

By email: [LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au)

01/07/2017

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

1. I am

- Paul Marshall
- Operations Officer & Officer in Charge of the Warrnambool (Integrated) Fire Brigade
- Employed by CFA under the expired 2010 Operational staff EBA
- A passionate supporter of and for volunteers
- A recipient of the:
  - National Medal including 1<sup>st</sup> clasp
  - National Emergency Medal – 2009 Vic fires

2. I live in Warrnambool and work in Warrnambool.

3. I also volunteer in my community:

- as a registered CFA Volunteer in the District 5 Headquarters Brigade.
  - I joined CFA as a Junior Brigade Volunteer at Ballarat aged 12 having now served a combined total of 40 years both as a volunteer and career staff having lived and worked at Warrnambool for the past 20 years.
- as a registered SES volunteer in Warrnambool having served 7 years

4. I write this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

- The Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) for career staff has become increasingly more difficult to negotiate over the past 15 years and has now become so prescriptive that it is now almost 500 pages in length largely as a result of growing distrust between the CFA Board and UFU / CFA operational staff, and interference from Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV). The VFBV is not my “employer” and therefore should not be able to interfere with the terms and conditions of my employment. There is no interference from volunteers in the EBA’s of Victorian Police, Ambulance, SES, Nurses, Doctors nor any profession that I can think of, yet firefighters are unduly disadvantaged and demonised for resisting such interference.
- CFA Urban firefighting capacity has grown quickly in Urbanised Regional areas over the last 10 years (and it needed to) to be equitable with the service provided within MFB areas to ensure the greatest majority of Victorian tax payers have the same or at least similar level of service. Additional career staffing at Warrnambool has made a dramatic and positive difference to minimising property loss and damage as a result of increased manning with 99% of structure fires now being contained to the “room of origin”. Overall this means much improved community safety and protection.
- The marriage between career staff and volunteers in an “integrated model” has served CFA in general well for many years, however the growth of the family (additional career staff) and the influence of external parties (UFU, VFBV, the State Liberal Party and the Federal Liberal Coalition) pushing their own agendas have unfortunately created a massive division between career staff and volunteers over the last 3 years in particular mostly as a result of

ongoing EBA negotiations. 12 months ago during the Federal Election when tension was heightened, 3 of our Warrnambool family reached breaking point and resigned from the Warrnambool Brigade. These were 3 of our best trained and reliable volunteers. As the current Officer in Charge and leader of the Warrnambool Fire Brigade, I have worked tirelessly to keep our Warrnambool Fire Brigade family (integrated model) together. I have a number of dedicated staff and volunteers that also support this work, however the external influences have had a lasting negative effect and I also have a number of staff and volunteers that would readily cite “irreconcilable differences” in support of a divorce of staff from volunteers. The “system is broken and must be fixed” before CFA implodes. The Fire Services reform package has provided a glimmer of hope for many including myself as a very real positive way forward. Now that we have come this far, my biggest fear is that the legislation will not be enacted which will only cause more division and heart ache for what was once a great organisation.

- Removal of operational career staff from being employed directly by CFA will allow CFA to get on with what it should do best, “supporting volunteers” without having to manage and negotiate EBA’s which has tied up an enormous amount of CFA resources in the past, impossibly trying to negotiate an EBA with tri-partisan support (CFA, UFU & VFBV) when at least 2 of the parties are diametrically opposed.
- Employing all career firefighters in one fire service will provide a larger pool of staff to fill difficult to fill locations in regional areas which has been an ongoing issue for CFA.
- Volunteer support will be maintained with the required operational staff being employed by Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) but continuing their current roles through an arrangement with CFA as per the proposed legislation.
- The biggest effect of the reform is around how the 35 integrated stations (which are highly urbanised – high residential and other risks areas) operate. There is no effect on the other 1185 CFA Brigades, volunteers or bushfire response.
- The strength of volunteers at the current 35 integrated stations will in my opinion grow as “autonomous” brigades (without external influences) whether they remain co-located or not, which will ensure and likely strengthen ongoing volunteer response and surge capacity.
- The formation of both FRV and the Emergency Services Infrastructure Authority will remove duplication of a number of services currently provided by a number of current Government bodies which should deliver long term cost savings for Government and tax payers alike.
- I don’t think I need to comment on the “presumptive rights compensation” component of the legislation as I would be shocked if any politician needed convincing re same.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the enquiry.

Regards



Paul Marshall