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CONFIDENTIAL

Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Email: lcsc@parliament.vic.gov.au

RE: VICTORIAN FIRE SERVICE REFORM PRESUMPTIVE LEGISLATION SUBMISSION

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Michael Falzon. I have been employed as a firefighter in the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade for 34 years. I am currently stationed in the Eastern District as a Station Officer at Nunawading Station #27. I have amassed extensive hands on experience and skills as well as obtaining certificates 2,3 & 4 in emergency operations and management, public safety, terrorist training (including CBR – Chemical, Biological, Radiation training), EMR, Hot Fire training and Heavy Rescue.

As a Station Officer for Heavy Rescue in Eastern District I regularly attend accidents where persons are trapped and require cut outs. I attend with both paid and volunteers to some of these calls. I can identify where the differences between the two exist in these situations. Understandably we (paid firefighters) go to severe accidents requiring heavy rescue on a regular basis whereas volunteers do not. I, in consultation with my District Commander, arranged with my neighbouring integrated station to have a vehicle delivered to their station on a Saturday to demonstrate/train/practice, for both paid and volunteer members, on operating heavy rescue equipment. Disappointingly my heavy rescue team and the paid firefighters were the only ones to attend. No volunteers attended.

I have lived in Croydon North for 19 years with my wife and two children. Half of my densely populated suburb is serviced by MFB, the other half is serviced by 100% volunteer Wonga Park brigade. 50 years ago, our area was all orchards, it is now a densely populated suburb with many schools/shops/etc. As I am serviced by a volunteer brigade I pay more in Fire Service Levy and house insurance than the residents at the other end of my street service by 24/7 full time service (MFB).

Levy and insurance aside, I have seen firsthand my local brigade's inability to attend the ever-growing demands placed on them by my community. They are unable to meet the 8 minute response time for 69% of their calls (12mths period – stats provided by CFA) – this timeframe is essential to suppress a structural fire and contain it to the room of origin, nor a road accident etc. Understandably there are also calls they fail to respond to at all due to their work and other commitments that take them out of the area.

As a Heavy Rescue Officer, time is of the essence when we attend vehicle or industrial accidents, especially when someone is trapped and in critical condition. We are also able to provide them with Emergency Medical Response.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Census results show Victoria is growing at a rate of 300 people/day. With the planning of large residential developments of 000s of house/apartment blocks in the urban fringes, currently paddocks/vacant land pockets serviced by 100% volunteer brigades our fire service needs to modernise to allow it to grow with our population.

The Victorian community expects a modern Emergency Service adequately equipped to deal with emergencies 365 days per year.

Going forward, this Reform is essential to provide adequate Fire Services for both now and for future generations.

As an Officer in the MFB and a resident living in the urban fringe I fully support this reform including Presumptive Legislation to protect ALL Victorians and firefighters. Please endorse the proposed Bill because ALL Victorians deserve better.

Respectfully yours

Michael Falzon