

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2017

Assistant Clerk Committees  
Department of the Legislative Council  
Fire Servicers Bill Select Committee  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
East Melbourne Vic. 3002

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is in regards to my support for the proposed fire services reform bill. I do wish for my submission to remain "name withheld".

I have been a professional MFB fire-fighter for many years, based in MFB's Western area near the MFB/CFA boundary, but I live near Geelong in a CFA area. Whilst working in MFB's Western area, I turn out and operate regularly with both CFA career and volunteer fire personnel and have the upmost respect for all. It can be a difficult and dangerous job. I see firsthand the personal impact significant incidents have on all those associated with the incident, whether it is a fire, hazardous incident, car accident or other incident of significance. Response time and appropriate resources are critical aspects in all these and the urbanisation of regional areas outside of Melbourne is adding risk and additional strain to our current fire services.

Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this out-dated system, 35 areas are incorrectly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and that most familiar to me, Geelong, are just some of these 35 'country areas'.

These areas need to be modernised as part of the reform of the fire service. As highly urbanised areas, they need a rapid response. This is due to the increased fuel loads in urbanised areas, increased assets, increased nearby structures (exposures) at risk and increased persons directly and potentially affected by the incident. An international standard is a response within 8 minutes, with 7 professional career fire-fighters on two fire trucks. This is to reduce the impact and significance of the incident, as well as providing a reasonable level of safety for the fire-fighters involved in any rescue or fire attack.

When attending an incident on the current MFB/CFA boundary (being highly urbanised) we know, based on past experience, that we cannot rely on a despatched volunteer crew to actually show up as well as knowing that if they do, there will be a delay. This is not a criticism, just the facts as volunteers are not always available nor have the appropriate skills such as using the breathing apparatus to provide the safety backup for other firefighters. Volunteers are involved in their normal lives resulting in an inability to support on occasion or if able to, there is a delay. For me and my fellow firefighters, when putting ourselves at risk we have to know we have processes which provide for other appropriate and available firefighters to go help/support/save us if things go badly wrong. We therefore need to have dedicated firefighters available in these urbanised

