

Dear Inquiry Committee,

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

- My name is Thurston Darcy, a Fire fighter of 3 years' experience with the MFB.
- I live in Eynesbury in the Western Suburbs and for the last 1.5 years worked at the North Laverton Fire Station (FS49).
- We respond primarily with MFB appliances from Spotswood, Altona, Laverton, Sunshine and Deer Park, but also with CFA appliances from Point Cook, Hoppers Crossing, Truganina, Caroline Springs and Werribee.
- I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

There are times when our job can have its inherit risks, sometimes unavoidable but most can often be mitigated, whether that be through Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP's), Training or Experience.

In this case legislation can be a mitigating factor to dangers I will face in my daily work life.

Being that I am in the Metropolitan fire district, in my direct response area I will receive at least one other primary fire appliance to a Fire Call, that means that as I approach a fire I can mentally commit myself whole heartedly knowing that backup is right behind me in case it's needed.

As the bordering stands this currently isn't the case for "Country" areas, to which I also respond into.

Regardless of the amazing job CFA volunteer brigades do, the fact remains that they cannot be available 24/7 365, as they shouldn't, they are community members with jobs and families. With our outer Metropolitan growth rapidly expanding (1800 per week settling in Melbourne according to CENSUS 2016), particularly in the West, the volume of calls is increasing as is the need for a professional response.

I have personally been to calls in Point Cook, Hoppers Crossing and Truganina called on only after the volunteer backup has not responded (4 minutes).

This alone puts a big risk to the community and to the fire fighters attending the call as a lot can happen in 4 minutes.

I have been to dozens of calls in Truganina (outside of our response area) and only ever seen the volunteer CFA Truganina Brigade turnout alongside us once, that is not a dig at them, that is a failure of the system that is currently in place and a failure to the residents and workers that occupy that space.

With operational staff under one banner and covering these outer metropolitan areas the people that live there will be guaranteed 2 fire appliances with minimum 7 fire fighters (2 teams of 2 wearing breathing apparatus, 2 pump operators and 1 incident controller) they will receive the fire coverage that they deserve and the volunteer response will not be altered, they will still be responded which is also great for us should we need additional support.

That volunteer support will also still be repaid with operational fire fighters employed by FRV in Training and management roles but continuing those roles through an arrangement with CFA.

The reform areas are around the 35 integrated stations primary response areas – no effect on other volunteer brigades or bushfire response, that means where I live (Eynesbury) will not change and in those stations that will change the CFA will continue to work alongside, co-located with FRV in a similar arrangement that the MFB currently has with Ambulance Victoria.

As I stated at the beginning TTP's can have a mitigating factor in risk management on the fire ground, as it stands now CFA and MFB employ separate TTP's and work with different equipment and appliances meaning that the communities protection varies dependant on their residence.

Bringing the 2 professional fire services under one banner will eventually standardize everything with the exception of speciality equipment and can help to ensure a better level of training for all professional fire fighters.

In my career with the MFB I have known only dispute, my first day on shift I could see the toll that had taken mentally on the fire fighters I was going to be working with and now I know it for myself the constant barrage of hate we receive from certain media outlets, members of parliament and volunteer associations.

It's ludicrous to think that a small group of community protectors (less than 3000) has received more negative front page articles than the Iraq war, but it's true. 39 by my last count.

I have heard in the media reports of volunteers threatening to quit if this legislation goes through, I don't believe this to truly be a proper representation as they volunteer for the same reasons that we do this as a job, to help people and provide

protection to the community and now with this we will all be covered by presumptive rights cancer legislation which is a great thing for all of us in particular the volunteers that trained at the toxic facility at Fiskville.

Lastly the CFA will receive a massive boost of 100 million dollars to assist with this change for retention, recruitment and station upgrades.

This legislation passing is a positive result for all Victorians.

Yours sincerely,

Fire Fighter Thurston Darcy

Contact details:

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