


Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

My name is Timothy Furs. I am currently a Qualified Firefighter for the Country Fire Authority. I have been a member of the Country Fire Authority for approximately 12 years, of which the last three years has been as a career Firefighter. I live in the greater city of Bendigo and work at the Bendigo Fire Brigade. I currently hold Specialist qualifications in rope rescue, 37 meter ladder platform operator and soon to have emergency medical response qualification.

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

- Victoria's Fire services are in need of a more structured single career fire service that can work alongside with the volunteers, rather than against them.
- The Fire service reform will effect only 35, of the approximately 1200 brigades. Combining Victoria's two career fire services will not affect surge capacity. It will have no change on the way the volunteer brigades respond to emergencies.
- Bendigo's population is currently approximately 115,000 and is forecast to increase to approximately 160,000 by 2036. The forecast increase in population will have a negative effect on the already time poor volunteers being able to turn out in a timely manner. It is imperative the the fire service be restructured giving it the opportunity to grow with the population growth of the Greater City of Bendigo.
- Bendigo Fire Brigade attends approximately 1200 emergency call a year. With the rollout of emergency medical response in November this is expected to increase to at least 1500 a year. Which will grow as Bendigo's population increases.
- Bendigo has a large number of major community infrastructure risks. Including the new \$60million Bendigo Base hospital, the large Saint John of God hospital, Bendigo Bank head office, numerous nursing homes, schools and shopping centres. The city centre also contains a large number of heritage listed buildings dating back the gold rush era. All these risk require a professional 24 hours, 7 days a week 90 second, minimum two truck response, with worlds best practise of a minimum 7 firefighters.
- The fire service reform will standardise career training and specialist response. This will include enhanced road accident rescue in parts of Victoria covered by the new Fire Rescue Victoria.

- The fire service reform will also put an end to the bitter dispute that has engulfed my work place for many years. This dispute is all I've known since becoming a career firefighter. This has created mental anguish to many of my work colleges, myself and family, and has to end.
- As a former volunteer I can see that the fire service reform will benefit volunteers. It has a package included to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention across the CFA; and includes funding to meet the needs of volunteers at co-located stations.
- The fire service reform will also provide both volunteer and career firefighters with presumptive cancer compensation, to protect our families for the sacrifice that we make for the benefit of our community. 

At two major structure fires that I have attended in recent times, on both occasions I have had to enter a burning structure on my own, for the initial attack. I have also had to wear three consecutive BA cylinders. This was due to having insufficient back-up to help combat the job. This is a risky and unsafe practise that will change under the fire service reform.

The package of volunteer funding will allow the local volunteer brigades to increase their skills. This will be of greater benefit to career firefighters working beside them and also the local community in general.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the parliamentary select committee for taking the time to consider my submission and the fire service reform for the benefit of the state of Victoria.

Your sincerely,

Timothy Furs,  
Qualified Firefighter,

