

Prue Purdey

From: KNEEBONE, Luke [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 28 June 2017 8:23 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire services reform

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

My name is Luke Kneebone and I have been a professional CFA and MFB firefighter for 12 years. I am currently based at Tullamarine fire station.

I write to express my support for the proposed fire services reform.

Having worked with both the MFB and CFA from Mildura to the Melbourne CBD I have seen the best and worst of the current system and believe the proposed changes are well overdue.

I've seen first-hand what happens in growth areas throughout Victoria when old systems are not reviewed and updated. When my own house caught on fire in Castlemaine in 2012 I experienced first-hand the stress of waiting for an appliance that cannot be guaranteed in a timely manner, and, when it did arrive, didn't have the required number of firefighters for a safe and effective fire fight. Similarly, I have experienced countless situations whilst working with the CFA/MFB where I have been waiting for recourses and/or personnel to arrive and assist in the emergency situation only to be left either on our own (as a single crew) or with a lengthy delay, hampering the response effort and increasing the risk to the public and emergency workers.

This is no fault of the great volunteers (many of which I am friends with in my local community and many others I remain friends with after working side by side in regional Victoria) but, as we know, people have less time available for volunteering, it's harder for employers to support employees to leave work and attend incidents, and, this coupled with rapid population growth in many CFA areas, puts a lot of pressure on. An independent panel to review response and staffing levels throughout the state will be a massive improvement and should assist the Volunteers, avoiding burnout and providing a better service to the community.

Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this out-dated 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', and many regional centres have expanded beyond the capabilities of volunteers alone.

These areas need to be modernised as they are highly urbanised areas as part of the reform of the fire service. All Victorian, professional and volunteer firefighters, deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities.

To ensure the safety of all Victorians - including me as a firefighter, I ask you to please seriously consider your support for the proposed fire services reform.

Reform of our fire services will help 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 also respectfully submit that you give consideration to my request to modernise the fire service along with the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect fire service employees. It would be great if both could be endorsed and implemented by Parliament before the commencement of the fire season. Another reason I believe this reform needs to occur promptly is that the personal impact of this drawn out saga is mounting on all involved, both career staff and volunteers.

I would welcome the opportunity to explain to you further about my personal experiences as a professional firefighter if required.

Kind regards,

Luke Kneebone | Station Officer
 Northern District | North West Metro Region
Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
 1st Floor, 152 Plenty Road, Preston, 3072.
 [REDACTED]

*The MFB is committed to minimising its impact on the environment.
 Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.*

 WARNING
 This email and any attachment may contain confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient you are not authorised to copy or disclose all or any part of it without the prior written consent of the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board.
