

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

As a matter of Privacy I request that my submission remain private and confidential.

My Name is Terry Heafield and I am employed by the Country Fire Authority in the position of Operations Officer located in CFA District 23 which is located in Wangaratta in the North East of Victoria.

My service within CFA started in 2001 when I became volunteer at Melton Fire Brigade before becoming a career fire-fighter in March 2003. Since 2003 I have progressed through the rank structure to my current position. I have also on occasions acted up to the Operations Manager position. During my career I have worked at many integrated fire stations around the state.

During my career I have responded to different types of emergencies from motor vehicle accidents, structure fires, industrial rescues, hazardous materials incidents, siege situations, floods and major bush fires. Major incidents that I have been involved in include, but is not limited to 2006 Victorian Bushfires, 2009 bush fires, Hazelwood Mine Fire, Lake Rowan/Stewarton Fire. As part of my dedication to all emergencies I have received the National Emergency Medal for the 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires and a Unit Citation for Service in 2014 for actions at the Hazelwood Mine Fire.

Throughout my career training and continuous improvement have been a primary focus of mine to ensure that I can contribute to community in the best possible way. Since my recruit course in 2003 where I received the CEO Award for the recruit with the highest academic results I have continued to undertake training to the best of my ability. My study has allowed me gain a number of qualifications and competencies including a Graduate Certificate in Applied Management which was obtain through the Australian Institute of Police Management. I have also completed an Advanced Certificate in Accounting, an Associate Diploma in Accounting, a Bachelor of Business in Accounting, Certificate III in Fire fighting Operations. Other qualifications that I have obtained include, but is not limited to:

- Planning Officer
- Safety Officer
- Operations Officer
- Logistics Officer
- Fire Officer (Level 2 Incident Controller)
- Leading Fire Fighter
- Sector Commander
- Strike Team Leader
- Crew Leader

A career fire-fighter undertakes 1000's of hours of training throughout their careers both formal and informal to provide the best possible service they can to a changing environment and community.

I have always been proactive to try and identify safety issues for fire-fighters and the community and have undertaken the role of Health and Safety Officer at a number of locations and am currently part of the North East Region OH&S Committee.

A major factor in my life is mental illness of fire-fighters. I have been suffering with mental illness for a number of years and last year completed a bicycle ride around Victoria (approx. 2300km) to raise awareness of the issues and to reduce stigma associated with the illness. During the ride I visited around 45 fire stations both integrated and volunteer. Since then I have continued this campaign and have spoken at a number of forums, fire stations and community groups around the state. I will continue to undertake this campaign in the effort to help just one person. The dispute that has been running for a number of years has not only had an effect on my health and wellbeing, but has also had a major impact on my family. I have had to take time off work as a result of this dispute and has been a major influence in my health not improving. I have sought medical support in this matter and wish that the reform will change the current work climate and enable me to continue my recovery.

Other activities that I undertake in my community include being a White Ribbon Ambassador, a Team Leader at Carevan Albury, a blood donor and am heavily involved in local sport including coaching juniors, captaining seniors and being a junior coordinator. In the past I have also held positions on various committees and been involved in leadership roles within the community.

I have always lived in areas of Victoria that CFA have supplied the fire and emergency response. This includes Melton, Clifton Springs and Wodonga. As with many areas of the state of Victoria these areas have grown not only in population but also risk. With the ever changing community it makes sense that services supplied by the Government changes to improve and supply the best possible service the community expects.

As with every aspect of life, business, health, technology, laws for example there is continuous improvement and change. This can be seen from activities all through history from the weapons used in war to the smart phone that has become part of normal life. If Governments, organisations or individuals do not adapt to the change often the worst can happen. This has been seen where organisations did not change or move with the times and have now closed or have limited market share and productivity. Kodak were one such company that did not embrace digital technology and stayed with film photography found themselves filing for bankruptcy as the community embraced the digital technology. Recently Australia has also seem major retailers, such as Dick Smith Electronics close their operations due to a number of forces including on line trading. Another example I would like to mention is the war on terror and how defence forces have had to change their strategies and tactics away from conventional warfare to try and halt the spread of terror activities around the world.

With the information contained above am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform. Not only do I believe this is a move to adapt to the changing community, the presumptive legislation is piece of mind for me and my family having been trained at Fiskville and exposed to a number of carcinogenic at incidents including Hazelwood Mine fire.

Whilst working in the emergency service sector I have been in situations that I feel have been not only dangerous but avoidable. This includes having no or little guaranteed backup - guaranteed that two trucks with at least 7 fire-fighters will be dispatched within 8 minutes.

As a community member I feel that response from the reform model is better for community safety and protection and protection of my family. Volunteers play a vital role within the community and will continue to do so and as a result I feel the employing all career fire-fighters in one fire service will not affect volunteer turnout or surge capacity. Volunteers will be continued to be supported through CFA and employees from FRV. Also I feel that the reforms of the areas are around the 35 integrated stations primary response areas will have no effect on the brigades that I service in the Benalla and Mansfield areas as the areas identified are now highly urbanised with an increase in risk. In a conversation that I had recently with a volunteer he stated that the MFB area should have been changed over the years as the metropolitan area of Melbourne increased. To me I see this reform doing just that and having a positive impact on the delivery of the emergency response in those areas.

I feel having a standardised career fire service will assist with the standardisation of career training/specialist response/response standards and equipment. This could have a positive impact on the Victorian budget due to a reduction in cost of different equipment and duplication of administration costs. The fire service has already seen an improvement in interoperability but this reform will again increase this where the risks are identified.

Not only will volunteers still provide an emergency service capability in the country area of Victoria the reform also identifies a number of other benefits which include presumptive legislation and a package to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention across the CFA; and includes funding for volunteer station upgrades etc.

In conclusion I feel that a reform to the fire service is well overdue. We have seen changes in other emergency service response including the amalgamation of the ambulance services into one single service of Ambulance Victoria and the introduction of PSO into the Victorian Police force. In my opinion these reforms have seen and improvement in service delivery and hence a safer Victorian community.

Yours sincerely



Terry Heafield



