

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Patrick McGrath [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 3 July 2017 4:47 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Inquiry into the Firefighters' presumptive rights compensation and fire services legislation amendment bill 2017.

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

My name is Patrick McGrath and I have been a professional Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) fire-fighter for 30 years.

In March last year I took on a secondment, and now permanent transfer, to further my career as a professional CFA fire-fighter. I am currently based at Morwell fire station, in the Latrobe Valley, as a Leading Fire-Fighter.

As well as my experiences as a fire-fighter for 31 years, I have the following specialist qualifications;

- Emergency Medical Response
- Hydraulic Platform
- Turntable Ladder
- Heavy Rescue
- Aerial ladder platform
- Teleboom

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

In my area of Morwell, I've seen first-hand what happens when despatched to a fire or incident. The support, through no fault of their own, from adjoining volunteer brigades can be a little sporadic at times (especially during business hours as the volunteers understandably have work and family commitments).

As a fire-fighter, you need to know that the support will be there, that another crew will arrive to back you up. Quite often the support from neighbouring volunteer brigades will turn out with only one person on the appliance because of work or other commitments. To fight a structure fire or attend an incident with a minimum of personnel can be very dangerous.

I've attended house fires, here in the Latrobe Valley, where our crew, (one Officer, one Pump Operator and one Leading Fire-fighter), were the only personnel with Breathing Apparatus (BA) qualifications. Other volunteer crews arrived but none had BA qualifications. Entering a burning building with two crew is how we are trained to perform a search and rescue and fight the fire safely. It is a common occurrence, however, in Morwell, to enter a burning building on your own, hoping that the oncoming brigade has BA qualified personnel on board to assist and back you up.

As mentioned, I was a Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade fire-fighter. In Melbourne, you always knew you would have a full complement of trained crew arriving within 8 minutes to back you up. Now having been stationed at Morwell, I can see real deficiencies in the safety of fire-fighters and the level of fire cover that people in the Latrobe Valley experience.

Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this out-dated system, 35 areas are wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and Geelong are just some of the 35 'country areas'.

These areas need to be modernised as they are highly urbanised areas as part of the reform of the fire service. A rapid 8 minute response, with 7 professional career fire-fighters on two fire trucks is the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas.

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

Volunteer fire-fighters will not be adversely affected by the reform;

- Volunteer turnout and surge capacity will remain the same
- Volunteer support will be maintained with operational fire-fighters
- The reform covers areas only around the 35 intergrated stations primary response areas – there will be no effect on other volunteer brigades or bushfire response.
- The reform will benefit volunteers as it has included a package to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention across the CFA.
- The reform includes funding for volunteer station upgrades etc.

To ensure the safety of all Victorians - including myself as a fire-fighter, I ask you to please seriously consider your support for the proposed fire services reform.

Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of your constituents, 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.

I also respectfully submit that you give consideration to my request to modernise the fire service along with the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect fire service employees. Both are needed to be endorsed and implemented by Parliament before the commencement of the fire season. This is important to my colleagues and I.

Sincerely

Patrick McGrath



Patrick McGrath Leading Firefighter
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Protecting lives and property



cfa.vic.gov.au



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