

By email: LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am writing to you to lodge a submission to the above inquiry. I request that my submission remain confidential.

I am a Leading Firefighter with the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Service Board. I have 14 years of service with qualifications in Hazardous materials, Breathing apparatus and a Resuscitation certificate. I have been awarded a National emergency medal.

I have also been volunteering for my community CFA for the past 20 years.

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

**1. Home owners and the community have a right to expect a professional emergency service.**

Recently government implemented reforms for collection of the fire service levy through rate notices. This reform ensured all home owners make a fair contribution to the provision of emergency services. Home owners and community have a right to expect a professional response to an emergency, particularly as they make a significant financial contribution to these services.

**2. Expanded urban landscape with complex emergency service requirements.**

The urban landscape has changed, with densely populated areas having expanded past the original boundaries established by the MFB and CFA. There are now billions of dollars of assets and infrastructure in these areas. These highly urbanised areas are now facing complex emergency service requirements e.g. medical first response, car accidents, chemical spills and industrial accidents, house and warehouse fires.

The proposed reforms to create a single professional emergency service in these areas will provided the standardisation of career training, specialist training, guaranteed response times, and response standards and equipment. The proposed reform to have only career firefighters at the integrated stations in the outer suburban stations significantly improves emergency services to these communities.

A volunteer response does not the necessarily have the appropriately trained staff for the complexity of emergency calls and cannot necessarily deliver a satisfactory or guaranteed response time.

A professional response would include:-

- Guaranteed two trucks with at least 7 firefighters dispatched within 8 minutes.
- Standardisation career training, specialist response and response standards and equipment.

### **3. CFA remains unaffected and will benefit from the reforms**

CFA volunteers are appropriate in low density rural communities. The proposed reform to employ career firefighters in one fire service servicing urban areas does not necessarily affect volunteer turnout or surge capacity. The proposed reforms ensures that volunteer support will be maintained with operational firefighters and the reforms propose to provide benefits to the volunteers through packages to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention across the CFA as well as funding for volunteer station upgrades.

### **4. Personal impact**

The debates on the reforms for emergency services and the proposed structural changes have had a significant impact on my morale and that of my colleagues. There has been intense media coverage that has been inaccurate and the issues have become political in nature.

As a result of the highly political environment surrounding the EBA negotiations and now the proposed fire services reforms my local CFA group have ostracised me and made it clear that I am no longer welcome at the group. I have volunteered at my local CFA station long before I became a career fire-fighter.

Yours sincerely,

