

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

To whom it may concern,

I am **Kevin Randall** and I am a Senior Station Officer with Country Fire Authority. I have been a professional, career fire-fighter, for 28 years and as such I have been with CFA for the last 17 years.

I currently hold many qualifications of which Nationally Accredited qualifications include:-

- Certificate IV in Fire fighting – Supervision
- Certificate III in Fire fighting – Operations

As well as specialist rescue, emergency medical responder and management accreditations and skills.

During this time I have also been the proud recipient of :-

- National Emergency Medal – Victorian Fire 2009
- National Medal
- CFA 15 year medal
- CFA 10 year medal

2. I live in Greensborough (MFB area) and work in Boronia (CFA area) at Boronia Fire Station but have also served at CFA stations across the state. In addition to this, I have served in other fire services nationally in South Australia (South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service) and internationally in the U.K. with Dorset Fire and Rescue Service.

3. I also volunteer in my community. I have spent many years volunteering at various clubs and organisations. This included teaching AFL Football through the AusKick Program, to children in my area and now continue with junior football at St. Mary's Junior Football Club, Greensborough.

In addition to this, I also volunteer during the summer as part of the Surf Life Saving Victoria at Venus Bay.

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

Having served in various fire services, as stated above, and having a fundamental understanding of how critical a properly run, efficient and effective emergency service is, to enable the best possible service delivery to the community, I ask that you give full and open consideration to the proposed fire services review that is before you for consideration.

The reform would, in my opinion, result in:-

- The updating of Victoria's fire services system to bring it into the present day.
- Cater for the ever increasing demands on emergency services due to the lack of change to the fire service boundaries in over 60 years - they have not kept pace with the enormous population growth in Victoria, particularly in outer-metro areas, like Dandenong, Springvale, Melton, and Craigieburn.

- Provide greater safety for career fire-fighters working in these urban areas by ensuring a relevant and critical level of support, this would enable them to be more offensive in fire fighting tactics employed, for example, at a structure fire with persons believed to be inside. It is incredibly important to have guaranteed backup - two trucks with at least 7 fire-fighters will be on scene within 8 minutes at incidents to facilitate safer operations and greater chance of making a positive outcome. Unfortunately I see on a daily basis, occurrences where neighbouring volunteer brigades fail to respond to emergency calls. This results in a longer response time because minutes have to tick by to initiate another fire brigade being called upon, to attend the same call. This next brigade will be further away and will therefore take longer to reach the emergency. Also these delays directly affect my own ability to direct my crews to save lives because I cannot direct them to proceed into a situation that I know is presenting an unnecessary risk or danger. This is made even more pressing by the lack of guaranteed support coming. When seconds, let alone minutes are vital in saving lives, these delays cannot and should not be allowed to continue. The creation of Fire Rescue Victoria would help to eliminate this scenario and benefit the community and fire service personnel equally.

A greater guaranteed response at the outer metro boundary and in major urban cities and towns around the state, brought about by the fire service review would result in better community safety and protection. This reform is vital to give Victoria a modern fire services system that ensures the safety of all people and properties in a growing state. In addition, there would be greater financial and emotional saving by reducing the amount of damage caused by the fire and restricting the damage to a smaller area. I has been in the news very recently ,how Melbourne's population is growing at an extremely fast rate and is set to result in more urban sprawl and a much larger requirement for new career fire stations in the outer metro area and growth corridors.

The volunteers would be unaffected and in fact benefit from this reform. The CFA's volunteer surge capacity would not be affected. There would be no adverse changes for volunteers - the role of volunteers would be further enshrined under law.

- Volunteers could remain co-located at integrated stations, as they are now.
- Reform would take the pressure off volunteers in urban areas, where there is higher demand for emergency services.
- That volunteer support will be maintained with operational fire-fighters (OO's OMs etc. being employed by FRV but continuing their roles through an arrangement with CFA)
- That the reform areas are around the 35 integrated stations primary response areas – no effect on other volunteer brigades or bushfire response.
- The reform will benefit volunteers as it has included a package to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention across the CFA; and includes funding for volunteer station upgrades etc.
- Employing all career fire-fighters in one fire service will not affect volunteer turnout or surge capacity.

In my opinion having all career fire-fighters and staff employed by one fire service would facilitate a much greater fiscal efficiency and also operational efficiency by reducing the duplication of systems of work and strip away many complex layers of local interference and inference. In addition to this, on a personal level, I feel that the benefits of moving forward to include the proposals in the Fire Services Review would:

- Remove the constant interference of the Liberal party and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, whom have continually stirred the situation specifically for the last 3 years, for political gain. This has resulted in likeminded tabloids and radio presenters continuously denigrating professional, career fire-fighters, of which I am one, in the media both locally and throughout the state. This has to stop.
- This level of continuous bombardment and being denigrated has had a colossal effect on many of my colleagues and peers as well as their families, and has been an unprentended attack on people just trying to provide the best service that they can. The disputation in the workplace has put additional strain on me and my family.
- The reform will assist with standardisation of career training/specialist response/response standards and equipment etc.

I hope that the above, has given an insight into just some of the reasons why I feel that the fire service reform is essential to enable the fire services in Victoria to move forward and become competitive in the provision of a world class fire service.

Yours sincerely,



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