

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

Inquiry into the fire fighters presumptive rights compensation and fire service legislation amendment (reform) Bill 2017

My name is Matt Bunton and I am a professional Country Fire Authority fire fighter currently at the rank of Fire Fighter level 3. I have been serving for 2 ½ years as a professional fire fighter at Geelong City. In this time I have gained my 42m Bronto ladder platform qualification as well as pumper and tanker qualifications. I am a qualified rope operator and currently working towards my Road Accident Rescue (RAR) qualification (this is rigorous training process, usually 6 months in training followed up with multiple practical assessments).

This is a vital service that CFA delivers especially given that the controlling agency to our North (Corio SES) has struggled to field members and qualified RAR operators therefore have called on our help to cover Northern Geelong. Geelong City Heavy rescue is guaranteed to respond in 90 seconds unless already committed at an incident, this is ideal for patient outcome with getting the casualty to a hospital and or operating room within the "golden hour"- The term is derived from the concept that trauma victims will have the best chance of survival if they receive definitive medical intervention within the first hour of suffering their injury.

Just 6 weeks ago on 25th May 2017 when I was working a day shift at Geelong City and we were called at approximately 2.15pm to a job of smoke issuing from a unit. On route we had further info that a person was unaccounted for possibly still inside with mental health issues. As per current dispatch standards, our pumper and Ladder platform were dispatched along with Geelong West volunteers as it was their primary area, which gives us a crew of only 5 professional fire fighters (2 less than recommended for us to safely conduct a rescue in a structure fire). This is an international standard and it is vital we meet this expectation for the safety of the community and our Firefighting crews inside a burning structure, this fire services reform will ensures my safety and the safety of the community. My Leading Fire Fighter and I undertook an aggressive internal fire fight and primary search of this structure to ensure no one was inside like first reported. We as a Crew inside a smoke filled extremely hot atmosphere were left in an unsafe position if anything had gone wrong, there was no one spare to drag us out as we were left short crewed on the fire ground.

It's totally understandable that many volunteer brigades find it hard to respond to an fire/ incident effectively during working hours primarily throughout the week, but if one of mine or your friend or family member is in need, the more professional firefighters that can be responded the better, by all means the volunteers play a vital role but it's the professional staff that need to fill the gaps when they fail to respond. The best outcome here is for the Professional fire fighters to return as they are not needed and the volunteer crew get the job done. This is not an isolated incident, its happening more and more frequently in outer metro and regional centres.

In the end we requested for another Geelong city appliance as well as a 2 Corio appliances which we knew could respond within 90 seconds. We need a modern fire service that delivers the best outcomes for the community.

By combining the CFA and MFB professional Fire fighters into one service FRV, means only one thing, a modernised fire service fit for this day and age. By no means is it going to affect volunteers or the surge capacity which is invaluable for large campaigning fires, flood events or summer grass fires. There's absolutely no reason why volunteers should be up in arms over this reform, no one is getting pushed out or anything taken from them, the community is just getting a better fire service and guaranteed response in regional and metro areas.

We as career fire fighters have and always will continue to support, train, mentor and work alongside our valuable volunteers. I personally have been a CFA volunteer for almost 10 years which is where my interest came from to pursue a Career firefighter role.

Ultimately, these reforms will assist in rectifying these problems by fixing crew numbers in these areas and ensuring my colleagues and I can go to work each day knowing that we will go home to our families safely.

Your sincerely



Matt Bunton Firefighter

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