

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

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

I write to you on behalf of CFA, Traralgon Fire Brigade, A Platoon.

A Platoon consists of:

- Senior Station Officer Aaron Worcester
 - Career Firefighter 16 years, Volunteer Firefighter 17 years
 - Qualified Rope Rescue Instructor & Technician
 - National Emergency Medal, National Medal, 20 Year Service Medal

- Leading Firefighter Greg Fisher
 - Career Firefighter 16 years, Volunteer Firefighter 20 years
 - Qualified in Fire Investigation, Rope Rescue Instructor & Technician,
 - Emergency Services Award (Black Saturday), 30 Years CFA Service Award

- Level 3 Firefighter Luke Bennett
 - Career Firefighter 2 years, Volunteer Firefighter 5 years
 - Qualified in 42m Ladder Platform, Gas Flare off, Steep Angle Rescue

- Level 2 Firefighter Terence Wade
 - Career Firefighter 18 months
 - Qualified in Steep Angle Rescue
 - Awarded Theoretical Firefighter Award for CFA Recruit Squad 1 2016

Collectively within A Platoon we have 39 years of volunteer fire experience and 36 years of career firefighting experience. All of A Platoon live in either Traralgon or in surrounding areas in Gippsland.

As Firefighters working in an urban township in rural Eastern Victoria we often need to rely on a volunteer response in order to operate at an incident as efficiently, effectively and safely as possible.

Unfortunately due to work, family or other commitments it is not always the case that the volunteers are able to respond, or if they do there is no way to ensure that the skills and qualifications possessed by the volunteers who do respond are actually those required for that incident.

By having guaranteed backup dispatched from another career brigade it means that the firefighters on the fireground can have confidence that backup is on the way and they know the exact skillset and training of that backup. This also allows the Incident Controller to be able create a plan of action knowing the resources that are guaranteed to arrive in the first instance.

Career staff are out the door in 90sec and generally on scene within 4min within their primary area. This has been proven to be vital in increasing the likelihood of survivability for occupants in a house fire and in allowing firefighters the best chance to contain the fire to the room of origin. This fast response allows firefighters to conduct an aggressive



internal attack on the fire safely, before the point of flashover, which generally occurs at around the 8min mark from ignition of the fire.

By employing all career firefighters in one fire service we would be able to create a new, streamlined, up-to-date fire service. This offers the communities around existing integrated stations a higher standard of service, faster response times and ensures the safety of firefighters is not compromised by uncertainty around:

1. Where the backup truck is coming from
2. How long it will take to arrive (if it does arrive)
3. What duties the volunteers on board can or cannot perform

One career fire service will also help to standardise operations, equipment, firefighter training and appliances throughout the state as at the moment we have two different organisations operating in different ways, with different equipment. By employing all career firefighters into FRV it would allow the opportunity to potentially use the best parts out of each of the CFA and MFB to create one career organisation with the same procedures, equipment and training and provide Victorians with a high standard fire service.

The areas that the FRV proposal affects have already been deemed a high enough risk to require career firefighters to be stationed there. These areas are highly urbanised and within each primary response area there are specific risks related only to that particular brigade. Career staff are already stationed at these 35 brigades, and work alongside volunteers from their own brigade and support other surrounding volunteer brigades as needed.

CFA volunteers at these integrated stations can remain with their current brigade, at their current location co-located with the career staff after they merge into FRV. This in essence does not change anything for the volunteer's capacity to respond; be it to a local structure fire, a strike team for a bushfire, or a large scale incident such as flooding. The volunteers at co-located stations would elect a Captain to head their brigade and liaise with Operations Officers and Operations Managers about any issues or requests to do with the brigade.

Response and operations for volunteer only brigades will not change under the FRV proposal.

Please take the time to consider this well overdue reform to the Victorian fire services. This reform will help to standardise firefighting in Victoria and ultimately end up providing a better service to the Victorian community and safer service for Victorian firefighters.

Yours sincerely,

SSO Aaron Worcester
LFF Greg Fisher
FF Luke Bennett
FF Terence Wade