To the Fire Services Reform Bill Committee,

My name is Rowan Chapple and I have been employed by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade for 27 ½ years. I am a Leading Firefighter and am currently based at Oakleigh fire Station. I wish to express my support for the Firefighter's presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

Over this time I have seen vast expansion of residential areas on the fringe of MFB coverage, and have had a large number of incidents and fires where we have been responded jointly with CFA brigades on the fringe of the Metropolitan Fire District. This has highlighted a number of shortcomings in relation to the expertise and qualification of responding personnel – often in time critical situations.

Particularly it is common to have fringe Brigades attending structure fires (such as house or factory fires) with only partial crews (ie. 2 or 3 people) and often these personnel are not adequately trained for the task. Specifically the ability to wear and operate in breathing apparatus is critical for both operational efficiency and the health and safety of crews involved. It is common that some or all volunteers attending are not trained or able to wear breathing apparatus, and as such cannot be utilised or deployed on the fire ground. Note that breathing apparatus competency does not form part of the CFA minimum skills requirements. It is however a critical requirement for firefighting operations within urban areas.

I have seen this trend increase and escalate in past years, and extends as the growth corridor pushes further out from the CBD. I live in Frankston, and with my knowledge of operations in the industry, am concerned that I do not receive the same protection, qualified personnel and service delivery as the areas currently covered by MFB. (Note, I am aware that Frankston does have Career staff coverage, however the neighbouring areas and supporting brigades are largely volunteer.)

Kind regards,

Rowan Chapple

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