

## Derek McPherson

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**5<sup>th</sup> of July 2017**

Fire Services Bill Select Committee Members  
Parliament House, Spring St.,  
EAST MELBOURNE, Vic., 3002

### **Dear Fire Services Bill Select Committee Members:**

This submission is in response to the - "Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017."

#### My Background.

I have been a CFA member for 30yrs this year. In that time, I have been a member of several different Brigades, both Rural and Urban, in different Groups and Districts. I have held varying positions and performed various roles in all.

Currently I am the Group Officer for the Moyhu and District Group of Fire Brigades. We are a small Group, consisting of 9 Brigades and over 500 members.

Whilst I believe that reform to the fire service delivery in Victoria is long overdue, I don't think change without any consulting and/or detail is the way forward.

'Make it up as we go' is not how we should be protecting the community of Victoria. Because, after all, that's what it is all about, or should be, protecting the community, no matter where they live.

I became a member to help my fellow Victorian the best way I can when their day turns to crap. If I can still do that, or maybe even better, after this reform happens, then I think we have kicked some goals.

- **Cost impact - Short and Long Term**

The Government appears to be throwing a bucket load of money at this reform to make it work.

But what happens when the bucket is empty?

It has been stated that FRV will take on all of the entitlements of the paid CFA members so they won't lose out on any.

But what about CFA's debt/budget overspend? Is that wiped clean? Does that also transfer over, or does it stay with CFA?

There is not enough money in the budget for MFA and/or CFA now.

So how will this reform all of a sudden produce more money?

The Minister and the Premier have stated that the Fire Service Levy will be fixed for the next two years.

Then what? Is the levy going to be increased? Is there going to be different fire service levy amounts applied to you depending on the fire service provider for your property? How are councils that have both FRV and CFA in their municipality going to divide the fire service levy? Is the budget for both FRV and CFA going to be structured around Risk Analysis, or Historical Data or a combination of both?

Without a proper costings analysis been done, I believe this reform is fundamentally flawed, before it even begins.

- **Impact on Fire Service Delivery**

The secondment of FRV members back to CFA would work without a problem, at this stage, due to the fact it will be the same people doing the same job.

Now what happens in 5 years', or 10 years' time? Are there still going to be personal that, a) Have had experience in wildfire behavior, b) Want to move to regional Victoria, and c) Understand volunteers?

You can't learn wildfire behavior or people skills from a computer.

At the moment CFA don't have the ability to fill all upper operational roles in regional Victoria.

How do you think FRV personal are going to feel and/or behave when told, 'You will move to location X'?

There needs to be more flexibility in where personal in upper operational roles are employed from. CFA used to be able to employ personal through 'Side Entry'. This meant a more capable person from another field of employment may be employed over a person that has moved up through the ranks at a fire station.

I believe this way we ensure the Victorian community has the best Fire Services.

- **Underlying Policy**

The marrying together of the 'Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017', is wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Wrong.

This is nothing more than a dangling carrot to get the reform across the line.

How can you put two totally different, yet so greatly important, legislations together?

Every fire fighter should have the right to compensation without any hindrance or duress, as has been recognized by other Governments.

Why can't these two be split, and then put each before Parliament?

I believe that nobody is against change.

It's more about how the change is made.

**Thanks for your time,**

**Derek McPherson.**