

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017 [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 1 July 2017 11:50 AM
To: LCSC
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Mr Matthew Castles
[REDACTED]

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Dear Inquiry Committee,

I am writing this submission because I feel strongly about a need for fire service reform. My name is Matthew Castles and I am a professional fire fighter with the MFB. I live in Wonga Park and have two young children. My eldest has just started Primary School which is a short walk from my house, where 400 children attend and is the neighbourhood safe meeting place in emergency situations. My youngest attends the local kinder/occasional care facility which is attended by a large number of children and families. When my youngest is not attending she is at our house being looked after by my wife, myself or grandparents. This is the case for a number of friends in the area, which has grown in population significantly in the last 100 years, as has the rest of Victoria.

As it currently stands, Wonga Park is protected by CFA volunteers, who do a terrific job, however cannot always commit to a 24 hour a day 7 days a week service. The volunteers do not always work in the local area, let alone, right where the fire appliances are housed, it takes time for them to travel to the station, and if they are working in the city for example it will be potentially too long.

Therefore I have concerns that when there is a structure fire with in the area, there is going to be a delay in turnout, and potentially deadly consequences. Being a professional firefighter, I know how quickly a fire can spread within a structure and time is critical in saving lives and property.

I have seen many instances, particularly during the day time, where MFB appliances have attended fire calls into the area, just a couple of streets from my house and there has been no attendance from the local Wonga Park volunteer CFA. I am unsure of the circumstances for the no attendance, but understand volunteers have lives outside of where they are volunteering, like work, family commitments illness etc which can hold up attendance to the fire station. Especially if they are working away from the local area, or employers have said, we can't let you keep attending all these calls, or have been at a party and are incapable of attendance. Also with no EMR response in my area, I and many others in the community feel disadvantaged to those who live 6kms down the road in an MFB area, who if have a cardiac arrest or similar will have an enhanced response due to EMR trained personnel being on the fire appliances turned out along with ambulance, where

early access, early CPR, early defibrillation, early advanced care is vital in saving lives.

I find it hard to see how the proposed Fire Service Reform is going to affect volunteers in what they are already doing. A number of volunteers join because they want to provide a service to the community, they would like to be helping where they can to protect life and property. I can not see how the proposed changes will affect volunteers from doing what they already do. They can still attend fire calls as they have been, and support the fire fighters who will have been first on scene. An enhanced response with quicker turnouts is better for everyone.

I have heard talk from some people in the community that there will be a reduction in surge capacity if there is to be Fire Service reform. I feel that it will actually be the opposite. If there are full-time firefighters in the area, they will be able to attend the smaller emergency calls (eg false alarms, minor car accidents etc), which I am sure a number of volunteers find it difficult to explain to employers/families that they needed to attend on a regular basis. Instead, employers and families will see that when there is a major emergency, like in our summer time, there is more need for the volunteers attendance and may be more willing to let them go, as they wont be getting tied up at all of the other firecalls on a regular basis.

I feel this Fire Service Reform will be of benefit to all of Victoria, with enhanced and quicker responses to an expanding/growing population. There is a real need for change.

Thank you

Matthew Castles

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File1:

File2:

File3: