

Warren Scott

CONFIDENTIAL**RE: FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017**

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Warren Scott and I am a Leading Fire Fighter currently employed with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. I have been a professional Fire fighter for 6 and a half years now and currently hold numerous qualifications such as a Diploma of Public Safety, Command and Control, Heavy Road Rescue, Breathing Apparatus, First Responder Emergency Medical Response and both Structural Fire and Wildfire Training.

I would like to take this opportunity to express to you why I think the passing of this bill is an extremely important step for the future of all Victorians.

I have worked at various MFB Fire Stations throughout my career and have worked alongside volunteer fire fighters on numerous occasions. I appreciate all the work and time that volunteer fire fighters do on behalf of the community and there is no doubt that they are extremely helpful and an essential service. However, there are times when these people are unable to answer the page or call for a fire service to respond, or a delay in responding, therefore leaving a 'hole' in the system which alternatively means that someone in the community that has required assistance has been left unanswered or had a late or inadequate response.

I can give an example of this when I had to sit on the balcony of my house in 2012 and watch a house in Chirnside Park burn because of the delayed response for a fire truck to respond. I watched from my balcony with binoculars as a house caught fire approximately 1 kilometre away. I rang 000 as soon as I realised and then waited for the response which seemed to take forever. My neighbours were also out on their balcony observing the same situation and asked me "why are they taking so long?" I had to explain to them that unfortunately we were covered by a volunteer service brigade and there would be a delay in response whilst they were being paged and attending the station etc.

As we watched the house continue to burn I finally heard the sound of sirens coming. When I looked through my binoculars I observed that it was a Croydon MFB truck that was first on scene. I could only assume that 000 were unable to raise a truck from Chirnside Park or Lilydale and therefore responded Croydon out of their area to attend.

Obviously this raises a number of concerns being that time is absolutely of the essence when dealing with a fire and fire spread. Unfortunately as Melbourne has grown and population expanded the

fire service has failed to expand with it, leaving the community with a dangerous and outdated system which honestly just isn't working.

As a fire fighter and understanding the dangers of the job I NEED to know that there is a truck coming to back me up with qualified fire fighters who are able to wear BA (Breathing Apparatuses) to enter that structure should I myself or any other occupants require rescuing. Hence the reason we need to have seven trained fire fighters responding to an incident.

As a resident of Chirnside Park I pay a fire service levy as does every other rate paying Victorian. However I do not receive the same level of service as people who reside in the Metropolitan Fire District. I am dumbfounded to see how in this day and age an area such as Chirnside Park or Lilydale with a built up area of residential, commercial and large shopping complexes still has a Volunteer Fire Service looking after the area.

I believe the fire Services Reform is a huge step forward for the Community and all Victorians. With the proposed introduction of a committee to analyse risk assessments in suburban areas and volume of calls etc. Victorians will feel safer knowing that once a municipality or area becomes highly populated or a higher risk that a submission could be entered for this area to become covered by full time Fire Service staff.

Unfortunately do to this bitter and ugly dispute that has taken place over the past few years I feel that the media and political influences have blurred what this Bill is trying to achieve. I hope you as a committee can find my feelings on this piece of legislation useful in your decision making process.

I would also like to request that the committee treat my submission as confidential.

Regards,

Warren Scott