

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

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

My name is Daniel Tawse. I am a Leading Firefighter at Dandenong Fire Station. I have been employed by CFA for 12 years.

My fire service qualifications include:

- Structure / Wildfire Firefighter
- Heavy pumper and Tanker endorsements
- Ladder Platform endorsement
- Emergency Medical Response
- Road Accident Rescue operator
- High Angle Rescue operator
- Confined Space Rescue operator
- HAZMAT Detection operator
- Ground Observer
- Certificate 4 Training and Assessment

I have been awarded a National Emergency Medal for service during the Black Saturday fires in 2009 and a 10 Year Service Medal.

I live in Neerim South and am a volunteer with the Neerim South Fire Brigade. Prior to my employment with CFA I was a volunteer with Wandin Fire Brigade for 3 years.

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

- There have been a number of critical task analyses conducted on fireground effectiveness for crews of various sizes; one of the most recent by the National Institute of Standards and Technology in the US. The aim of these studies has been to break the job of safely fighting a basic structure fire down into a series of critical tasks and to evaluate how effective different crew sizes are.

The need to have a minimum of seven firefighters dispatched as a minimum comes from these studies. Most studies show seven is a bare minimum to get the job done safely and effectively.

Seven firefighters enables us to comply to Standard Operating Procedures by providing people to perform the following roles:

- Incident Controller
- Pump operator
- BA Control Officer / First Aid
- 2 x BA wearers
- 2 x Standby BA wearers

The studies also assume that all crew members will be competent structural firefighters. Currently for CFA firefighters there is frequently no guarantee that we will get enough people, in a reasonable timeframe, with the required skills to make up the required safe number of firefighters.

These reforms will provide mechanisms to ensure that firefighters are provided the security of a guaranteed response of a minimum of seven appropriately qualified personnel.

- In rural areas such as Neerim South where I live and volunteer these reforms will have no negative impact and may even have a positive impact. Career firefighters only support into these areas for very large incidents and specialist skills. This will not change.

Without having to manage career firefighters CFA will be able to focus its attention solely on the needs of volunteers, brigades such as Neerim South should see an improvement in support from CFA.

- In urban areas that are currently serviced by CFA, the community will get an improvement in service delivery from the reforms. Ensuring the provision of the quickest response, regardless of historical brigade areas, is what the community expects and should receive. The system currently means that an incident in a highly urban area may have a delayed or insufficient response due to volunteers being unavailable or not suitably qualified. At present, this can occur even if career firefighters are available in neighbouring areas.

Decisions about whether a community is better served by the higher level of training and guaranteed response provided by career firefighters should be made based purely on public safety requirements and facts, not on emotion or a desire to avoid upsetting volunteers. These reforms will put that decision making in the hands of an independent panel.

- The skills required by firefighters to provide full protection for large, urbanised communities are broad and complex. Many of them are perishable skills that require constant use or training to maintain. Career firefighters, especially at busy locations, have to work hard to maintain their basic skills, and the additional specialist skills, at a sufficiently high standard. It is unrealistic to expect volunteers to be able to maintain the same range of skills to the same standard. A few may be able to but, due to availability and exposure, it is unlikely to get seven appropriately qualified volunteers in a reasonable timeframe.

Career firefighters do a 19 week full time recruit course, 3 year apprenticeship and a significant range of professional development and further training throughout their career. Volunteers do not get the same level of training. This is not attacking or denigrating volunteers, it is just a fact.

These reforms will allow volunteers to focus their attention and limited time available for training on providing a basic, high standard of protection for their communities and the broader community when called on for large incidents.

In conclusion I believe these reforms will improve service delivery to the community with little to no impact to the vast majority of volunteers.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Tawse

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