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

areas to provide this support, as well as resulting in less damage and impact to the community.

I have the upmost respect for all volunteers and particularly those who put themselves at risk. I have an understanding of the commitment and self-sacrifice these persons undertake as I have been a volunteer in lifesaving for over 30 years - even being recognised with a national award. It is extremely positive to see that the reform proposal provides for improved recruitment and retention of volunteers within the CFA –something all volunteer organisations increasingly struggle with in today's society.

All Victorians deserve to have a modern fire service that meets the needs of our growing communities. In highly urbanised areas, professional career fire-fighters are required to provide the quick response time. In the correctly defined "country areas", dedicated volunteers will continue to serve the community.

To ensure the safety of all Victorians, and fire-fighters, I ask the committee to please seriously consider the need to support the proposed fire services reform.

The reform of our fire services will help ensure the safety of all communities in our growing state. Additionally, it will ensure the safety of fire-fighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer fire-fighters because of the enormous urban growth, resulting in increased emergency calls.

Along with the modernisation of the fire service, I also respectfully request that you give consideration to the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect fire service employees. Both are needed to be endorsed and implemented by Parliament. This is important to me and my colleagues.

Res	pecti	vely,
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