

FIRE SERVICES BILL SELECT COMMITTEE 2017 SUBMISSION

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

Christopher John Gore

████████████████████

These views are my own and I am not representing my employer.

I have been employed by CFA as a Career Firefighter for 10 years and currently hold the rank of Station Officer and I am qualified to the rank of Operations Officer.

I started my involvement in CFA over 22 years ago as a junior and have been an active member since, filling the volunteer roles of Firefighter, Lieutenant and various roles as a delegate to the lower Yarra group of fire brigades and Nillumbik shire council fire protection committee.

August 28th 2006 I started my career as a Firefighter with CFA at Fiskville training college, since then I have progressed through the ranks from Recruit Firefighter to Station Officer. Over my time I have been stationed at 5 CFA fire stations (Bendigo, Caroline Springs, Hoppers Crossing, South Morang & Mildura). I have instructed on a CFA career Firefighter recruit course and hold qualifications in Incident Management Team roles. I have received the National Emergency Medal for my involvement in the Victorian 2009 fires.

From my experience as a volunteer and career Firefighter I feel that I am able to provide comment from an informed position as I have been a CFA volunteer and CFA career Firefighter in various parts of CFA.

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

I support this reform of the Fire Service. The current systems and strategies have failed to keep up-to-date with the

- Population growth & urban sprawl
- Community expectation
- Declining volunteer availability in Victoria.

FIRE SERVICES BILL SELECT COMMITTEE 2017 SUBMISSION

Impact on fire service delivery across Victoria

This reform will improve the Fire Service across Victoria.

I have seen and experienced CFA's failings in its service delivery of fire protection as a volunteer and career firefighter and its inability to provide like response across the country area of Victoria. CFA has developed from a fire service that was started to service rural communities and has evolved over time but has failed to properly provided and support a modern urban fire service that the community expects today.

The best way to combat any fire or incident is to prevent it, or in the event prevention fails we need to stop the fire or incident from getting large where you need surge capacity. This is why response is important. Having an effective response will give the best possible outcome for the community. This reform will improve response.

Again this reform will improve response and will not impact surge capacity.

I have seen, heard, read reports and experienced CFA fail in its capability to deliver a service to communities across the state. It's disappointing that when this topic is discussed, the topic of providing a timely fire service to the community with capable people appropriate trained to perform the roll required for the risk, is lost and seen as an attack on volunteers.

How do we improve any systems/ strategies or workforces when we cannot openly look at a deficiency with a view of improving the system for the community?

CFA

Our Mission

To protect lives and property

CFA

Our Values

As we evolve to remain a modern and progressive emergency services organisation, it's our core values that anchor and guide us. They are practical behaviours that reflect how we all want to be treated.

*We put **Safety** first*

*We **Respect** each other*

*We act with **Integrity***

*We work **Together** as one*

*We are **Adaptive** and agile*

When I was a volunteer the brigade I was in occasionally failed to provide a service to the community or did not meet the required response times. As a career Firefighter I work with volunteer brigades that are responsible for large urban areas. These brigades response times vary or don't respond and when they do respond the fire appliance regularly does not have appropriately trained and capable Firefighters available.

FIRE SERVICES BILL SELECT COMMITTEE 2017 SUBMISSION

This is why it is important to have two career appliance with 7 firefighters dispatched to an incident, so we as Firefighters can perform our dangerous roll safely, completing the required tasks efficiently to reduce the risk to life and property so the community can return back to normal ASAP.

It's very disappointing to hear uninformed people discussing the fire service and scaring the community to thinking that this reform is bad for Victorians, for their own personal benefit.

My current local member is against this reform but has not spoken with the local career firefighters. He has been invited to discuss on many occasions, but chooses not to, so how can he be informed as to what positive affect this will have to the community he represents. Further to this some of the Volunteers that were against the proposed EBA do support this reform.

As a Station Officer every decision I make is to ensure that this is the best service that I am able to provide to the community.

Why would some groups not be in favour of improving the service to their community?

I believe that they have been misinformed or have other motives other than what is best for their community.

Having an organisation Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) responsible for providing fire & rescue services to urban areas in Victoria with a process to review what communities needs are is a way of future proofing the expanding population of Victoria and ensuring the community we serve has the best possible fire & rescue coverage. This reform is good for all Victorians.

Effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery

The reform will further support volunteers by retuning CFA to a fully Volunteer service.

The model that is proposed will not impact on volunteers as they will still be able to participate in providing a fire service to their communities. CFA will remain unchanged and will function under the direction of the Chief Officer. One of the benefits I can see of this reform is returning CFA back to the Volunteers and returning the ownership and the ability for them to be masters of their destiny.

This reform will not affect the volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery. Last night (26/6/17) I attended a Brigade Management Team meeting and the Mildura Fire Brigade BMT (Volunteers) informed me that the volunteers have had a meeting and decided they will continue to provide a volunteer service to the community of Mildura.

CFA Annual Report 2015-16

CFA has approximately 35000 operational volunteer firefighter (respond to fires/ incidents) across 1220 brigades and a further 18935 support volunteer (do not respond to fires/incidents).

FOUNDATIONS OF CFA- Capstone January 2014

FIRE SERVICES BILL SELECT COMMITTEE 2017 SUBMISSION

In the context of emergency management, capability refers to the ability to deliver a service. Capacity refers to the extent to which this capability can be sustained for long periods or across multiple locations.

Core Capability – the capacity and sustainability of brigades to provide services to the community based on local risk.

Surge Capability – the capacity and sustainability of CFA to provide services for emergencies primarily within Victoria and other jurisdictions

This reform will not impact CFA's ability to provide Surge Capacity as CFA will still have that same amount of fire brigades in the state after this reform is introduced. In the media and other groups against this reform they have been discussing the detriment of surge capacity. Surge capacity has been deliberately confused with response to an incident and again this miss information being pushed is to try to stop this needed reform.

This reform will allow CFA to focus on what it was intend to be, a volunteer fire service that looks after the county areas of Victoria. CFA only having this focus will allow it to strengthen its volunteer capability, improve training, expand brigade support, Improve workplace health and safety, improved technology service to assist remote brigades. This reform supports a volunteer CFA, increasing CFA's ability to provide surge capacity meaning that when surge capacity is required a well-trained and resourced force is available.

Short term and long term cost impact on fire service provision

Having seen people be seriously injured or die in fires, rescues, incidents & emergency medical response, cost while important should not be a limiting factor for reform.

The cost on community members who lose part or everything being life or property is a terrible thing to watch let alone experience Injury or death and should be acknowledge, reducing this cost to the community would benefit the community, something this reform will do.

The current environment and moral in the fire service is at an all-time low. This is not the type of fire service we all joined. This reform will improve moral in the fire service providing the community a cost effective efficient fire service that is able to meet the community needs and expectation.

Having seen the fire services in the Federal High Court and in Fair Work Australia trying to remove agreements that they had previously agreed to with its employees and spending millions of public money to only fail cannot continue. The fire service needs to be more community focused of providing services to the community and looking out for its members that provide the service.

FIRE SERVICES BILL SELECT COMMITTEE 2017 SUBMISSION

Underlying policy rationale

This reform will return CFA to a volunteer organisation allowing it to focus on the country areas of Victoria and how best to support that area with volunteer firefighters and strengthen their training, numbers and resources.

The recent damage that has been done to the fire service and the relationship between volunteer and career firefighter has been disappointing. This reform will assist in mending the relationship off and on the fire ground.

This reform will create Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) to provide fire rescues services to Victoria's urban areas. The combining of CFA and MFB career firefighters will create efficiency's in managing them but will also increase the productivity of these firefighters as they will be used more often and for more roles to support the needs of the community. This combination of career firefighters will remove the old line between CFA and MFB meaning the workforce can now work across any FRV location in the state.

The creation of the Fire District Review Panel will mean that FRV areas can be reviewed to ensure that the best possible service is being provided to that community.

The introduction of Presumptive Rights Legislation is fantastic. To know that if I contract certain cancers from my employment I will not have to struggle with not only the cancer but now I won't have to struggle with the legal side of proving my claim.

This is why I support the reform of the Fire Services.

Regards

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Christopher Gore.

Christopher Gore