

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Greg Cahill [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 2 July 2017 8:00 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Submission

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

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

1. I am Greg Cahill and my details are as follows:
 - I currently hold the rank of Operations Officer with CFA Victoria
 - I have over 30 years' service with the MFB and 2 years with the CFA
 - My career commenced as a recruit firefighter with the MFB and I have worked up through the ranks which include Qualified Firefighter, Senior Firefighter, Leading Firefighter, Station Officer, Senior Station Officer and currently hold the rank and position of Operations Officer with the CFA.
 - Qualifications that I possess include:
 - Diploma in Management
 - Diploma of Public Safety (Firefighting Management)
 - Certificate IV in Public Safety (Emergency Communications Centre Operations)
 - Certificate IV in Public Safety (Firefighting Supervision)
 - Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations)
 - Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations)
 - Certificate IV Fire Technology
 - Certificate IV Training and Assessment
 - Awards and commendations that I have received include:
 - Chief Officers Commendation
 - Executive Officers Commendation
 - National Medal
 - Long and Good Service Medal
 - National Emergency Medal
2. I currently live in Swan Hill and work at CFA District 18 Headquarters in the position of Operations Officer.
3. I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:
 - After working in the MFB for over 30 years the ability to make critical decisions during dynamic emergency environments has been underpinned by the knowledge that the required resources are readily available. Most importantly the ability to have the required amount of fully trained professional firefighters at hand is not only essential for firefighter safety but also for that of public safety. In June 2015 I started work with the CFA in Mildura, a growing regional city with an increasing population and quite quickly I experienced first-hand the difficulties combatting fire and emergencies with limited resources.

It was at this time the staff manning levels were increased allowing for a second fully staffed firefighting vehicle to be brought on-line, this added resource provided for a better community service and increased firefighter safety. As the officer in charge at a fire or incident it is critical to have as many as possible fully trained operational firefighters on scene to carry out safe firefighting practices with the minimum number being seven. It is true that sometimes due to unforeseen circumstances or crewing levels that firefighting practices commence with less than seven personnel but this inherently has effects on firefighting operations and safety.

The primary focus for increased manning levels at fire stations is without doubt Community Safety, the ability to have an appropriate number of fully trained firefighters on scene in the shortest amount of time is vital for the protection of life and property. My first-hand experience with the addition of increased staffing levels at integrated stations in the CFA primarily benefits the community with increased safety and protection, this situation has also reduced the reliance on volunteer response at certain times allowing them to go about their normal day to day activities. I will however say that there are many occasions especially in rural environments that volunteer support for the community and staff firefighters is critical and this support including bushfire response in my opinion will not be affected in any way by the proposed reforms.

- There have been ill-informed and sometimes malicious comments made by many which has only led to division and confusion particularly for volunteers and members of the general public. My primary role as Operations Officer in the Mallee region of Victoria is for that of volunteer support and includes emergency preparedness, service delivery performance and risk management strategies. I can honestly state that in my opinion the proposed reforms will have absolutely no impact on volunteer turnout or surge capacity. There may be a slight decrease in volunteer turn-outs at integrated stations where staffing levels are increased however this process is already in place because of Government commitments to increased manning levels and is independent from the proposed reforms.
- There are areas in Victoria serviced by 35 CFA integrated stations which are now highly urbanised with continued growth and risks, many of those stations work side by side with the MFB and both services over recent years have identified the need to operate on a common platform which includes standard operating procedures, vehicles and equipment. With over 30 years' experience as an operational firefighter, officer and now manager, it is in my belief that it absolutely makes common sense to have one fire service for career staff and one for volunteer firefighters. There will be benefits and opportunities for both volunteers and career staff arising from the proposed changes, the CFA volunteers will receive a package to assist in recruitment and retention along with station upgrades and career staff will benefit from the use of standardised training, equipment and response standards.
- In 2013 I lost a kidney to cancer which I have no doubt was due to the numerous exposures to chemicals and carcinogens over my thirty years as an operational firefighter, the proposed Presumptive Rights Compensation will not help me with what happened in 2013 however the importance of the reform cannot be underestimated. I have lost count of the amount of cancer related firefighter deaths that I have witnessed and scientific studies have now provided evidence to that which many of us already presumed, the support that this bill provides is crucial for the welfare of the cancer sufferers and their families with treatment and rehabilitation.
- I have no problem in saying that I am a lot closer to the end of my career than the beginning and unfortunately the end has been drawn closer by the stresses and strains that have impacted on me in the last couple of years. I have experienced sights and events that I would wish on no person yet here I find myself planning the end of my career because of the stress that I have been experiencing largely attributed to the continued attacks on me because of my occupation as a career firefighter.

I have just spoken about my personnel situation but I can absolutely guarantee you that I am not alone, the continued attacks on firefighters is also an attack on their families and it **IS** taking a toll, I have never witnessed in my long career the amount of career personnel who have openly stated that they have sought professional help because of the stresses that they have been experiencing. I also have serious concerns for the welfare of many if this bill is not passed, I truly think that many of the people who have contributed to the continued attacks on career firefighters do not understand the damage that they have caused, moral is the lowest that I have witnessed in over thirty one years and I have sincere concerns for the health and wellbeing of many of my colleagues.

- Fire service reform is long overdue and I implore you all to carefully weigh up your considerations and support the reform. There is no question that there will be a lot of work to perform with the

proposed changes however the support is there including that from the Chief Fire Officer of the CFA, the Emergency Management Commissioner and both career and volunteer firefighters.

Yours Sincerely,

Gregory Peter Cahill

Ph: [REDACTED]



This email is for official use only. The information in this communication is privileged and confidential, intended only for the use of the individual or entity named. If you are not the intended recipient, any dissemination, copying or use of the information is strictly prohibited. Any personal information in this email must be handled in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and applicable laws. If you have received this transmission in error please inform us by return email and then delete it immediately from your system.