

6th July 2017.

To:- Assistant Clerk Committees,

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

I am:-

Wayne Rigg
Operations Officer – Aviation - Capability & Innovation
Country Fire Authority

I joined the CFA as a volunteer in 1994 and started as a Career Fire-fighter when I graduated from Fiskville training college in 1995.

Once I completed my recruit course I was stationed at Ballarat City Fire Station and since then I have held a range of CFA positions and ranks including:-

- Fire fighter
- Qualified Fire-fighter
- Qualified Leading Fire-fighter
- Leading Fire-fighter
- Station Officer (Fire Officer 1)
- Senior Station Officer (Fire Officer 2)
- Instructor
- Operations Officer
- Operations Manager (Acting)

I hold the following qualifications:-

- Cert II in fire-fighting (Operations)
- Cert IV in fire-fighting (Supervision)
- Cert IV in Training and assessment
- Diploma of training and assessment

I hold a range of specific fire qualifications and competencies relevant to my employment and position as a fire-fighter and manager (too numerous to list here).

I hold the following specialist operational qualifications/endorsements in Aircraft Operations:-

- State Aircraft Co-ordinator
- Regional Aircraft Resource Coordinator
- Air Operations Manager
- Air Attack Supervisor
- Air Observer

I have been awarded the:-

- 20 year CFA service award.
- National Medal – for long and diligent service.
- National Emergency Medal – 2009 Fires.
- Commendation for Service – Aircraft Innovation – Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire 2014

I am a Justice of the Peace (JP) and have previously served for 6 years as an elected Councillor with the City of Ballarat. 2002 – 2008.

I live in Ballarat and work in a State based role between Ballarat and the State Control Centre (Nicholson St). My current and previous position has been focussed on establishing aviation capability within CFA and other agencies to meet the changing risks of Victorian communities. My core focus is fire-fighter and community safety and to reduce the impact of fires/emergencies on communities.

I volunteer in my community as a JP and as a member of various equestrian groups including the Creswick Light Horse Troop and RDA.

I provide this brief submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services, and wish to ensure that the following points are included when making recommendations:-

I support the proposed fire service reforms and fire-fighters presumptive rights legislation.

I work alongside staff and volunteers from all fire & emergency agencies and will continue to do so into the future. I believe the proposed reforms provides a positive pathway forward to modernise the fire services and provide an increased level of fire protection across the State, I believe that the proposed legislation will assist me in undertaking my duties into the future and if resourced correctly, empower me to provide an increased level of service to fire-fighters (volunteers and staff) and the broader community.

There will be many people making submissions in relation to ground based fire fighting and they are better positioned to provide advice and opinions on the subject than I am.

My specialist field is aircraft operations. I have worked in this field for approximately 12 years and I am considered the CFA's subject matter expert in this area and I am the highest ranking CFA operational member to hold the specialist qualifications that I have obtained in air operations as previously listed on page 1.

I submit that whilst the focus will be on standards of fire cover on the ground, specialist/technical areas of fire fighting such as *Aircraft Operations* also need due consideration when deliberating on the proposed reforms to ensure that these areas are adequately:-

- Resourced with:-
 - Agency personnel (Staff & Volunteers) – Management & Operational roles
 - Aircraft Capability – Aircraft and support/logistics arrangements
- Funded:- Current funding needs to be reviewed to ensure both agencies receive appropriate levels of funding to establish, maintain and grow their aviation capability.
- Structured/Managed:-
 - Within the newly created agencies of CFA & FRV.
 - The current management structure and governance for aviation within the agencies is piece-meal, fragmented and does not reflect a joined up approach to the capability.
 - The proposed reform of the fire services presents an opportunity to establish an appropriate, stable and empowered management and governing structure to enable streamlining of service delivery and improved value to the tax payers to ensure that fire-fighters (regardless of agency) along with the community of Victoria receive a capability that reflects contemporary needs and addresses the current and emerging risks in the State.

- The existing aviation management structure should be reviewed with the intent to establish a more suitable and modern structure which delivers the resourcing, training and capability needs of all the fire agencies and in particular CFA volunteer fire-fighters.
- There have been at least 8 managers or acting managers of the unit responsible for aircraft management in Victoria in recent history. The existing model has been troublesome for years and has been reviewed and restructured time after time with little to no improvement.
- The fire services reform presents a positive opportunity to move air operations and the management of the capability into the new age and provide a streamlined and tailored service to the agencies and communities.

My professional opinion is that there are significant areas for improvement of the aviation capability and through the proposed legislative reform these improvements can be achieved, leading to an increased fire service delivery to the State of Victoria.

The aviation capability must be advanced from its current position to meet the legislative requirements of each of the new organisations and to ensure staff and volunteers alike are provided with the aviation resources, training and capability required for them to undertake their work in protecting communities.

Victoria currently has an aviation capability that is tracking ok, however it struggles to keep pace with community expectations and the ever changing risk and is in danger of falling behind and becoming sub standard if it is not reformed, refocussed, adequately funded and suitably resourced with personnel. The proposed reform provides the driver to makes these positive changes.

The current capability is mainly focussed on the Summer bushfire season and is limited outside of the bushfire season, a 24/7/365 capability needs to be funded and established which can service both CFA and FRV (and partner agencies).

The agencies can only achieve a certain amount with what they have and government must act to cement the future of the aviation capability and move aviation management into a space where it will deliver an increase in the service delivery to the people of Victoria, regardless of whether they are covered by CFA or FRV.

There are a number of components of the air operations capability that I ask the review to include in their recommendations:-

(1) Management and Governance structure (as previously mentioned on page 3&4).

(2) Bushfire – Capability

- Aircraft are increasingly being utilised for bushfire response both in the Urban interface and Regional/Rural areas of Victoria. It is essential that the current aircraft fleet is reviewed and the identified gaps are funded to ensure the required level of coverage is established to meet current and emerging risks.
- CFA & FRV staff will need to maintain their current qualifications and operational roles throughout the entire year to ensure the service delivery is maintained and operated across all parts of the State regardless of who the primary agency is for any given parcel of land.
- An increase in training new personnel from both agencies (staff & volunteers) will be required to build the capability and availability of accredited personnel. Personnel from either agency (and partner agencies) can easily operate in air ops roles across the State.
- Operational aircraft support to brigades, particularly CFA volunteers is increasing at a steady rate as communities experience rural decline and brigade numbers decrease. Brigades in rural areas are finding it more difficult to respond to fires and aircraft are being utilised more often to support ground crews with rapid initial attack. The introduction of pre determined dispatch (PDD) has greatly assisted brigades and communities, and the workload within CFA to service and build the aviation capability has significantly increased, yet CFA has only 1 Operations Officer assigned to the aviation section.
- An appropriately resourced aviation unit should be established within CFA to ensure the needs of the CFA personnel are met as one person does not currently meet the requirements.
- Equally – Urban interface areas and areas of high population density and risk will require the same level of aviation capability to ensure rapid initial attack on all bush fires.
- I see no reason why under the proposed structure the current mix of staff and volunteers could not continue and be expanded in air operations to be interoperable across the State.

(3) All Communities – All emergencies Capability

- Other than RPAS (Drones) capability - The MFB does not have a formal air ops structure or unit dedicated fulltime to establishing and operating an air ops capability.
- In addition to increasing the human resources numbers in a CFA unit, any reform will need to establish a similar (or joint) dedicated aviation unit within FRV to ensure a capability to meet current and future needs of the agency.
- There are many aspects of the current “urban” environment for which aircraft could and should be utilised – e.g. hazmat, technical rescue, marine, high rise fire fighting, rescue and winching – however the capability is not funded or easily accessible to the fire agencies. This capability needs to be established.

It would be very easy to overlook the specialist/technical areas of the States fire services during the reform process and I ask the committee to ensure that this does not occur.

The demand on the air operations capability for the State particularly in CFA has seen a significant increase in recent years and will continue to grow. It is an essential capability to support our staff & volunteer fire-fighters and our communities.

Any reform to the fire service will require a look at the end to end operations of the services provided and ensure that going forward all steps are taken to adequately fund and resource specialist areas of fire fighting such as Air Operations to provide both staff and volunteers have the tools they require to provide a high level of fire service delivery to the people of Victoria.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission and I would be happy to expand on the contents or appear if required at the inquiry.

Regards,



Wayne Rigg JP

