

**Prue Purdey**

**From:** Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017 [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 27 June 2017 3:20 PM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** New Submission to Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

MR JOHN COOPER  
 [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED]

## SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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My name is John Cooper and I have been a resident of the current City of Wyndham for over thirty (30) years. My wife also works in the City of Wyndham.

I am also a firefighter with the MFB and hold the rank of Station Officer and I have almost 36 years of service. During that time I have attended numerous large incidents both inside and outside the current Metropolitan Fire District, which includes Butlers Transport, Coode Island, Ash Wednesday, Dandenongs fires, Hazelwood and Black Saturday, to name a few.

I have also attended numerous smaller incidents around the current border with CFA and have had the opportunity to observe first hand, the response of both the integrated brigades and the volunteer only brigades. There is no denying that volunteer only brigades have inherently slower response times than the permanent crews at the integrated stations. This is not the fault of the volunteers. They cannot be expected to "turn out" in equivalent times to a permanent crew purely because they have to travel to the station before getting their gear and getting the truck out the door. However, in many of the growing suburbs of outer Melbourne, and indeed, in many regional areas, the residents of those areas deserve to have the same coverage for fires as is received in metropolitan Melbourne.

Suburban Melbourne is no longer only within the limits described in the MFB Act 1958. Our urban sprawl has far outgrown the ideology of a small city with a number of outlying townships such as Werribee, Melton, Craigieburn, Kilsyth, Monbulk, Noble Park, Mt Martha and others. The residents of these areas deserve the same fire coverage as those in inner city Melbourne.

During my years with the MFB, there has also been a huge change in building materials and the way buildings are constructed. Although there have been many improvements, such as smoke detectors, these new materials, many of which are plastic based, add to the strength and ferocity of fires as well as giving off more toxic fumes than previous building materials. This inherently creates more danger for firefighter safety, hence the new legislation will enable far more trained Breathing Apparatus qualified personnel to be on the fireground sooner. The result of this increase is that many more fires will be contained sooner and the risk to firefighter safety is also reduced. The community is better off because of reduced damage to property and all firefighters are better off because of increased safety measures.

The new Fire Service Reform bill, will give those residents the coverage they need and deserve. It will also align career firefighters from both agencies under the one banner and allow the new Commissioner and the review panel, to make amendments to the boundaries as the population grows even further. This will also benefit many regional centres around Victoria. It is also worth noting that this will have no impact on volunteers. All volunteers, including those currently at integrated stations, will still "turn out" as they normally do. The so called "surge capacity" will not be affected because those volunteers will still be there. The upside is that all urban areas statewide, will now have the same response as those in metropolitan Melbourne. In general, it is a win – win situation for all Victorians.

The current fire service coverage for Wyndham/Werribee consists of Integrated stations at both Hoppers Crossing and Point Cook, and Volunteer only stations at Werribee, Wyndham Vale and Truganina. Most of the residential area of Werribee, as well as the main shopping area in Watton Street, is serviced by the volunteer only stations with backup from Hoppers Crossing if required.

When my wife and I moved into Werribee, the population was approximately 80,000 people. Now the population has grown dramatically and is approaching 250,000 and as you would all know, Wyndham is one of the fastest growing suburbs in Australia. All residents of the City of Wyndham deserve the same fire service coverage, but at present, we do not get it. I know that there are many other areas of metropolitan Melbourne that have this same problem. This can be illustrated by the attached article in the Wyndham Leader from 2007. For many parts of Wyndham, this is still a problem.

The bill also allows for career related cancers suffered by many firefighters, to be covered under the Presumptive Legislation and bring Victorian in line with other firefighters in all other states. This is so important for them and their families, to know that they have the support they will need enshrined in this bill to get them the assistance they so desperately need.

I personally have a friend/firefighter in this situation and this legislation will enable both he and his family to get the help they need both now and into the future, albeit that his future is not very long.

In my time as a firefighter, I have seen many colleagues pass away from cancers that are "job related" with little or no recourse to claim compensation. This bill is needed to address this situation.

In conclusion, I trust the Committee will agree that our fire services need to be brought from languishing in the 1950's to the 21st century and become the modern and world leading fire services that we should be. One that puts community safety AND firefighter safety before everything else. I also trust that the Committee will recommend this bill to enable all firefighters regardless of classification, to apply for the compensation they deserve for any fire related cancer, especially those that attended Fiskville, which has been proven to be one of the most volatile places for work related cancers.

Thank you for reading my submission and I look forward to seeing this vital legislation passed in the near future.

Regards,

Station Officer John Cooper  
Laverton Fire Station



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File2:

File3: