

Prue Purdey

From: Roy Griffiths [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 30 June 2017 9:44 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,

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL – NOT FOR PUBLIC VIEWING

I am Senior Station Officer Roy Griffiths and I have been a Professional Career Firefighter with the CFA for 24 years and a CFA Volunteer for 16 years.

I have long Service awards of 12, 25 and 30 years as well as Honorary Life Membership, National Medal, National Emergency Medal and The Chief Officers Unit Citation for Courage.

I am trained in many aspects of fire fighting including Urban Search & Rescue Category 2, Wildfire, Structure Fires, Hazmat, Plantation Fire fighting, MVA's, Ground Observer, High Angle Rope Rescue Operator, Trench Rescue, Confined Space Rescue, Strike Team Leader, Sector Commander, Planning Officer, Logistics Officer, Operations Officer, Staging Area Manager and Certificate 4 in Training and Assessment.

I live in Oaklands Junction and work in Greenvale CFA which is an Integrated Station which means Staff and Volunteers working together at the same station.

I also volunteered in my former rural community of Coldstream for 16 years, 9 of which I was also employed by the CFA.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

I believe it is important to have sufficient numbers on the fire ground for safe operations due to the complexities that exist, for example a Structure Fire requires a minimum of 4 persons in Breathing Apparatus for Search and Rescue and Fire fighting within the structure as well as an OIC (Officer in Charge), a pump operator and a Firefighter to do a multitude of roles including Safety, find water for pump, Medical and external fire fighting. It is critical to have these personnel within the first few minutes of arriving on scene to minimize loss and perform an effective fire fight. The community expects that when they call 000 that a fire truck will immediately respond and get there as quickly as possible to help them in their time of need, whilst waiting for help every minute counts and seems like an eternity to the community that are waiting. Whilst in a heavily populated area it is expected that the service to the community would be better than that of a rural area where the service delivery to the community does not have the same funding so therefore it would be a reduced service.

The volunteer system has been steadily declining in my opinion over the last 10 years due to work and family commitments, people used to work in the communities that they lived in and employers would allow people to leave during their employment to attend fires and incidents in their community. With the pressures of Employers to make profit and stay economical they cannot afford to let their employee's leave the workplace. As well as with the commitments of family the time available to volunteers has also become a rare commodity. Generally volunteers are made up of persons whom are young or mature with less commitments and more time available to volunteer. The suggestion that this Fire Service Reform would diminish volunteer numbers has no merit as it has no effect on Surge capacity or existing volunteer stations only integrated stations and they will continue to do the same job now as they have always done. Removing the Career fire fighters from the CFA into FRV can only help the CFA into giving more time and resources to the volunteer system as they won't be required to deal with anything that previously was allocated to Career Fire Fighters .

The reform will bring 2 systems into 1 modern standardized service working alongside volunteers in the CFA and SES. Some examples of this are working on the same radio network, Breathing Apparatus that is the same, Appliances that have matching stowage and type, identical training and assessing etc.

Roughly every 3 years we have had to endure prolonged EB negotiations that have sometimes become bitter due to many factors including VRFB interference, the conditions of our employment have very little effect on the volunteer system in a negative way, in fact I can say that it has improved their conditions rather than eroded them. One such example is the UFU push for our PPC that we wear today, if this was not pushed by the UFU we (staff and volunteers) would still be wearing the inferior "Horse Blankets" PPC (Personal Protective Clothing) that we had many years ago and our modernized fleet of appliances would be made to last another 10 years over their lifespan.

The package that is being offered to the Volunteer CFA under the reform will greatly assist them in better funding for training, appliances, station upgrades including toilets and showers and in some cases hot water.

I have seen many examples of failures under the current structure to provide an efficient service to the community.

- Response tables are compiled by volunteer Captains and as such it can be whom they want to come to their area for support instead of the brigade that can get there quicker, this is not always a staff station it can be also preferential to a volunteer brigade that they like better than another.
- Responding volunteer brigades get 6 minutes to respond before VICFIRE despatch another brigade, if that brigade also does not respond in 6 minutes another is paged and so on until a brigade responds. When responding to a fire/incident we need the second appliance to make up numbers on the fire ground for safe operations. There is NO Guarantee with a volunteer brigade that they will respond, a staffed station will be responded at the same time and guaranteed to turn out.
- Career Fire Fighters must pass physical, theoretical and psychiatric exams to begin their intense recruit training and then need to continue their study to progress through the ranks, the volunteer system does not have the same requirements. I believe that they should be required to do at the very least a psychiatric exam with a police check and a physical exam to start.

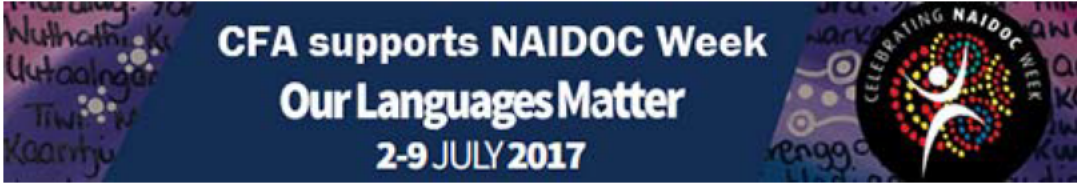
Regards,



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I acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of country throughout Victoria and respect them, their culture and their Elders past & present.



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