

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

My name is Tim Nicholas. I am a Qualified Firefighter with the MFB and have been a full-time firefighter for 5 years. I am currently stationed at Eastern Hill Fire Station on C Platoon and have worked at this station for 18 months. Prior to this, I have largely worked at the northern stations of Carlton, Broadmeadows and Pascoe Vale.

I am in full support of the proposed fire services reforms.

At present, I live in inner Melbourne and am very fortunate to have the full service of the MFB as a resident if needed. Looking into the future, I may be living in an outer suburban or regional area with my young family and would not feel safe with the fire brigade response currently offered in these areas.

I have lived in Melbourne all my life and have seen the population growth and urbanisation of the greater metropolitan and regional areas throughout my 34 years. I find it unbelievable that despite all this growth, the fire service boundaries have not significantly changed in almost double that time. That means that those people living in urbanised areas in high growth outer suburbs and regional cities don't get the same coverage that is provided in the inner to middle Melbourne suburbs. I believe that the communities in areas such as Frankston and Geelong deserve (and pay for) a full-time fire service, with two appliances with a minimum seven firefighters responding within 8 minutes. I have seen first-hand the enormous difference a few minutes can have in emergency situations such as the development of a structural fire or the progression of a cardiac arrest.

During time stationed at Broadmeadows with the MFB, I was involved in firefighting operations with integrated CFA stations such as Greenvale and Craigieburn. These are examples of fire stations that have moved from rural volunteer operations to integrated urban fire brigades due to population growth over the past few decades. These areas must have better responses and with the proposed fire service reforms they will come into line with the current MFB response. Professionally, if I was a firefighter in a current CFA integrated station, I would want to know that I had a fully trained crew on a second appliance arriving within minutes of my appliance for any fire, rescue or incident. At present, there is no such guarantee.

CFA volunteers play a very important part in our rural firefighting capacity. Each time I am turned out as part of a strike team to rural areas for major bushfires I am willing and happy to support them and work with them. These reforms have no impact on the volunteer service (in fact they include features to assist with recruitment, retention and funding) and all to do with better protecting Victoria.

Finally, I want to convey to the Committee the emotional toll this ongoing dispute has had on both my colleagues and me. What began as an EBA negotiation has turned into a public, politically-driven agenda with little regard for the major issue at hand – public safety. When making your recommendations and vote, please make this your deciding factor.

Yours Sincerely

Tim Nicholas