

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

My name is Rohan Taylor. I am a Senior Station Officer with Country Fire Authority (CFA). I have been employed with CFA for fifteen years in September this year. I hold a large number of qualifications, both core and specialist qualifications. Some of my specialist qualifications are:

- Steep and High Angle Rescue
- Confined Space Rescue
- Trench Rescue
- Bronto 42 metre Ladder Platform
- Teleboom
- Aerial Pumper
- Ground Observer
- LP Gas Flare Off
- Emergency Medical Response
- Division Commander
- Sector Commander
- Strike Team Leader
- Staging Area Manager

I live in Trafalgar and I am currently stationed at Morwell Fire Station (CFA) on D Platoon.

In total, I have been with CFA for over 28 years both as a volunteer and career fire fighter.

I write to express my support for the proposed fire services reform.

All Victorian, professional and volunteer fire-fighters, deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities.

I have been involved in CFA for all of my adult life.

I joined CFA in 1989 (as a volunteer) as a young 19 year old wanting to make a commitment to my community, gain skills and meet new people within the local area. This brigade was completely run by volunteers and with the systems the brigade had put in place it ran exceptionally well. Fire call response was very good, with great numbers of members able to turnout during the day and night.

I moved from the area and transferred to another brigade in the South Eastern suburbs in 1993. When I joined this brigade they were attending approximately 110 fire calls per year, when I left that brigade in 2003 they were attending 450 fire calls per year. This brigade now attends over 600 calls per year, and they still remain a fully volunteer brigade, but they have CFA Career Fire Fighters respond to support them for a large number of their fire calls.

These brigades both ran extremely well in the early days but the pressures of family, home, work life balance and the urban and population growth, has, and continues to put pressures on brigade fire call responses with smaller numbers (members) turning out to fire calls because of these commitments. This has, and will impact on the fire service delivery for those communities.

In 2002, after a lot of very hard work, I was successful in being accepted as a professional fire fighter with Country Fire Authority, at that stage I couldn't have been more happier being a part of what I grew up to know with the uniqueness of CFA's integrated service model, but now I have seen firsthand how this model is slowly diminishing with the growth of Victoria's population and housing, and it now needs reform.

I have worked at a large number of integrated fire stations over the last 15 years and I have personally seen the growth of the country area of Victoria, and how the outer suburbs of Melbourne are now expansive as well as the difficulty for volunteers being able to maintain the commitment to the integrated stations, as well as the full volunteer brigades compared to 20 years ago. The urban sprawl is not only subject to the outer suburbs of Melbourne, but the provincial cities of Victoria are also expanding as well, and we need to keep up with this growth with a modern fire service response model.

Please don't think I am discrediting the CFA volunteers, I am still one as well. I'm not currently registered with my local brigade here in Gippsland, but I still assist them with training and fire call response (especially day time) and I still enjoy being a part of the community, but the proposed fire service reform is needed and is long overdue.

I can say this with 28 years' experience, this is the time for reform for Victoria's fire services, and I can say this with 28 years' experience, that this will not impact on volunteers, because they are a very adaptable group of people and more volunteers want reform as well.

To ensure the safety of all Victorians - including me as a fire-fighter, I ask you to please support for **The Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017**.

Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of all Victorians, and all communities in our growing state. Additionally, it will ensure the safety of our fire-fighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer fire-fighters because of the enormous urban growth resulting in increased emergency calls.

With Fire Service Reform, CFA volunteers will have the opportunity to re-shape a world class fully volunteer fire service, without the impacts of Enterprise Bargaining Agreements every four years, they will have more opportunity to set direction for their training, And they will also still have the long history of their Country Fire Authority.

The need for reform is very real, even just to stop the vilification of professional fire fighters in all form of media. This is taking a toll on many fire fighters, as well as me. I have been abused in the streets of Morwell, for just for doing my job, and I take that very personally.

Fire Service Reform will stop the personal attacks on fire fighters in all forms of media.

For CFA and MFB (Metropolitan Fire Brigade) Fire Fighters, we need, and welcome Fire Service Reform as well.

I personally have a genuine want for this bill to pass, not only for the Fire Service Reform, but also for The Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation. I have been waiting for many years now for The Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation to be passed through the Lower House of the Victoria Parliament, only to see it filibustered three times and then voted down. My family deserve to know that I, and they, will be protected, and looked after due to the increased risk that I have in developing fire related cancers because of my employment.

I would be happy to expand on any of my points to the committee, if required.

Yours sincerely,

Rohan Taylor

Senior Station Officer
Morwell Fire Station

