

Assistant Clerk Committees  
Department of the Legislative Council  
Fire Service Bill Select Committee  
Parliament House  
East Melbourne, VIC 3002

6 July 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the *Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill*.

I am the wife of a CFA career firefighter. I support both aspects of the Bill; however my submission will only focus upon the Reform component of the Bill.

Melbourne and our regional centres have changed dramatically since the fire boundaries were established in the 1960's. We need a fire services that can adapt to meet the growing demand and the specialist fire services responses required in these areas. **To not do so, compromises the lives of the community and the firefighters responding to incidents in these areas.**

Some areas of outer Metropolitan Melbourne and larger regional centres still rely solely on CFA volunteers for their fire service delivery. As these areas have become increasingly populated, the demand on the volunteer brigades has escalated. Many of these call outs are "false alarms", particularly with the increasing advent of automatic alarmed premises. High volumes of calls risk burn out to volunteers, and also increases the risk of slower or indeed even no response to jobs judged likely to be false alarms. **The inclusion of career firefighters at these outer metropolitan and regional centres supports the volunteers and ensures a timely response to every call.** This can only be a positive change for the volunteers and the community.

I have lived in rural Victoria where CFA volunteers are the sole source of fire services. Indeed, I can recall my father returning home exhausted from the fires of Ash Wednesday. As it was back then, CFA volunteers are acknowledged as providing an essential service to the community. **I have researched the proposed changes extensively and I cannot see that the Fire Services Reform will impact the functioning of these rural brigades in any way.**

Finally, I would like to state that I believe that career firefighters deserve the best, safest working conditions we can give them. Firefighting as a career is already acknowledged as a high-risk job – trying to obtain life insurance as a professional firefighter is a difficult and expensive task. **Just as volunteer engagement, participation and welfare in our fire service is important – so is the engagement, participation and welfare of our career firefighters.** The Reform contains important changes that will enable the improvement and modernisation of the fire services of Victoria; as a result, appropriate and standardised work practices can be implemented as a standard of service to benefit all career firefighters.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. I am happy to discuss any aspect of my submission if requested.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Janelle Jones

