

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

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

My name is Kenneth (Ken) Brown and I'm currently the Acting Deputy Chief Officer South East Metro Region with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. I have been employed as an operational firefighter and officer since 1983 (34 years). During this time I have attending multiply incidents of significance not only in the Metropolitan area but also across the State.

I have received the following awards and commendations;

- Australian Fire Services Medal
- National Emergency Medal (Black Saturday)
- National Medal (30 year service)
- Metropolitan Fire Brigade good conduct and service medal (30 Years)
- Chief Officer's Commendation (Yarraville Fire)
- Chief Officer's Commendation (Middle Park Fire)

I have attained the following qualifications;

- Advanced Diploma in Public Safety (firefighting management)
- Diploma in Project Management
- Graduate Certificate in Applied Management
- Nationally accredited Level 3 Incident Controller (Australian Maritime Safety Authority)
- State endorsed Regional Controller
- State endorsed Level 3 Incident Controller

Specialist Qualifications;

- Rescue specialists (including road, rail, bus, industrial, trench and tunnel)
- Emergency Medical First Responder
- Strike Team leader
- Wildfire level 3

I reside at Rye on the Mornington Peninsula. During my time in the service I have worked in the Central, Western, Northern, Eastern and Southern Districts of Metropolitan Melbourne. I have worked alongside many CFA brigades, both Volunteer and Career and have formed friendships and strong bonds with them.

My role as a Regional Controller and Incident Controller has required me to work across the State in multi-agency teams supported by agencies, government

departments, NGO's and local communities. I have led teams in combating rescues, flood, fire, storm and hazardous situations on many occasions and in multiply locations. I have a deep appreciation for the emergency service sector and what they do to support the community during these difficult times.

I am making this submission to support the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

1. I have experienced firsthand the challenges that heavily urbanised emergency response agencies face and the unnecessary risk that is placed on firefighter's and the community by the current system. The fire boundaries have not changed or expanded to match the ever increasing population growth expected to double over the coming years.
2. This situation has led to an inconsistent approach to emergency response that does not align to the risk profile. This does not provide a level of service that is equitable across the suburbs, districts and regions of Victoria. An example of this is; that one side of the street in outer metropolitan Melbourne will receive different response yet have the same risk. Responses should be equitable to match the risk.
3. Having a response model that provides the same level of service is something that the community would expect. Safe systems of work is vital in a time critical situation that both protects firefighters and affords the community the best possible protection that minimises loss of life, community consequence and property loss.
4. Safe systems of work have been developed over many years and is based on providing effective resources that are appropriately trained and equipped to effect first attack rescue procedures that ensures that;
 - Safe rescue, protection and evacuate for those who are at risk, including warning those affected by the incident
 - Containment of the incident to a manageable level
 - Safe operate within the parameters of the legislative obligations, policies, procedures and experience
 - Impacts on critical infrastructure are minimise
 - Impacts from losses are kept to a minimum
5. Providing, as a minimum, a guaranteed response of 7 firefighters from two trucks despatched in 8 minutes will allow for these principles to be achieved.
6. With career trucks comes Emergency Medical Response (EMR), with FRV the holes in service delivery including EMR will be greatly improved by ensuring that EMR is maintained within the station footprint which doesn't happen now.
7. In integrated areas where there is a dual response from Career and Volunteers does not always provide the best and most effective uses of

resources. Volunteers are important part of the response and will always be required to support career firefighters in a first response capability; nothing changes with the introduction of FRV. The value that is added in these situations is the surge capacity that they provide and again nothing changes with this.

8. The rules around integrated station responses are based on a Brigade response not by a fire truck response. The issue is that the system will default to the brigade even though that Brigade's primary trucks have already been assigned to an emergency. This leads to further delays and under resourcing at emergencies because the computer aided despatch (CAD) system will still page the brigade even if they are committed elsewhere. This has an effect on escalations as a prescribe response is required for certain incidents. If an integrated brigade has another event or an escalation and receives another page the response will still go to the station even though the trucks are already out at another incident. The effect of this is other trucks that could be responded are bypassed because CAD still looks for the empty brigade. FRV standardising CAD rules to despatch trucks and not brigades will ensure that the right trucks are assigned to the right emergencies.
9. Currently delays in response by volunteers are not fully known at the time of despatch as the response is from those volunteers who are available at the time of call. This leads to the responding trucks unsure of what their back up will be. The CFA volunteer response is based on a 6 minute delay value,(excluding pager response) which means that those responding won't know if there is a failed response for at least 6 minutes. Once the failed response is realised then a decision has to be made as to whether to have another brigade paged to respond thereby starting a second 6 minute delay factor on the next brigade. This will add possibly a 12 minute plus response and a far greater distant of travel by another brigade, that is if they don't fail to respond.
10. Having FRV will ensure that there a response from 2 career appliances with a minimum of 7 firefighters within the 8 minute window without reducing any volunteer response. If the volunteers fail to respond then the career trucks will continue until such time as the volunteers arrive or they get on scene. This will ensure that there are minimum numbers of firefighters on scene to safely operate as detailed in point 4.
11. Failed volunteer responses are a common occurrence through no fault of the volunteers but through higher demands and their availability to respond during certain times of the day and week.
12. The proposed changes will actually provide greater support into these integrated areas by ensuring that the movement of career appliances across the suburbs and districts will match the surge needs. For example, currently if an integrated station goes off line due to an emergency the request for back up can take some time to action either through internal CFA arrangements or support arrangements from the MFB via the State Duty Officer. Having all

- career services from one identity will allow for systems that are either automated or manually actioned that doesn't require high level of approval.
13. Currently, as is in a lot of cases, areas are denuded of both career and volunteer resources. This leads to a loss of coverage and in the event that a second emergency occurs, resources have to be sourced from other areas that are distant from that brigade area. Having Fire Rescue Victoria should greatly improve this lack of coverage via that automated support process.
 14. Surge capacity for high fire danger periods will be improved as coverage can be planned in advance. There will be better access to career firefighting appliances through FRV that can back fill the integrated stations increasing volunteer surge capacity.
 15. FRV will also allow for specific training of volunteers by freeing up resources for training purposes whilst maintaining fire coverage including Emergency medical response for that area.
 16. The Fire Services Reform will put an end to the ~~duplicated—complex~~ consultation arrangements process that has seen delays in the supply of uniform and equipment vital for the protection of firefighters. Separating Career Firefighters from Volunteers will allow for separate consultation process that can be independent of each service. This will ensure that Volunteers will be consulted on issues that affect them and career firefighters will be consulted on their issues therefore negating conflict that has existed for many years.
 17. The costs of these conflicts have been in the order of millions of tax payer dollars. Harmonisation will save community money which in turn will translate to better services.
 18. Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation is a fundamental right for firefighters that are exposed to carcinogenetic products at not only fires but at hazardous chemical incidents. The evidence is overwhelming in support of this legislation and as in many states and countries around the world, firefighters are being afforded the presumption that our career as firefighters exposes them to a greater risk of contracting cancer. Firefighters go to work not expecting to contract cancer however it is in the back of their mind that it is a distinct possibility that they could. This legislation will provide comfort to firefighters and their families that in the event that they contract cancer they will not have to fight for treatment and compensation.

Conclusion:

Having FRV will ensure that there is;

- an improvement in response times,
- safe systems of work are carried out,
- better coverage into the integrated areas

- improved surge capacity not only for major emergencies but also for every day responses,
- improved support for volunteers through an improved service delivery model, greater access to training, and
- greater collaboration between Volunteers and Career firefighters.

Note # there will be no change to the way in which volunteers volunteer and for anyone to suggest anything else is without foundation, mischievous and not in the best interest of the community.

Separating the services will assist with a more efficient consultation process which deliver a better and more cost effective service for the community and will greatly reduce further sector conflict. Community dollars will be spent where their needed rather than on disputation.

Presumptive rights will allow firefighters to do their job without worrying whether their families will be looked after if they succumb to cancer. These rights provide peace of mind that I can do my job with one less worry. Over the many years that I have fought fires I have asked the question, why? do I do this because if I get cancer I will have another fight to get treatment and that's not fair. With this legislation I won't have to worry anymore. I don't want to get cancer and I'll take all the precautions that I can however this is insurance against my career.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

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Kenneth Brown

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