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Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

Please treat the following submission as confidential.

Inquiry into the Firefighters Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

My name is [REDACTED]

- Metropolitan Fire & Emergency Services Board
- 30+ years of Service

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the Fire Services for the following reasons:

- The current disputation surrounding the reform, enterprise agreements and industrial action has caused somewhat a substantial shift in the moral and harmony at the Fire Station level, both MFB and CFA. I have seen this first hand as [REDACTED]. The MFB stations which I manage currently have a joint response with a number of CFA integrated and permanent stations such as Bayswater, Eltham, Rowville, Boronia, Mooroolbark, Chirnside Park, Warrandyte South and Lilydale. One of the more important roles I perform is to continually monitor the welfare of the firefighters in my district.
- A common theme is the low morale brought on by the uncertainty of the Brigades future, structure and model conditions. This is repeatedly evidenced in discussions during regular joint engagements between MFB and CFA stations, including - drills, familiarisation days, open days, meals, and fire calls. All such events I attend with the stations in an effort to encourage a continued positive relationship between the two services. The consensus of all the firefighters is to see the end of the current and prolonged divisive political environment and move forward as one service for the benefit of the community and both services.
- In essence, this reform should be about what is best for the community. I believe the best way to establish this is primarily for the committee to be informed through these submissions in order to fully understand the key elements which currently are preventing the community from having the best possible Fire Emergency provisions available.
- The MFB/CFA boundaries were established over 100 years ago when there were distinct urban and rural populations. In 2017 the greater Melbourne District now includes densely populated areas into CFA areas (previously rural). The reform affects 35 integrated stations which all contain various high need, high risk elements – including, but not restricted to dense populations, multi storey

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buildings, light and heavy industrial areas, health facilities, retirement villages, residences effected by hoarding, dangerous goods sites and shopping centres.

- This reform is not about the denigration of the CFA volunteers; in fact it focuses on 35 integrated stations currently servicing densely populated areas which need, and deserve a modern urban fire service to provide protection both today and for future risks. This reform does not affect any other volunteer brigades or bushfire response. Currently the MFB and CFA are responding together into areas which warrant full time response capabilities due to the population growth and inherent risks. These areas require a timely response, to a commercial, industrial or residential risk. Unfortunately in many instances, the delayed response times from a Volunteer capacity provide a separate risk not only to the requirements of the emergency, but also to the safety of the firefighters on the fireground.
- Integrating the two services will not affect volunteer turnout or surge capacity. Volunteer support will be maintained. Operations Officers and Managers will be employed and supported by the MFB and continue their roles through an arrangement with the CFA.
- Consolidation of the various areas of operational differences between the fire services, including, but not restricted to equipment, training, qualification, rank structure, command structure, alarm response, management systems, administrative business systems, policies and procedures would eradicate the areas of ambiguity in the delivery of an emergency service for the community. For example – in the current environment firefighters from both the MFB and CFA on a fireground together can be uncertain of their colleagues training, abilities and protocols. This often put both the members of the fires services and the community at risk.
- The reform will enable the provision of substantial financial support for training and equipment to assist the current volunteers and future volunteer recruitment and retention. This financial support would also be provided for the development of Fire Stations and refurbishments.
- A fire rescue service, which can deliver firefighters, appliances and skills to the Metropolitan Fire District's built up communities in the quickest response times will enable maximum protection of life and property.
- Standardisation of career training, specialist response, standards and equipment, will contribute to achieving maximum protection to the community.
- Critical to the provision of community protection, firefighters must be provided with training and resources for their own safety. Two appliances and seven firefighters on the Fireground is a minimum safety standard which enables

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firefighters to conduct internal firefighting operations without hesitation or delay. The current position involving volunteer firefighters, which on many occasions do not have the training required for internal firefighting, often results in the delayed delivery of critical operations. It is my understanding that many CFA volunteers are not trained in the use of breathing apparatus which on many occasions has delayed critical firefighting operations.

All Victorians deserve the best fire emergency service the government can provide. Such a service should acknowledge the distinct and unique requirements (risks) which rural and metropolitan areas need. The reform is not about individuals or individual stations – it's about what is best for the emergency protection of Victorian communities – both metropolitan and rural.

Yours Sincerely,

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