

LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au  
 INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS  
 COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION  
 AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

Hello, I am Senior Station Officer Ben Taylor and work at Geelong City Fire Station in the Country Fire Authority. I have been employed by CFA as a career fire-fighter for the last 14 years. Some of the qualifications/courses I have completed in that time is as follows

- 16 week CFA Recruit Course
- Continuation training to reach the required standard of LFF over the period of 5 years
- 3 week LFF Development course
- 1 week LFF Assessment
- Continuation training to reach the required standard of SO over the period of 3 years
- 3 Week SO Development course
- 1 Week SO Assessment
- Continuation training to reach the required standard of SSO and OO

- Road Accident Rescue Operator
- Confined space Rescue Operator
- Rope rescue Operator
- Trench Rescue Operator
- Urban Search and Rescue Category 2 Operator
- Heavy Pumper and Tanker Increment
- Aerial Appliance Increment
- Strike Team Leader endorsement
- Promotional Assessment Team Bushfire Assessor

Needless to say these all take time and effort and the hours of training I have undertaken to achieve these is hard to quantify. I have failed to mention the countless hours of training I have received and delivered whilst on shift at work. Compare these hours to that of a volunteer, you will see they are very far from the same.

I am no different to countless other career firefighters who have strived to be the best they can at their given role. I also feel privileged to be have been able to fulfil my chosen career while serving the state and people of Victoria

This is as stated my career not a hobby or activity I undertake in my spare time, it is my profession and one that I love.

I live in on the outskirts of Geelong and work at Geelong City Fire Station.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons.

Where I work I am regularly responded to areas that rely on volunteer response, including my address that is in the Leopold Brigade primary area. On most occasions my appliance will reach the location of the fire or incident long before the primary brigades arrival. This is no fault of the volunteers that serve their communities, as I do they need to work and cannot be available 24 hours a day. I would like to think that another appliance with enough suitably trained and equipped firefighters was on its way to not only help me carry out my job but help the community that we are here to serve.

7 suitably trained firefighters on scene within 8 minutes is not only necessary but imperative to the safety of the responding personnel and bringing the incident to a speedy conclusion.

Bringing all career firefighters together will alter the response into these areas and ensure an adequate timely arrival of crews. If a volunteer crew arrive and deem the incident to be safe the other responding appliances can return to station. Surely anyone can see that a guaranteed response straight away is better than a little response sometime soon.

I grew up in Leopold and have seen it grow from a sleepy small town to a booming residential area with all the infrastructure to match. When I went to Leopold Primary School there were approximately 300-400 students now there are approximately 900 and growing every year. I can't say Leopold will ever need career staff but a guaranteed response into this type of area is imperative, and Leopold is not alone just a representation of where I live. All around the metro area of Melbourne and other regional cities (Ballarat, Bendigo, Colac, Warrnambool, Mildura etc.) the same is happening, the CFA has not kept up with community expansion and growth and cannot if reform is not implemented.

Under these reforms volunteers will not be affected and their funding will be enhanced, the support they get from admin and operations will not change. In this age volunteering and the people who want to are diminishing, people are time poor and work demands are ever increasing, I have chosen fire fighting as my career and would not want to be a schoolteacher, a nurse or a police officer in my spare time. The reforms allow for training and retention of volunteers which is sorely needed but also support operationally with guaranteed response, after all are we not a fire service, so let firefighters serve.

For a lot of my career I have been in dispute with my employer over my conditions of employment. The fact that my colleagues and I

need to drive change through a workplace agreement speaks volumes for the relationship with management. The vilification I have endured over the last 12 months with attacks on firefighters in the media is unheard of and has significantly affected my mental well being and my relationships both at work but more importantly at home. This reform seemed like a light at the end of a very long dark and draining tunnel, the end of which seems to get closer only to be dragged further away by political games of which I want no part. I used to be proud to wear my uniform home from work or to the supermarket but not anymore.

I am not a union thug or bully, I have been covered in strangers blood, picked up body parts, pulled kids from cars, tried to protect peoples belongings during fire and flood only to be called a lazy grubby thug on the front page. I am a father who just wants to go to work and do the job I love, why then am I criticised for wanting my colleagues to be safer and the community to be better protected.

Lastly all career firefighters have stories of volunteer brigades failing to respond or not having suitably trained personnel on the fireground. This is not volunteer bashing but facts that happen time and time again, it is good luck not good management that prevents more injury and death. You will be inundated with fact during this process all of which is taken from the CFA's own data I am happy to produce more if requested.

I implore you to vote for this reform, it has been widely commentated on that there is little detail in the legislation, let the Fire Service Commissioner and the leaders of both organisations be the ones to decide the details and build the Fire service that Victoria needs and deserves.

Yours Sincerely  
Senior Station Officer Ben Taylor  
Geelong City Fire Station  
69 McKillop St Geelong



Please read the below it is a story you would not of read in the paper. My crew and I were responded to this call, it was mid afternoon on a very hot and humid late summers day. On arrival I found paramedics on scene and an elderly man collapsed in the roof cavity of an old house with an asbestos roof. He was unconscious and unresponsive

the paramedics had not entered the roof cavity for fear of asbestos contamination.

We made access into the roof and used our ladder platform to remove the gentleman through the roof and onto the ground. I then had to take my crew and some of the paramedics through asbestos decontamination procedures. After he was transported the paramedic told me he did not like the chances for the gentleman due to his age and body temperature. Below is a letter of thanks from his wife. Please read and reflect on it.

To Whom It May Concern, [REDACTED]

On March 4th 2016, my husband entered the roof space to do some minor maintenance work, as he had done many times in his younger years.

This time was to be different. On my return home he answered my call from where he was working, acknowledging that he knew I was home. When he did not come inside I went to check on his whereabouts + could not find him. In that time he had moved back towards the manhole and collapsed near the opening. He had over heated (T° 42° plus d had got hot) and had a heart attack, I phoned 000. The ambulance came in 9 min. time and a major "rescue" took place, where he was lifted out through the roof. I was given little hope for his survival by the ambulance people and by the staff in Emergency, that evening each of our grandchildren were taken in, to ICU to kiss him (goodbye), while friends prayed. Miraculously he survived and I was able to bring him home after nearly 4 weeks.

We are indebted to all who worked tirelessly to rescue him + treat him to the best of their ability.

Thank you for the part you played bringing back my husband! Thank you that my husband was able to enjoy Christmas 2016 with his family!  
Thank you! Thank you!  
Sincerely,  
Robyn (+ Ross) Grazules.

In attendance that day (from photo and camera footage)  
Ambulance 7879  
Ambulance 7461  
Paramedic 7498  
Firetruck MCL 629  
Brands sky lift F42RL  
Police car MCW 073  
plus Emergency + ICU staff.

Thank you!

