

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

Inquiry into the Firefighters Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2017.

I would like to start by clearly stating that I wish for my details and identity to remain private and confidential.

I am a Leading Firefighter with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, and I have been a Firefighter for nine years.

During my employment with the MFB I have gained the following Qualifications:

- Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations)
- Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations)
- HAZMAT Technician
- Long Duration BA Operator
- BA Service Technician
- Urban Search and Rescue Technician
- Trench Rescue Technician
- Shipboard Firefighter & Ship to Ship Transfer qualified
- Forklift operator

I also received the Nation Service Medal for my contribution to The Black Saturday event.

I reside in [REDACTED] and I am based at Fire station 38 South Melbourne.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reforms for the following reasons:

I support the proposed reforms firstly as it will introduce the Presumptive Rights Legislation. This Legislation is absolutely crucial to support the health and safety of all Firefighters. Unfortunately, the work that we do is very dangerous. Utilising all of our personal protective equipment is no guarantee that we will not be exposed to any number of carcinogens throughout our careers.

Science has proven that we have a far greater chance of contracting a number of different cancers due to these exposures throughout our careers.

The proposed Presumptive Legislation will give us all the peace of mind that if we are struck down by one of the listed cancers, we will be entitled to compensation without our families having to endure endless battles to prove that we have contracted the illness whilst serving our communities.

During my nine years with the MFB I have been involved with, amongst many others, two of Victoria's largest fire events. Black Saturday, and the Hazelwood mine fire.

Both of these events required unprecedented commitments of resource from both the MFB and CFA. The interoperability of these two organisations at these events was made all the more difficult for a number of reasons. Communications were extremely difficult due to each organisation using different radio networks. The operational procedures are different, which in turn creates confusion when tasks are allocated.

The equipment that the two organisations use is also different, which hampers the flexibility of crew utilisation, with confusion of what capability's and limitations each appliance has.

More and more we are being utilised as a State resource, not just within the Metropolitan Fire District. We have sent HAZMAT teams across the state to support the CFA crews at protracted incidents. We have utilised our swift water rescue teams during flooding events across the state, as well as interstate. Our Urban Search and Rescue Technicians have also been utilised across the state, and interstate, carrying out Rapid Impact Assessments of properties affected by fire and major weather events.

There has been much talk and media coverage of the proposed reforms having an impact on the 'Surge Capacity' of crews from urban areas to respond to large events. If the response to Black Saturday and The Hazelwood mine fire are examined, it is plain to see that when it is required, large numbers of crews can be mobilised from the Metropolitan Fire brigade in support from both on shift personnel and off duty personnel.

Personnel at the Hazelwood mine fire were actively involved in all facets of the event. This included firefighting in the mine, asset protection of mine infrastructure, strategic and logistical support, and Atmospheric monitoring for not only the health and safety of the firefighting operations, but also monitoring the Atmosphere in and around the town of Morwel, to insure the health and safety of the residents.

During the 45 days that the Hazelwood Mine fire burned, there were Coach loads of Firefighters being bused down to Morwel for both day and night shifts for the majority of the campaign. This clearly demonstrates the ability to respond large numbers of crews for protracted incidents. There is absolutely no reason for this to change, in fact it will only strengthen as a result of the proposed reforms. During such long term events such as this, it is simply not reasonable to expect volunteer firefighters to be available for the duration.

I support the proposed reforms because it will give both organisations, if brought together as one professional service, the opportunity to streamline training, procedures, and communications. It will provide the state of Victoria a much more agile Fire and Rescue Emergency service, thus creating a modern Fire service with the ability to provide a world class emergency service to the people of Victoria, and indeed the other states of Australia if called upon for assistance.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Your sincerely,

Leading Firefighter [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]