

By email: 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 Kerry Phillips

- • Senior Station Officer
- • Country Fire Authority.
- • 35 Years Of Service,
- • Fire Investigator
- • CFA Life Membership, National Medal, National Emergency Medal, 30 Year Service Award

2. I live in Cranbourne East and work in Hallam.

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

Many factual submissions I could speak about and below is just a few:

Responded to a going house fire in support to a local Volunteer brigade, on arrival no member could wear Breathing Apparatus as they did have the training so no internal search could be carried out until Staff arrived, yet all we hear is we are as professional. Having two staff appliances respond in support to the volunteers guarantees qualified crews for all tasks. The response of two staff appliances does not affect the Volunteer response but it does guarantee that arriving crews have the skills to carry out all tasks; if the second appliance is not required it can be stopped. This only affects the 35 staff locations so I don't understand why brigades in areas where there are no staff are getting involved, staff appliances will not be responding to their calls, which is unrealistic and impossible to achieve.

In regards to the above fire, this brigade actively protested about 7 staff on the fire ground and in this call they called for another staff appliance to respond.

Recently we responded to an alarm at an Aged facility only to find the responding volunteer brigade responded one up (Driver only), this is just not expectable yet the CFA have no minimal response, more than happy to just to have an appliance respond. Each appliance should have a Code 1 driver/Pump operator, OIC, 2 BA wearers yet they can respond one up? When this is relayed to OICs the response is, they are only Volunteers. They turned out one up 35 years ago and to this day they can still turnout one up, have the CFA responded to this, short answer no.

I believe that the true issue here is not why our Volunteers lack training and discipline but why has the CFA failed them. We promote that there is 60000 volunteers yet in real numbers we would be lucky to have 15000 active members, there are brigades that

have over 60 members yet they still cannot get an appliance out to a call. Why has this never been addressed by management.

Another frustrating fact is when a new staff station is built the response area for the brigade does not change automatically, this only occurs when the Captain of the local area agrees that the staff can take over parts of his response area, so the change of boundaries may take years to occur.

Rather make changes that benefit the public it will come down to what affects the local brigade, this should be an automatic change that occurs by the CFA not local members, and the change is calculated on response tables and not emotions.

I believe that the true issue here is not why our Volunteers lack training and discipline but why has the CFA failed them. We promote that there is 60000 volunteers yet in real numbers we would be lucky to have 15000 active members, there are brigades that have over 100 members yet they still cannot get an appliance out to a call.

The failure of the CFA to grow is what has brought us into the dispute we have today, Our Chief Officer we have today is the only one that is prepared to make changes to suit the public and not brigades.

Lately all we hear about is how this is going to affect the Volunteers, has any Volunteer member stood up and mentioned who the real winners are here, yes the public. This should never be about how upset the Volunteers are going to be, in reality we have to evolve as the area changes except in the CFA as nobody want change hence why the CFA never really changes.

Surge capacity, this is another thing we hear about but has anyone said why it is going to affect response, they are still going to respond. There are only 35 Staff stations that are going to be moved across to the new Fire Service, the volunteers have an option to stay at these stations or have their own station, which means the volunteers will still be responded. The rest of the state will be unaffected; this is where a large amount of surge capacity comes from. Submissions should be taken from 35 affected areas and hopefully not from the other 1200 brigades which will be unaffected. In those submissions are we seeing facts or emotions, emotions will never help to have an appliance respond but facts will.

Prior to the explosion of the urban growth boundary volunteer brigades were responding to less than 300 calls a year, due to the growth of certain areas these brigades are doing in excess of 700 calls. Within these brigades they have rostering systems so that members have to be at the station between certain hours, if this does not show the stress put onto these brigades, their families and relationships then we are failing in the monitoring of these brigades and how they are coping with the workload, once gain the CFA have no systems in place to monitor brigades and workload.

The CFA continue to run the organisation as a volunteer based organisation and in the past will not make decisions that will upset the volunteers so now is the time to remove the staff component and be a fully volunteer service. The CFA is broken and have now good leadership to move forward to build the Volunteer service but not with the staff component.

Integration of Staff and Volunteers does not work and with the Volunteers actively getting involved in the EBA has now created a toxic environment.

Yours sincerely,

Kerry Phillips
Hallam Fire Station

