

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

1. I am Grant Bews

- I currently hold the position of Leading Firefighter at the Corio Fire Station
- I am employed by the Country Fire Authority
- As of the 1-7-17, I have been employed by CFA for 7 years.
- I hold a number of specialist qualifications/increments such as but not limited to ; HAZMAT / CBR operator, BA Support operator, Ground Observer, 42m Ladder Platform, Ariel Pumper, Road Accident Rescue and Steep Angle Rope Rescue, Heavy Pumper

2. I live in the town of Anglesea **and work in** the northern suburbs of Geelong, predominantly in the areas of Corio and Norlane. I am stationed at the Corio Fire Station. The station is one of CFA's 'major' stations and for the 2016/2017 financial year did 1362 calls. Corio has the highest number of actual fires in the state within its primary area. Pockets of Corio and Norlane hold 80% government housing.

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

- The CFA which was formed to service the country area of Victoria in 1958 does not in its current form reflect the needs of the community living in urbanised areas of Victoria.
- Areas of Victoria which were classified as country in the mid 1950's are now considered to be metro and cities such as Geelong. The old concept of Staff supporting volunteers simply doesn't have any effect now.
- I strongly disagree that Volunteers should be consulted whenever CFA professional FF's have to negotiate a new EBA with the State Government. With the fire services reform this will be avoided.
- I find it totally discouraging that volunteers feel that they are affected by our EBA and that they are prepared to risk community safety before the better of Victorian citizens.
- The VFBV are constantly misleading their membership with ill-informed suggestions that volunteers will be disadvantaged. The premier, minister, chief officer and CFA board have all said CFA volunteers will not be disadvantaged.
- Geelong's population is experiencing high growth with an extra 70'000 residents moving into land developments and populating the southern suburbs. It's estimated that Geelong's population will be over 300'000 in the near future.

- It is my opinion that the community and rate payers are entitled to a reliable fire service that they are paying for through their fire services levy. Residents should not be made to pay a levy hoping that "Volunteers" may or may not turn up to assist in the event of a fire. Several volunteer brigades do not have the required skills mix or experienced members qualified in BA apparatus to conduct an internal search for occupants as well as fire suppression. This is often left for the career FF's to carry out as this is one of the first qualifications we acquire to carry out the job that the community is entitled to through their levy and expects of us.
- Volunteers on a regular basis do not meet the required SDS set by CFA. This is because in the event that they respond, they need to battle an increased amount of traffic plus adhere to all road rules to respond to their station.
- It is commonplace to regularly attend fires and incidents in Corio's **primary** area and have no volunteer attendance. These include but are not limited to fully involved structure fires, various non structure fires including car fires, motor vehicle accidents, grass fires, gas leaks, alarms etc.
- We regularly respond into our support areas often finding ourselves first on scene and working on our own.
- When a CFA volunteer appliance turns out there is no requirement for them to adhere to minimum crewing numbers (the crew may consist of only 1 person being the driver) or hold skills mix appropriate for fire fighting (the crew may not possess any breathing apparatus (BA) wearers crucial to protect airways in structural and many other types of fires).
- Guaranteed staff response equates to considerably better community safety and protection as well as considerably better firefighter safety.
- Reform areas are around the 35 integrated stations primary response areas = no effect on other volunteer brigades or bushfire response.
- The reform will assist with standardisation of career training/specialist response/response standards and equipment.
- The reform will benefit volunteers as it has included a package to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention across the CFA; and includes funding for volunteer station upgrades.

Yours sincerely,



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