

Brendan Crozier

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

**Regarding the fire fighters' presumptive rights compensation and fire services legislation amendment (reform) Bill 2017.**

My name is Brendan Crozier, I am a Level 3 Fire Fighter currently working at the Sunbury Fire Brigade. I have been employed with the CFA for 2 years and previous to that worked for Parks Victoria as a Project Fire Fighter. I have also served as a volunteer with the Newham Fire brigade for 24 years.

I am writing as I believe your assistance to bring reform to our fire services is critical.

I have been disheartened with how the current situation has been politicised and it feels like the most important issue has been lost, which is providing the best possible service to the community. This is the reason I joined the CFA as a junior volunteer back in 1992 and why I have more recently pursued a career with the fire services, in order to serve my community.

I support the proposed reforms for the following reasons:

**1. Guaranteed response**

As a fire fighter, my safety and that of my colleagues is paramount. Working at a station such as Sunbury, where our nearest guaranteed response is at least 20 minutes away (MFB station 48 -Taylors Lakes) I believe this poses a direct risk to my safety on the fire ground, but also is not providing the best possible to service to the community. By having 7 fire fighters dispatched within 8 minutes, the success of a potential rescue and the overall fire fight will be greatly enhanced, while providing additional safety to me and my crew mates. Currently at Sunbury, we are supported by a dedicated group of volunteers, however as volunteers, there is no guarantee of how many will attend and the skill sets of those available i.e Breathing Apparatus Qualified / HAZMAT qualified. In addition, with the proposed growth of areas such as Sunbury, the stress and demand on volunteers will be increased as the number of incidents increase. These reforms will help relieve that stress at these integrated stations.

**2. Improved interoperability**

While fellow colleagues from the MFB have similar training, skills and experience, there are differences between the services, which I believe would serve the community better, if brought closer in line. For example, currently the CFA and MFB use different radios, which pose extra complexities with communications as not every fire fighter on the fire ground, will have both radios, which can lead to miscommunication, making the job more difficult as well as posing potential safety risks. By bringing career staff together, we can standardise our procedures, equipment, appliances etc, improving our overall interoperability.

**3. Holistic approach**

As a career staff member, with previous experience from another agency (Parks Victoria) and as a CFA volunteer, I believe I have a more holistic understanding of our fire services. As a career fire fighter I have had the opportunity to work across the state, in areas such as Caroline Springs, Craigieburn, Bendigo, Mildura and Wangaratta. I understand that these reforms will affect me as a staff member, more than that of the average rural brigade, where the reforms will have little if any impact. I believe there has been a great deal of scare mongering and miss information, causing great distress to these

brigades and creating a fear of change. During this, the real point has been missed, “What is best for the community?” These reforms will not negatively affect the brigades such as Newham, where I started my association with the CFA. These brigades are the backbones of the community and epitomise people looking out for each other while being able to provide important surge capacity for the state. None of this will change as a result of the proposed reforms. There will be extra funding for these brigades, which can only be a good thing for the community.

**4. Additional Funding for volunteers**

Under the proposed reform, volunteers will receive a \$52 million CFA support fund for improved training, increased brigade support and improved health and safety. This will also be supported with a new \$44 million station building program. This additional funding will help serve the community better

**5. Presumptive Rights Compensation**

While I accept that the chance of exposure to contaminants and the potential for contracting cancer is greatly increased by my chosen profession, I would like to think that me, and my colleagues; both career and volunteer, will have some form of protection, should the unthinkable occur. These reforms will help protect those who help protect the community.

**6. Out dated fire service**

Victoria’s fire service boundaries have not been changed significantly for 60 years. To class areas such as Springvale, Dandenong, Frankston and Craigieburn as country seems ludicrous, with the increase of housing, industry and infrastructure, these areas demand a modern fire service with a rapid response.

Overall I believe the proposed reforms will provide a better service to the community, by improving guaranteed response from a single career staff organisation and better interoperability than the current model. It also provides a safer workplace for me and my colleagues as well as much needed additional funding for volunteers.

I implore you to vote using facts with the utmost consideration on how can we achieve the best fire response for all Victorians in the safest manner, and ignore the rhetoric, scaremongering and politics that have overshadowed the issues for far too long.

Kind Regards,



Brendan Crozier