

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS

COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT

(REFORM) BILL 2017

1. I am a Level 3 Fire fighter, employed by the MFB since March 18th 2015

2. I live in Kallista and work in Box Hill.

3. I am an ex CFA volunteer, I volunteered between Kallista the Patch fire brigade and Ferntree Gully fire brigade for 16 years. I started with the junior brigade at Kallista at the age of 10 and moved up to the senior brigade at the age of 16. I was an active volunteer up until December 2015.

I am writing this submission because I believe the fire services need to be reformed for the following reasons:

- As a fire fighter it is important to have guaranteed backup - guaranteed that two trucks with at least 7 firefighters will be dispatched within 8 minutes. Not only is this for our safety on the fire ground but also for the safety of the community.
- The reform is only in relation to 35 integrated CFA brigades out of around 1200 brigades. The reform will not affect volunteers at those 35 stations as they are still able to operate out of the same station as they always have. The positive is that the community the volunteers are there to protect and serve will now get a guaranteed response of 7 professional fire fighters within 8 minutes.

4. Below are examples from my experiences which demonstrates the failures of the current structure:

- During my time as a volunteer there were countless times that we as a brigade would not be able to respond to an emergency within the community due to there not being sufficient volunteer response to the fire station, due to family life, jobs, friends etc.

When this did happen, Ferntree Gully would be given 4 minutes to respond, only after this 4 minute timeframe had passed would another brigade be notified to attend which in most cases was another volunteer brigade which would also have 4 minutes to respond and so on and so forth. This is precious time wasted when the community we are there to protect is in need of us most.

This also leaves the neighbouring brigade been Boronia which is a career station without the guaranteed back-up of another fire truck and crew to assist them at the emergency for their safety on the fire ground.

- As a volunteer, turning out to an emergency in a highly urbanised area is extremely hazardous and dangerous just trying to get to the station. On the way you have to contend with pedestrians, red lights, dense traffic, school zones etc. All of this is in your own personal car and you are racing the clock to try and turn out within the 4 minutes before another brigade is responded.

Once at the station you don't know who else is coming, if anyone. Also the volunteers who do attend may not have the appropriate training or qualifications for the emergency on hand such as breathing apparatus, search and rescue, you may not even have a driver of the truck.

All of the above points places volunteers in an urbanised area at a huge disadvantage and has all sorts of safety implications for the volunteers, the community and the other fire fighters that are in need of back-up on the fire ground.

Please allow this fire services reform to be passed for the safety of the community the volunteers and professional fire fighters.

This out of date system has gone on long enough.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Oliver Miles McQueen

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