

Re: FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017

Dear Members of the committee,

I wish to express my profound support of the proposed fire services reform as seen in the above Bill. Please allow me to introduce myself and explain why this Bill is great for every single person within Victoria.

My name is Damon. I have been a firefighter within the MFB for just over six years now. I have worked at 42 of the 47 MFB stations. From Altona south west of Melbourne, St Albans and Tullamarine in the north west, Epping and Templestowe north east, Ringwood and Croydon in the East, and as far south east as Mentone. I've worked in inner Melbourne, for example at Richmond and Carlton, as well as right on the border between the MFB and CFA boundaries, for example at Somerton.

I am acutely aware of the differences that exist in the emergency response models as they exist in the "Metropolitan" and "Country" areas of Melbourne and it's surrounds.

When 000 is called for a fire response in the "Metropolitan" areas of Melbourne (<https://firedoesntwait.com.au/>), the caller always gets the closest appliance(s), guaranteed crew numbers and a guaranteed training level. They also get a rapid response time of less than eight minutes.

In the so called "Country" areas of Melbourne (<https://firedoesntwait.com.au/>) the caller is not guaranteed any of the above. A CFA Captain may choose which trucks come along or not to the call regardless of proximity, he/she may or may not get a sufficient number of people arrive to achieve "seven on the fireground" (this is the world's best practice number of personnel required for safe firefighting). Those that arrive may or may not be trained in Breathing Apparatus (hence cannot enter the structure to effect a rescue, not of the public nor of me if I go down) and their knowledge and experience varies greatly. Sometimes when a volunteer station is paged they are unable to assemble a crew. After several minutes the page goes to the next station. If they are also unable to assemble a crew it then goes to the next station.... This can lead to significant delays.

In the case of Emergency Medical Response calls a rapid response is required have any chance of saving that life. For example in the case of a heart attack the patients chance of surviving falls dramatically with every minute CPR and Defibrillation is delayed. In the case of structural fires the possibility of containing the fire to the room of origin experiences a similar catastrophic decline in success rates as the minutes go by.

Suburbs such as Boronia, Dandenong, Springvale, Craigieburn and the like are now heavily urbanised and populated. These people deserve a guaranteed standard of emergency response. The passing of this Bill will ensure that these areas have a much improved system of fire protection.

A fair question to ask is how will this affect the current CFA volunteers? When we consider the details of the reforms it is clear there is no need to worry. The reform is specific to the thirty five suburbs identified as high risk due to population and industry density. They have simply outgrown their "Country" label. And in each of these areas the volunteers will still be able to turnout as they do now. In fact, they will be greatly supported via a comprehensive package for recruitment, station upgrades and so on.

Please pass this Bill and thankyou for reading my submission.

Warm Regards,

Damon Coonan
Leading Firefighter, MFB

