

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

1. I am Michael Dancey,

I am a career Leading Firefighter stationed at Corio Fire Brigade, where we have 4 government licensed major hazard facilities.

- Viva Refinery
- Lyondell Basel
- Terminals
- Elgas plant

We also have within our assigned area a number of major life risks and major infrastructure such as:

- Geelong Grammar School
 - Grace McKellar nursing home
 - Geelong Ports
 - High pressure gas line from Viva to Elgas which runs through residential housing and is approximately 3km long and can only be closed at each end.
 - Corio Village Shopping Centre
 - Bell Post Hill Shopping Centre
 - Midway wood chipping
 - MC Herds Abattoir
 - Grain Corp
- Rank: Leading Firefighter
 - Country Fire Authority
 - 8 years career firefighter, 15 years Volunteer at Werribee F.B
 - Qualifications:
 - Completed a 16 week recruit course.
 - Passed the Leading Firefighter assessments both theory and practical.
 - CBR Qualified.
 - Heavy Hazmat Qualified.
 - Qualified Ground Observer.
 - Specialist qualifications:
 - Teleboom Aerial Appliance
 - CBR Technician (Chemical, Biological and Radiological)
 - Heavy Hazmat Technician
 - Breathing Apparatus Support Technician
 - Ground Observer

- Awards:
25 years' Service

2. I live in Werribee and work in Corio

3. I also volunteered in my community for 15 years as a Firefighter, but with the workload that Werribee Fire Brigade was receiving 795 calls per year that it was becoming too busy for a volunteer only brigade and it should become an integrated brigade.

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

- Reasons why as a fire-fighter that it is important to have guaranteed backup - guaranteed that two trucks with at least 7 fire-fighters will be dispatched within 8 minutes:
Let's break down the basic requirements for house fire.
1 x Officer in Charge
1 x Pump Operator
2 x Breathing Apparatus Operators
2 x Backup Breathing Apparatus Operators
1 x Spare Fire-fighter to help get water for the pump operator as water maybe 100 meters away from the truck and given that the truck holds 2000 litres and the B.A Operators are using 495 Litres per minute that is 4 minutes of operational water fire-fighters have until we can get it from a hydrant.
In total that is 7 Fire-fighters for our safety and the community.
- What that response means for better community safety and protection.
What this response means to the community where I work is that it is a low socio economical area and we find that a lot of the houses do not have working smoke alarms due to financial reasons or other reasons so it would be a benefit to the community for their safety and with seven on the fire ground the numbers are also for or safety so we go home to our family's.
The message that has been lost with all this political back and forth is Service Delivery for the community.

- • How employing all career firefighters in one fire service will not affect volunteer turnout or surge capacity.
By employing all career firefighters into one service it could streamline the training to one group. All new recruits would be trained the same way under the one training module and they would then proceed with future training the same way, which could then flow onto Leading Firefighter Assessments and Officer Progression and training. Under the current system MFB and CFA career staff seem to partake very different training strategies, especially when it comes to Leading Firefighter and Station Officer Assessments. Also it would not affect volunteer surge capacity because the CFA would stay a volunteer based organisation and they would still cover their assigned areas of fire coverage and would still be called upon to large scale incidents as they are now. All we are really looking at doing is joining two career forces into one under one badge and the CFA stays as it is with the volunteers going on to cover their towns and in larger areas be supported by the career staff as it is now.
- • That volunteer support will be maintained with operational firefighters (OO's OM's etc being employed by FRV but continuing their roles through an arrangement with CFA)
- • That the reform areas are around the 35 integrated stations primary response areas – no effect on other volunteer brigades or bushfire response.
- • The 35 areas are now highly urbanised – high residential and other risks
- The reform will assist with standardisation of career training/specialist Response/response standards and equipment.
As I noted earlier by being under one service all career firefighters from Recruit through to Senior Station Officer will have received the same Training and sat the same assessments.
- Why it is better to have all career staff being employed by one fire service
It would be better to have all career firefighters employed by one service as you could then have one payroll and all uniforms would be the same cutting Associated costs and greater buying power.
- • The damage the disputation in the workplace has had on your workplace and any additional strain that has had on you and your family.
The damage the VFBV and Liberal Government have done to the working relationship of volunteer and career firefighters is in some areas un-repairable. I have a lot of close friends at Werribee because when I moved there I didn't know anybody. Once I joined the Brigade over

15years I made a lot of close friends but now that this EBA sarger has gone on for 4 years and VFBV sticking their nose into something which will not affect them and have told the volunteers that if it went through there wouldn't be a place for them I have lost a lot of people I call friends.

The VFBV and Liberal Government are determined to drive a wedge between the Volunteers and Career Firefighters which is very unfortunate as I have a lot of respect for the volunteers and it's a shame to see it going down this path and as for my family there are now people who were good friends with my wife will no longer talk to her because I am a career firefighter.

I have seen and heard people carry on about how it will destroy the CFA and that volunteers will leave in droves, yet nobody has shown how it will destroy the CFA and force the volunteers out, as far as I am concerned it is all political scare mongering by the Liberal Government and the VFBV.

- The reform will benefit volunteers as it has included a package to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention across the CFA; and includes funding for volunteer station upgrades etc.

5. Below are examples from my experiences which demonstrate the failures of the current structure:

While responding to alarms at Barwon Maximum Security Prison and Margoneet Medium Security Prison we have been downgraded or cancelled by Lara Fire Brigade before they have reached the prisons and done a full size up. They have relied on information given to them by the prison that it's a false alarm only to arrive and find there is or has been a fire in a cell.

Lara Fire Brigade also on make their service delivery standard less than 70% of the time and that was from CFA data.

Werribee Fire Brigade respond to between 800 to 1000 calls a year now for a full volunteer brigade that is an extremely heavy work load and these men and women also have their own careers to attend, so what happens if one of these people have a busy night of responding to emergency calls then go to work and have an accident on the way or at work, who is liable?

This Brigade has been left to go on as it is but it should be covered as an integrated station that way career firefighters can cover the work load both practical and the administration that way the volunteers are not forced to turn up to every call and they can also spend Christmas, New Years, public holidays, school holidays with their families while career firefighters are on duty 365 days a year 24 hours a day.

Yours sincerely,

Full Name: Michael Dancey
 Leading Firefighter
 Corio Fire Brigade

Contact details:

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