

Prue Purdey

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 29 June 2017 5:21 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017

Categories: CONFIDENTIAL REQUEST

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

I request that this submission remains confidential.

My name is [REDACTED] and I am a Leading Firefighter with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), registration number 10688. I have been in the service for 6 years. I am a qualified fire truck driver and pump operator and am breathing apparatus certified to undertake internal structure search and rescue and firefighting duties. I am also qualified as an Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) as are all of my colleagues at the MFB who have passed recruit training, advanced emergency driver training and recruit retention training which includes EMR certification. On top of these qualifications, I have been given the opportunity to become a HazMat Technician and a Breathing Apparatus Technician. I have also recently received a Chief Officer's commendation for the part I played at the Bourke Street incident on the 20th of January 2017, where I attended as part of the MFB's EMR program, to assist Ambulance Victoria on what was a large casualty situation.

I live in Beaumaris and work in South Melbourne. I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reason. I am fortunate enough to work within the MFB and within it's Central District. This is important because it means that I can be confident in knowing that within 8 minutes of a firecall that I am involved in, there will be at least two trucks on the fireground. This means that there will be enough qualified crew to operate safely.

This includes

- Two firefighters able to enter a fire involved structure,
- Two firefighters outside ready, as back up, if the initial crews get into trouble,
- One firefighter who is accountable for the internal crews, their location and how much Breathing Apparatus (BA) air that they still have on board,
- A pump operator who is responsible for supplying unlimited water to the hose that the internal crew relies on for safety, this also requires them to locate and tap into a fire hydrant,
- and an incident controller who is responsible for the entire fireground operation.

With these resources on scene it is possible to make entry into a burning structure and search for trapped persons.

I currently work at South Melbourne fire station that houses two primary firefighting pumpers, however, I did work at Port Melbourne fire station for 18 months previously and it only stationed one firefighting pumper permanently, a second pumper being available only some of the time. The permanent pumper has a minimum manning of three firefighters.

On more than one occasion (24/11/2014, call #15173, 06:10hrs, Melbourne Chiropractic, 81 Bridge Street, Port Melbourne and 08/05/2014, call #3330, 00:32hrs, 219 Rouse Street, Port Melbourne as examples) I was the pump operator that formed part of the three firefighter crew first on scene to a going structure fire.

This leaves

- One firefighter to fight the fire
- One pump operator to supply water
- and one incident controller

As you can see this does not allow enough personnel to effect safe operations. The one firefighter, alone, is not safe to enter the structure, therefore only external attack can be made to the fire and no internal search and rescue can be undertaken.

Fortunately for myself, the other crew members on the fireground and the owner occupier's of the burning structures, a second fire truck from South Melbourne was automatically dispatched at the same time we were and arrived on scene within two minutes of our arrival. This second truck supplied the required seven firefighters on the fireground and safe firefighting operations could commence, including internal search and rescue.

This is a guaranteed response within the MFB's fire district, however, it is not guaranteed within the CFA's 35 integrated station's primary response areas.

I was also confident in the fact that all firefighters dispatched to these calls were internal Breathing Apparatus search and rescue qualified as it is a mandatory certification held by all operational firefighters within the MFB. This is also the case for all Country Fire Authority (CFA) career staff, however, it is not a mandatory requirement for all CFA volunteer staff meaning that it is possible for some volunteer firefighters to arrive on scene at a structure fire and be unable to don BA, enter an involved structure and carry out search and rescue. In my opinion, these current differences in training requirements along with no guaranteed two fire truck dispatch to structure fires within the CFA firefighting boundaries, present an unacceptable risk to firefighting staff attending firecalls in these areas. Not to mention it potentially puts the community at risk as there is every chance that the fire truck that arrives on scene may not be able to safely carry out a rescue within the burning building.

The fire services reform aim to address these above stated issues within the current CFA's 35 integrated stations primary response areas. These areas have become highly urbanised over the past 50 years and now present a far higher risk than they did when the state's fire boundaries were last addressed. I think that the public would be shocked if they understood that I am guaranteed a minimum of two fire trucks to attend a firecall at my house in Beaumaris, all attending staff BA search and rescue qualified, but a person living in Aspendale may not get the same emergency response. These areas may have been vastly different 50 years ago but today they are both densely populated and in need of modern fire coverage. Coverage that this Fire Services Reform, aims to address.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]