

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

To Fire Service Reform Select Committee 2017

Victorian Parliament House

Submission from : Mr Peter John Cunningham.

Employed by : Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

Rank : Leading Fire Fighter.

31 Years Employment as an operational Firefighter.

I have obtained the following qualifications with the MFB, Pumper and Pumper Tanker operator, Water Tanker operator, Breathing Apparatus, TeleBoom, Heavy Rescue, Trench Rescue, & Urban Search & Rescue

I have also obtained a Certificate IV Training & Assessment used within the MFB for training.

I live in St Helena, and currently work at Thomastown Fire Station, being No 7 Station on B Platoon.

Firstly, I would like to thank Fire Service Reform Select Committee for the chance to provide input and have my say in this very important matter.

I must say that I fully support the Fire Service Reform Bill and the long overdue update of both Fire Services Acts and out-dated boundaries.

Working in the MFB where we respond to fire calls both inside the MFB boundary, and outside the MFB boundary, with both CFA full time staff and/or CFA volunteers, has allowed me to see and inform you of where the problems are.

Over the years Melbourne and the outer suburbs has grown and the population density along with it. What were once defined as rural areas and covered by CFA volunteer Fire Stations, have now been developed into large suburbs that require fulltime services that a volunteer fire service would never of been expedited to provide.

Our traffic and road congestion is steadily increasing. Along with this, is the ever increasing number of fire calls per year. It is through no fault of their own, but the CFA volunteers can't be expected to first drive to the CFA volunteer station, wait for a full crew to arrive, they initiate their turnout. All the time the clock is counting, while any fire will be rapidly increasing in size.

I'm sure it's well known by all on the Fire Service Reform Committee that, fire response in the first minutes is critical for the protection of life and to prevent further loss of life. It has been proven numerous times by statistics, that show, that if Fire Appliances with Breathing Apparatus trained fire crew, arrive within 7.7 minutes of the fire starting, with an internal fire attack commenced, the fire can be contained to the room of origin. Confining the fire to the room of origin, which is the difference between families having a home to go back to, or a structure that has to be totally rebuilt.

I greatly respect the role volunteers play in our community. Especially their work in our peak fire season. And this should never be taken away from them.

An Act of Parliament cannot expect volunteers to provide a 24hour, 7 day a week cover, with the average onscreen time of 7.7minutes, which is what our community expect and needs. Especially In this day and age, when we are all paying a Fire Service Levy, shouldn't we all have an equal level of fire service cover.

The issue of the MFB -CFA boundary that is embedded in the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958, SCHEDULE 2 is out-dated and not keeping up with urban growth. We know that our outer suburbs have grown extensively and the old Act was never written to cover this suburban growth for this period of time or for this increase in population. The fact that the CFA –MFB boundary has not changed for such a long period of time, shows that both Acts must be reviewed and changes made.

I strongly support the merging of both fire services and the merging of two Acts of Parliament into a modern single ACT that places the MFB-CFA boundaries outside of the ACT and under review by the relevant Minister or an expert panel. That way the future growth of Melbourne and the MFB -CFA boundary will be reviewed in a timely manner without having to change the ACT each time. And residents in growth areas will have their level fire response reviewed as often as is required.

In conclusion, we need to update our fire service Act to bring us up with modern service delivery. You have a great opportunity to make changes that will benefit all Victorians, now and well into the future.

Yours Sincerely

Mr Peter Cunningham

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