

Michael Henningsen


Assistant Clerk Committees
Department of the Legislative Council
Fire Service Bill Select Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

Re: Inquiry into the firefighter's presumptive rights compensation and fire services legislation amendment (reform) bill 2017

I wish to express in writing my full support of the proposed reform of Victorian fire services. I am a Qualified Firefighter with the Caroline Springs Fire Brigade, employed by the Country Fire Authority. I commenced work as a Career Firefighter in June 2014, and have seen ongoing industrial disputation for the entirety of my employment. I wish to see this end.

The primary reason I would like to see reform is safety in the workplace. Current structures restrict my employer from guaranteeing at least two trucks and 7 firefighters will be dispatched within 8 minutes to the fireground. This adversely affects the safety of my work.

Added to this, the safety of the community is being put at risk as we structure our fire services around out-dated and outgrown restrictions. The 'country area of Victoria' is no longer as close to the Melbourne CBD as it was in the 1950's. Our primary response area in Caroline Springs consists of an ever-increasing population of people, hundreds of small and large businesses, four of Victoria's largest prisons, several shopping centres, and more and more new homes being built every day. This is hardly what I would consider to be 'country' Victoria.

Volunteers cannot and should not be expected to meet the demands of such a high-growth area. We have had approx. 1000 call-outs each year since I commenced at Caroline Springs. When I go to work, I want to be guaranteed that a second truck is on its way behind me to the job. If employing all firefighters under one fire service banner will enable this structure to be implemented, then it must happen. A safer workplace is what I deserve, and the community should expect the same.

The reform can only benefit volunteers, as it has included a package providing funding for volunteer station upgrades and support with volunteer recruitment and retention. Further to this, current CFA managers, whilst being employed by FRV, will still be able to maintain their support through an arrangement with CFA.

Please consider this reform as an important step in the modernisation of Victoria. My colleagues and I, along with the communities we all live in, deserve a modern fire service.

Sincerely,



Michael Henningsen