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From: ██████████ Watts ██████████
 Sent: Tuesday, 27 June 2017 2:43 PM
 To: LCSC
 Subject: Submission to the Fire Services Bill Select Committee
 Importance: High

Secretary,

Legislative Council Select Committee

Re: Submission to the Fire Services Bill Select Committee.

Dear Madam/Sir,

My name is Steven Watts and I have been a professional firefighter for 32 years. I currently hold the rank of MFB Operations Commander based at Eastern Hill fire station and I live in St Helena (Research urbanised border). I make this submission to the Fire Services Bill Select Committee in support of the proposed Victorian Fire Services Reform and Presumptive Legislation laws.

My family has a long association with both MFB & CFA, my (late) father **Ivan** (and brother Rodney) lived on the family farm in country Victoria, Ivan was also an MFB professional career firefighter stationed in Essendon for 25 yrs and Rodney was a CFA volunteer. (Unfortunately Dad passed away aged 56 from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma) a disease said to be directly related to the job of firefighting, Dad was a good man and an advocate for community safety, he left behind 5 children and a wife. Firefighters work hard and don't deserve to die young from these painful diseases and then be told "it was just bad luck" that you contracted this disease.

I grew up with the Fire brigade around me and I've seen (and still see) firsthand what can occur when response times to any calls for assistance are delayed, these include house fires, fires in the bushland, chemical leaks and medical calls (EMR) etc.



I reflect on the Picture (left) of my Dad - Senior Firefighter *Ivan Watts* seen here assisting an Injured Firefighter during a firefight at an inner-suburban factory fire in the 70's and think... WOW.....what if firefighters had been covered by Presumptive Legislation that could have supported and protected them and their families in the event they did contract cancer.

I think of how lucky Dad and his mate were to have had backup available by professional career firefighters in rapid response fire trucks to the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas to ensure firefighter and community safety.

Now is the time to advance.....the proposed Victorian Fire Service reforms are now required to ensure the future safety of our Volunteers, professional career firefighters and our communities in a changing risk environment.

The JOB of Firefighting is dangerous and the proposed Victorian Fire Services Reform and Presumptive Legislation for Firefighters are long overdue to ensure the safety of all Victorians - including me as a firefighter.

I ask you to please support the proposed fire services reforms.

Background;

- Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this outdated system, 35 areas are wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and Geelong are just some of the 35 'country areas'.
- These areas need to be modernised as they are highly urbanised areas as part of the reform of the fire service. A rapid 8 minute response, with 7 professional career firefighters on two fire trucks is the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas.
- All Victorian, professional and volunteer firefighters, deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities.
- Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of all communities in our growing state. Additionally, it will ensure the safety of our firefighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer firefighters because of the enormous urban growth resulting in increased emergency calls.

I believe the committed Volunteer Firefighters will embrace a revamped CFA as their own organisation and in doing so **FBSC SUBMISSION 01** and numbers increase, they would also work seamlessly along-side and be supported by Fire Rescue Victoria across a broad range of tasks to create opportunities like training facilities, purchasing of gear and equipment, health and safety, skills development and family support services.

The sky is not falling in, but opening up Opportunities for all Firefighters and most importantly looking after our Communities.

Regards,

Steve Watts



Not Confidential.