

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

My name is Liam Morgan-Payler and am currently employed by the cfa as a Qualified Firefighter at Corio Fire Station. I Live in Torquay Victoria.

My specialist qualifications include hazmat technician, accredited aerial appliance operator, CBR, first aid qualified assessor. I also work in an area containing the highest number of structure fires in the state of Victoria.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

Having worked across outer metropolitan Melbourne and the Geelong region, I have had a vast exposure to turning out to areas supported by both staff and volunteer support. Fire service reform appears to me to be the only way forward to ending the highly politicised campaign against fire-fighters, both staff and volunteers alike.

Before I go on, I would like to highlight the fantastic job that the volunteers largely provide and I can honestly say that I have been honoured to work along side them for the last 5 years.

However, when a house is on fire, persons are reported to be trapped inside, and you you are in an appliance with 3 or 4 firefighters it is absolutely essential that next supporting appliance arrives. Unfortunately, when your nearest support comes from a volunteer area with a service delivery compliance of only 29% such is the case when turning out to jobs in our neighbouring brigade of Lara, then safety is hugely compromised.

To commit to an aggressive internal fire attack, where visibility may be 10cm, structural collapse a real possibility and flashover always a present danger, backup of competently trained personnel is absolutely essential. It is simply not acceptable that in some areas where I turnout that backup can only be assured in 29% of the cases.

Protection of life is our primary goal in this job. But protection of my crews life is my absolute concern here. In my role I am asked to constantly do things to protect the lives of others, however the way that I see it, it is only a matter of time before my life will be jeopardised because the 'backup' of neighbouring brigades will fail at a time when it is most needed. Fire service reform will ensure that 'backup' always arrives, not just sometimes arrives and it will provide me with the best chance of returning home to my family at the conclusion of my shift.

In terms of volunteer 'surge capacity' under the proposed reforms, I simply cannot accept that it will be jeopardised in any way! At the 35 integrated stations across the state, volunteers will continue to respond as they currently do today. I have spoken to volunteers at numerous integrated stations across the state and I am yet to speak to a volunteer that says they will no longer respond if the new changes come in. Any argument from persons who say this will be an issue and are not actually from an integrated brigade should not be accepted.

The new fire service reform is far overdue. Politics has created a tense work environment for staff over the last 3 years and it has also created a tense environment for volunteers also. The fire service reform will create a fresh start for both volunteers and staff. The fire service will no longer be used for political advantage and we can all get on with doing what we do best, protecting life and property.

Yours sincerely,  
Liam Morgan-Payler

