

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am Firefighter Callan Randall Stewart for the Country Fire Authority since August 2016 and a Breathing apparatus technician with the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board since February 2013

I live in Altona Meadows and work in Greenvale.

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

As a new operational firefighter my experiences and interaction with the current system are somewhat limited but I have been exposed first hand to a system which in my belief is fundamentally broken, a system that has failed to grow as the population of Victoria has grown and the risk diversified, a system that has members not only mentally and physically exhausted but a system that is letting the down community that we vow to protect.

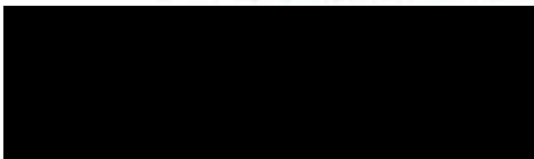
Regardless of if you are for or against fire service reform a trend is emerging that is being fuelled by the ongoing media coverage and that is that firefighters can no longer be trusted, firefighters are not there for the right reasons and that the community is unsafe.

We have legislation and documentation that due to the size and diversity of the country area of Victoria is so broad and ambiguous that it leads to uncertainty and confusion.

Standard operating procedures that have to envelope brigades that have response areas that are remote with little life risk to fully urbanised environments that are densely populated of high economic importance with major ramifications for the state of Victoria if they were to be lost.

With the enactment of this legislation the ambiguity and need to encompass such a dynamic and large area would cease, the ability for an urbanised fire service servicing areas of high risk where a prompt and proficient response is required in order to protect life and property in an area where seconds count. And a rural fire service which can be intertwined into a community such as it now that a 90 second response and on scene time would not provide a tangible benefit to the community due to the tyranny of distance, a service that could provide a surge capacity when boots on the ground are needed while ensuring its sister service can protect the urbanised environment and Legislation and operating procedures that reflect this.

Fire service reform is more than just a name change it's about providing the framework to allow the representative bodies to protect Victorians with the fire service they expect, need and deserve.


Yours sincerely,
Callan Stewart
