

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am Qualified Firefighter Andrew Braemar of the CFA. I have just under 4 years' service as a Career firefighter with the CFA

I live in Drouin and work at the Morwell Fire Station in Morwell

I have been a volunteer Firefighter for CFA since 2010. I currently volunteer at the Drouin Fire Brigade

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

A clear separation of career and volunteer firefighter management will have many benefits. The needs and capabilities of career firefighters and volunteer firefighters are vastly different. Having a dedicated management stream for both groups will be able to exactly cater to their needs in terms of training, admin support, field support and psychological support. At the moment the CFA is an organisation that is trying to compromise between these two groups. With neither group getting close to the ideal outcome. As an example I have been stationed at Traralgon Fire Station and Morwell Fire station since graduating from the recruit firefighter course. Both these stations offer Technical (rope) rescue. I have had to wait almost 4 years before I had an opportunity to complete a basic rope rescue course. What has happened is Technical rescue has been modulised into smaller courses to cater for the needs of volunteers. But as a career Firefighter I have the capability to complete the full Technical rescue package in one course as the MFB currently does. So my training and therefore my response capability and therefore community safety has been negatively affected because the CFA doesn't differentiate between the capability of career and volunteer firefighters.

The separation of career staff from the CFA and the creation of one career firefighter service for the state will have a positive impact on volunteering. I will use myself as an example. I was a volunteer

firefighter before becoming a career firefighter. It is extremely hard to volunteer and work for the same organisation doing exactly the same role. There are social issues with regards to the current toxic climate with the VFVB attacking career firefighters. There are also the ethical issues of working and volunteering for the same organisation within the same role. With a separation of staff and volunteer organisations, this will remove a lot of hurdles that currently stand in the way of career staff volunteering in their home communities.

The separation of Career staff from the CFA will have a major impact on staff morale and community expectations. As a current career firefighter with the CFA I feel professionally very undervalued. I am not allowed to serve the community to my full potential. The CFA deliberately do not advertise career firefighter presence to the surrounding communities. From my experience, lots of people in the surrounding communities do not know that they are served by career firefighters and the extra capabilities they have. For example a career firefighter crew will be on the road within 90secs with a fully qualified and competent crew. This is something that cannot be guaranteed with volunteer response. It can be something of a lottery if a volunteer brigade can even turn out a crew in a timely manner, let alone a competent crew. As a career firefighter this can greatly affect our morale. Not only are we not getting public recognition for our capabilities but in this current climate we are being actively demonised, attacked and defamed. This hurts us as we care very deeply about the community and providing the best level of response in an emergency situation. Being part of a statewide career fire service will let the public know and understand our capabilities to a much greater level.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Braemar

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