

FIRE SERVICES BILL SELECT COMMITTEE 2017**Date:** 4 July 2017**Submitter:** Gerard Woodlock**Address:** [REDACTED]**Mobile:** [REDACTED]**STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY REQUESTED FOR THIS SUBMISSION**

Firefighting Experience: 40 years fully operational firefighting mainly in the Melbourne CBD and surrounding suburbs
30 years of that is as a Station Officer and Senior Station Officer

With clear structures being put into place, the impact on Fire Services can only be a positive one in the long term. As the urban sprawl continues, the employment of career firefighters gives the community protection with a guaranteed turnout to emergencies (including emergency medical response) within a 7.7minute response time or less.

The effects on volunteers will be, if properly managed, very beneficial. With new structures in place, there will be a clear understanding of operations, procedures and expectations at integrated stations. This will enable volunteer firefighters to remain at their residences or places of work while being kept aware of the situation should the emergency escalate. The need to keep volunteer firefighters as part of the Fire Service in integrated areas is very important as has been demonstrated in major emergencies e.g. large bushfires. Obviously, both career firefighters and volunteer firefighters have the interests of the community at heart. However, only the career firefighters are able to guarantee a turnout and a response time as mentioned above. Rural brigades will not be affected. Access to the Presumptive Cancer Legislation will be applicable to all firefighters.

The cost impacts, both short and long term, are difficult to foresee. However, with single administration and management structures, considerable streamlining will be achieved. This, in turn, should involve less bureaucracy, less complexity and less financial cost.

The new underlying policy rationale will foster a cultural change which is required as the result of further population growth. Despite any such cultural change, the fundamental reason for the existence of fire services is to continue protecting the community.

I encourage you to support the Fire Services Reform Bill.