

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am a Senior Station Officer employed by the County Authority. In total I have 27 years' service with the CFA, 12 years as a volunteer and 15 years as career staff member. I would like to take this opportunity to give my view on the current fire-fighters presumptive rights compensation and fire services reform.

I currently reside in Mornington and work at Dandenong Fire Station in a SSO relieving position. In my time as a career staff member I have worked at the majority of integrated stations throughout Victoria.

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

Whilst working at Frankston as the crew leader on the support appliance I have experienced firsthand the difficulties in safely performing fire ground operations with insufficient numbers on the fire ground.

The minimum crewing on our appliance was two with no guarantee that the primary brigade would be able to respond (especially during the day). If the primary brigade fails to respond after four minutes an additional brigade would then be paged. When you take into account the four minute initial delay, plus the travel time of the supporting appliance it is a long time on the fire ground with insufficient numbers to protect life and property and provide a safe working environment.

It is important to have a guaranteed backup in these situations. The reform would provide two trucks with at least 7 fire fighters to be dispatched immediately to the fire call. This would offer a better service to the community, would mean that fire fighter safety is increased and would provide better support for the volunteer fire fighters.

There is a lot of talk of how the reform will affect volunteer surge capacity as volunteers would leave the service. I do not understand how providing a better model to support the community and volunteers will affect surge capacity. The volunteers in the above example would still be required to respond to this call as they would be the closest truck as it is their primary area. In the event that they do respond they will know that they have supporting fire trucks on the road to assist. If the volunteer brigade fails to respond the community will still be guaranteed a truck attending with no unnecessary delay.

This reform will improve the service we offer to the community while providing safety on the fire ground and support for the volunteer fire fighters as well as including a package to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention across the CFA. This is a win for all concerned.

The reform will standardise career training, specialist response, response standards and equipment. This would allow a better and more efficient service to protect the community. The reform will result in significant cost savings on unnecessary duplication of departments within the fire service.

I look forward to a future where we put community safety at the top of our priority list, where we can provide a professional service to the community and maintain safety on the fire ground.

Yours sincerely,
SSO Paul Anderton

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of SSO Paul Anderton.