feeling from the volunteers and being verbally abused while doing my job. I have had family turmoil created from the feud as some family members are volunteers.

**I have considered leaving my job as a result, and if this legislation for reform is not past I may well do so, as the problems of the last 2 years will continue. As well as we will continue to not have an EBA as it can never be signed under the current arrangements!!**

Reform will carry benefits to ALL parties, professional and volunteer fire fighters, with better more direct funding especially for volunteers.

The community benefits with an increase in service delivery for urban areas and a select committee to review delivery standards in growth areas to make sure those areas get the best possible service available.

I sincerely hope you will strongly consider voting yes for this legislation, this reform is long overdue and needs to happen to not only fix a broken system but also to provide a better service for the community which is what they should expect and already pay for.

Yours sincerely,

Marcel van Elmpt

