

Assistant Clerk Committees
Department of the Legislative Council
Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

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

My name is Jason Miller. I am a Leading Firefighter within the Country Fire Authority of Victoria. Thank you to the committee for allowing me the opportunity to submit this to you for your consideration.

I have been a career firefighter for 15 years this September and joined the CFA in a fulltime position in 2002. Prior to this I was a volunteer firefighter in CFA for 12 years with the Diamond Creek Fire Brigade from 1994 to 2002.

I have been a Leading Firefighter for 10 years and have worked at several outer metropolitan stations throughout my career. I have also completed a twelve month secondment with the MFESB in 2012.

I currently hold a Certificate III in Firefighting Operations, I also hold Certificate IV's in Training & Assessment & Road Transport – Driver Instruction for both vehicles and heavy vehicles.

I am currently stationed at Eltham Fire Station and have been here for the last two years. I live in Diamond Creek with my wife Linden and two sons Lachlan & Toby.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons & given examples. I will expand on some of the personal experiences below later in my submission.

1. I have been in the CFA in two capacities as both a volunteer & professional firefighter for the past 22 years.
2. In my time to date I have seen the organisation, the communities and the outer metropolitan and regional centres we protect grow enormously.
3. When I joined the CFA as a volunteer we wore woollen turnout coats that were second hand, still had petrol powered pumps, and little to no training was required to respond on a vehicle.
4. When I joined the CFA as a professional firefighter in 2002 we still wore the same woollen turnout coats, were working on station with minimum manning of three at best, but at worst with two people on an appliance, and there were stations such as

my current station Eltham, that only had one Fire Officer (Station Officer) working at it both day & night.

5. I have worked at stations in the North Western suburbs such as Greenvale that have had enormous growth that have seen them placed in the top rating urban growth areas not only for Victoria but also in Australia.
6. I have seen and bore witness to the failings of a system that has not changed since the 1950's.
7. I have not only my safety but that of my fellow firefighters put at risk, but more importantly the public's too when critical support appliances have failed to respond.
8. I have been involved in fighting internal structure fires with only myself and one other Fire Officer with no support for over 10 mins.
9. I believe that the community and all Victorians deserve to have the very best fire service, this should be regardless of if the firefighters are paid or volunteer. It should also not matter what badge is on the side of the fire truck too.
10. As a previous volunteer within the CFA I cannot see how the changes to CFA being reverted back to purely volunteer brigade and the formation of FRV will be either a safety issue to the public, or a disadvantage to volunteers.

I only see positive reform that will firstly and most importantly benefit all Victorians across the state by providing a modern and adaptable model that will allow expansion of full time professional firefighters to growth & high residential, commercial and industrial suburbs and provincial cities. Along with protecting the vital volunteer surge capacity for Victorians.

Operational experiences and the need for the Fire Service Reforms.

The two examples below are given to highlight the need for reform, and the situations that existed when I first joined. And continue to the present day.

These are actual incidents that I have responded to personally and contain factual information to the best of recollection that occurred.

When I joined the CFA in 2002 I was stationed at Boronia Fire Station after completing my 16 week recruit course.

During my first two years on station as firefighters we would be sent to relieve at Eltham Fire Station. At this time Eltham was staffed by one Fire Officer (Station Officer) both day & night.

To assist the Fire Officer (FO) firefighter would be often posted on dayshift at Eltham to drive the pumper and provide support to the FO. At this time Eltham was receiving anywhere between 350 – 450 calls annually.

On one particular day we were paged to a reported garage fire in Eltham's primary response area. Upon arrival were confronted with a semi-detached garage fully involved and threatening the house and a neighbouring property.

Due to our manning of just two, these are the actions that I had to perform by myself:

1. Roll out two lengths of 30 metre hose and connect hose branch up the driveway to near the garage.
2. Return to the pumper and remove three (3) lengths of 64mm hose, connect one end of the hose into the water inlet for the pump, then grab a standpipe (used for getting water out of the main) and hose key, and then proceed 100 metres down the road to the hydrant located in the street nature strip. Connect the standpipe to the water main, connect the hose, and turn the water on.
3. Return to the pumper and open the inlet for the water to go into the pump, perform a changeover so that our water supply is now from the water main.
4. Charge the smaller hose running up the driveway.
5. Go and place a Breathing Apparatus onto my back and perform the required safety procedures, whilst doing this do a quick visual size up of the fire location, access points and to see if I can see the FO for a briefing before I enter the structure.
6. Proceed up the driveway and get briefed by the Fire Officer for the required tactics to be deployed.
7. Enter the fully involved garage fire by myself and begin an aggressive internal attack.
8. Whilst performing the attack try and relay the information that I am seeing back to the Fire Officer.
9. Checking on my dwindling air supply as I have just performed all of the above actions by myself, checking to see if any signs of structural collapse and also checking for extension into the house and/or neighbouring property.
10. Hoping and listening for the second support appliance as I am working by myself in a structure with only one person to rescue me if I become trapped or injured.

This incident occurred in the early 2000's and was a regular occurrence for many firefighters such as myself. It placed me in a position of enormous risk, it also placed a huge burden on the officers in charge of these fires.

These actions were not reminiscent of a modern day fire service.

My next example happened last month, June 2017. Whilst on dayshift at Eltham we were responded to a reported LPG gas leak, at a local 7/11 Petrol Station in St Helena.

We had been at the same petrol station in the week preceding. This premise is actually located in the Diamond Creek brigade's primary response area that Eltham provide support into.

Upon arrival we were given further details that the leak could be smelt around the LPG bowser. We set to work donning Breathing Apparatus, setting up a charged hose line, cordoning off the road and public and formulating our tasks & tactics to ascertain the extent of the leak using specialised gas detection equipment.

After being on scene for several minutes we were notified by our communications that the supporting brigade had failed to respond. This means that the brigade (Diamond Creek) had failed their obligated time to turnout, which is 6 minutes.

The OIC decided to implement the use of our specialised gas detector to source the leak.

Once we had begun to check several BBQ cylinders the supporting brigade arrived.

They had taken an extra 16 minutes to arrive on scene after we had already arrived and began working.

This meant that we had no support if an ignition source had found the leak and caused a fire. Upon the support brigades arrival we noticed that they had only two members on board the appliance.

In total the primary brigade had taken 20 minutes from time of page of the call to the arrival on-scene. Again this is not reminiscent of a modern day fire service and why reform is needed.

Our first priority must always be the protection of life & property, if the system is failing and placing the community and firefighters at risk then change is needed.

My personal view and how I relate these important Fire Service Reforms to my family:

Our eldest son Lachlan has several disabilities ranging from being non-verbal, has been diagnosed as severely intellectually disabled, suffers from low muscle-tone and is on the low functioning side of the autism spectrum.

There are some extremely important safety issues and core community issues that affect every Victorian's basic rights to modern emergency services and the protection of life that they should be offered to every Victorian.

My son is picked up from home via bus and travels to his special school on an hour long trip every day of the week. He attends his school with his other friends with special needs, teachers and carers.

His school is located in a purely volunteer CFA area. The local brigade does a great job for a very busy urban area of outer metropolitan Melbourne, but it isn't perfect, and they cannot guarantee a response and sometimes don't have sufficient and/or qualified crew as they are fully volunteer, it's just an unfortunate fact of life we have less & less time.

Please do not feel that I am in anyway anti-volunteer, I still work with (as a career firefighter for 15 years) CFA volunteers and was myself a volunteer for twelve years in my suburb. I've been in the CFA for near on 22 years now, I have lived both sides of this fence.

My point is that when I wave good-bye to my son every school morning I put my faith and hope that he will be safe and protected and that regardless of geographical area, organisation, badge, paid or volunteer, government in power that he is protected and that the best practice and safest strategies are used if he was to be involved in an emergency that fire services attend.

If my son's bus was involved in an road accident I would want the quickest response possible to help gain access to my son and free him, and allow paramedic intervention and transportation to a trauma centre within the principals of the "Golden Hour", something that firefighters can do, and that is also being bolstered by the reforms and implemented too.

If my sons school was to grow in size and student numbers, and it's risk raised due to this, I would want & expect the quickest and most waited response (consider the evacuation of a hundred students and the resources needed) I could get from the local Fire stations regardless of which badge the truck has on it, or if the firefighters are paid or volunteer if there was a fire.

I'd even go as far to say that I would want the ability for an independent panel to decide if the fully volunteer brigade that currently looks after the area was struggling to provide the response or the risk was greater than what they could provide, then if a full time station needed to be responded in addition, then an Independent Panel could implement it. Again the reforms allow this.

Also if a medical emergency was to occur at my sons school the dual response of medically trained firefighters and paramedics to the call to assist and provide life saving care. This is also another initiative that would expand under the reforms.

My point is that there are some very important initiatives that are in the fire service reform legislation, most of this has not been mentioned or reported. It's very important it's about the safety of our son, our most vulnerable and all Victorian's not just a few in some areas.

This legislation may cause some to be upset, and I'm sure there have been many emails sent to you covering the political nature, the perceived issues, and some about the loss of identity. These are all valid points and worthy of consideration.

But there is one thing greater than all of it...

The voice of our most vulnerable, my son doesn't have a voice, both literally and figuratively. I am his voice, and for me to not appeal to you, and ask you to consider the human side, and the core safety issues that will come from modernising and implementing the Fire Service Reforms and the benefit they will have to ALL VICTORIAN'S then I will have failed as a father in standing up and being a voice for not only Lachlan, but Toby too, and all those who are vulnerable and have no voice in this state.

As a volunteer and now as a career firefighter my duty is and will always first and foremost be to protect life & property. And that duty also extends to ensuring that morally we ensure that all Victorian's are protected regardless of badge, fire truck colour or if paid or volunteer...

I'd be more than happy to chat with any of you if you wish to discuss this submission, you can contact me anytime on [REDACTED]

Thank you sincerely for taking the time to read this, and for considering this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Jason Miller
Leading Firefighter
Eltham Fire Station.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Nov 2014 – Current Leading Firefighter Eltham Fire Station

- Continued the development of my skills as a Leading Firefighter, responding to incidents and fires.
- Organising and conducting training & assessment for both career and volunteer firefighters on a daily basis.
- Designated station Health & Safety Representative.
- Delivering Driver Training to volunteers & career firefighters using my qualifications as a Driver Educator/ADI, including the use of my Certificate IV Road Transport (Car Driving Certificate)

May 2014 – Nov 2014 Leading Firefighter Boronia Fire Station

- Continued the development of my skills as a Leading Firefighter, responding to incidents and fires.
- Organising and conducting training & assessment for both career and volunteer firefighters on a daily basis.

Apr 2008 – May 2014 Leading Firefighter Greenvale Fire Station

- Continuing the development of my skills as a Leading Firefighter, responding to incidents and fires.
- Participated in a twelve month secondment to MFESB as a Leading Firefighter attached to Northern Zone & Central Zone. Also completed qualifications in EMR and several MFESB Pumper endorsements (MK5, MK4 & MK4 PT).
- Organising and conducting training & assessment for both career and volunteer firefighters on a daily basis.
- Responsible for the daily checking of equipment and vehicles in readiness for operational response.
- Participating in School & Community Education sessions through CFA Programs such as Brigades In Schools & Fire Ready Meetings.
- Responsible for the development and maintenance of the stations Operational Pre-Plans for response to designated risks within the brigade area.
- Delivering Driver Training to volunteers & career firefighters using my qualifications as a Driver Educator/ADI, including the use of my Certificate IV Road Transport (Car Driving Certificate)
- Certificate IV – Training & Assessment – TAE.

Jun 2007 – Apr 2008 Leading Firefighter Eltham Fire Station

- Performing the role of Leading Firefighter on A platoon at Eltham Fire Station.
- Continuing the development of my skills as a Leading firefighter, responding to incidents and fires.
- Implemented the installation of the FAYe Voice Over Integrated Paging system at Eltham Fire Station.
- Designed and implemented a system for the ordering, recording, and allocation of staff uniform items on station within budget limits. Implemented a station uniform store.
- Arranged the purchase and installation of new secure protected premises key cabinet.
- Assisted with the redesign of the station motor room layout, in particular the location of the staff & volunteer PPE pegs.
- Maintained the station vehicle inventories.

Nov 2006 – Jun 2007 *Qualified Leading Firefighter* Boronia Fire Station

After completing the CFA Leading Firefighter Assessment I have been acting up in the position of Leading Firefighter.

- Working as the Duty Officer at Scorseby Fire Station, responding as the Incident Controller, providing leadership to a busy volunteer brigade.
- Completed the Boronia Fire Brigade – Water Recycling Project.
- Developing Skills Maintenance database for Boronia Staff and possible statewide use.

Jan 2003 – Nov 2006 *LVL 1 F/F – Qualified Firefighter* Boronia Fire Station

- Completed Recruit Course 3/2002 and commenced duty at Boronia Fire Brigade as a Level 1 firefighter.
- Completed increments on the following appliances 2.2D Tanker, Hino Type4 Heavy Pumper, 2.2D Pumper/Tanker.
- Worked as Logistics Officer at Bairnsdale IMACC during the 2003/2004 fires.
- Worked as IMT Co-ordinator at CFA HQ SECC during the 2003/2004 fires.
- Worked at R13 RECC deploying Strike Teams during the 2003/2004 fires.
- Relieved at Eltham Fire Station on numerous occasions as an above strength FF and as a Transitional Leading Firefighter.
- Successfully gained a substantive position as the Firefighter Reliever on C Platoon at Boronia.
- Worked through continuation modules to gain Qualified Firefighter rank in September 2005.
- Co-ordinated Brigades in Schools program from 2007
- Co-ordinated Youth Crew program from 2005 to 2006

- Co-ordinated and managed brigade accounts, and petty cash.
- Implemented the FAYe Voice Over Paging system into Boronia.
- CFA Ground Observer during the North East fires at Moondarra.

Sep 2002 – Jan 2003 **Recruit Firefighter** Fiskville Training College

CFA Recruit firefighter course

- Completed recruit firefighter course 3/2002 on the 10th of January 2003.

Dec 1994 – Dec 2006 **Volunteer Firefighter** CFA

CFA Volunteer Firefighter.

- Community Safety Manager
- Brigade Training Manager
- Delegate to Nillumbik & Banyule Councils – Municipal Fire Prevention Committees.
- Crew Leader.