

## FIRE SERVICES BILL SELECT COMMITTEE 2017

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Submitter: [REDACTED]

Address: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]

**STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY REQUESTED FOR THIS SUBMISSION**

Firefighting Experience: MFB Firefighter Aug 2015 – Present

CFA Volunteer – 2014 - Present

Firefighting Awards:

- Ross Leader Instructor Award (MFB)
- Executive Officer Commendation (MFB)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- Impact on Fire Services in Victoria

The 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission (in recommendation 63) identified the need for a Fire Commissioner and also that one of the roles of the commissioner was to look at the expanding of the Metropolitan Fire District. This recommendation if followed through would have seen CFA volunteer stations taken over by the widening of the Metropolitan District.

This will now not happen. The Government's proposed model will see CFA volunteer stations remain and in the case of integrated stations, the CFA volunteers will also remain and be able to re-instate the role of Captain to further empower their volunteer culture.

The Fire Rescue Victoria arrangement which will employ all career firefighters in the state will also be better placed strategically to utilise the skills and resources currently existing within the state to help all members across the state.

- Effect on volunteer engagement and participation

The key point is to remember that the safety and protection of the people of Victoria should not be directly linked to how volunteers feel about the changes. This must only be about what is best for the community.

CFA volunteers will have a new state of the art training facility funded, new stations built and significant amounts of money spent on volunteer recruitment and retention. They will remain in place in their suburban stations (1200 CFA stations before the change 1200 CFA stations after the change). Surge capacity will be protected by maintaining these community volunteer locations. They will also have access to Presumptive Legislation for cancer that has been denied to them by previous state governments.

- Short and Long term cost impact

The fire services funding model was modernised by the previous government. It allows for the cost of operating a state of the art urban and rural fire service structure to be funded directly. This model of funding is designed to allow governments to fund the fire services for the safety of all Victorians.

It is likely that there is much to be streamlined in terms of administration and management levels of the new Fire Rescue Victoria. This streamlining will see duplication of roles and resources within the current CFA / MFB model eliminated for a far more cost effect model.

With some CFA career stations responding to around 2000 calls per year and with the introduction of EMR (Emergency Medical response) this number will only increase. It seems unreasonable to impact the life of a CFA volunteer and their families to such significant volumes when they also have lives to live and family interests to support.

- Underlying policy rationale

The rationale to modernise the fire services in Victoria has been heavily driven by the demands of volunteers. The VFBV has pushed to have no union influence in the CFA, the VFBV requested the previous government and were successful in altering the CFA charter to reflect it legally as a volunteer based organisation. The CFA Act describes the CFA as a “country” fire agency. The changes to modernise the fire services delivers all the key demands of the VFBV and also allows the government to meet it’s legal requirements as set out in the CFA charter and CFA Act. To not allow the modernisation of the fire service would likely require these areas of legislation to be amended to reflect the status quo.

- Presumptive Legislation

Presumptive Cancer Legislation has been structured to give fair access to all firefighters who suffer from cancers proven to be prevalent in the course of our community service. The fact this covers both volunteers and career staff equally is to be commended.

- In Conclusion

This legislation is designed to provide a framework for a modern fire service. I believe, that an all-volunteer CFA will truly flourish with a culture that recognises their commitment and works with the demands of being a volunteer and is consistent across the whole organisation.

The firefighters of this state need cultural change to provide a modern and respectful future. The people of Victoria deserve a modern and rapid emergency response from their fire service.

I encourage you to support the Fire Services Reform Bill.