

CONFIDENTIAL

Submission – Fire Services Bill Select Committee 2017

[REDACTED]

1. My name is [REDACTED]
2. Address; [REDACTED]
3. [REDACTED]
4. Email; [REDACTED]
5. I am currently employed by CFA as PAD Supervisor [REDACTED], at the Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre – Huntly Campus.
6. I have a Bachelor of Economics Degree and a post Graduate Diploma of Studies in Humanities plus hold Certificate II and III in Firefighting Operations
7. I have been a volunteer CFA firefighter for 38 years, having held various ranks, including that of Deputy Group Officer and 1st Lieutenant with the Springvale Fire Brigade.
8. Additionally for the past 17 years I have been employed by CFA as a Practical Area / Drill [PAD] Operator and Supervisor.
9. Since 2008, I have managed the Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre – Huntly Campus [near Bendigo] [also known as the CFA Regional Training Ground - Huntly].
10. Throughout my volunteer service I have been an active firefighter initially with the CFA's Norlane Fire Brigade and since 1980 with Springvale Fire Brigade.
11. During this time I have been the senior volunteer officer at Springvale plus commanded CFA Strike Teams to fight fires in New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria – including Ash Wednesday, the 1997 Mt Dandenong Fires, the 2009 Black Saturday Fires plus the fires in the Hazelwood Coal Mine in early 2000 and more recently in 2014.
12. In addition, I am an endorsed Level 3 Logistics Officer, having worked in various Incident Management Teams controlling fires in the outer areas of Melbourne, central, eastern and north western parts of Victoria.
13. I have been awarded the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria [VFBV] Gold Star for service to the Springvale Brigade and volunteer firefighters.
14. I am an Honorary Life Member of the Country Fire Authority [2015] and Springvale Fire Brigade, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria District Council No 8, Flinders Urban Fire Brigades Association and the Yarra Valley Fire Brigades Association
15. It is with this background I would like to make the following submission.
16. I have taken the considered decision to write to you to convey my support for the proposed fire services reform.

17. The Victorian fire services boundaries have not changed for a considerable length of time, and no longer reflect the urbanised areas of the greater metropolitan Melbourne area and provincial cities/towns across the State of Victoria.
18. I am of the view that all citizens of Victorian deserve a modern fire service that meets the needs of our growing communities, including a level of firefighter response that permits effective weight of fire attack and enables the safety of the firefighting crews to be maintained, irrespective of where a person resides or works.
19. This needs to reflect the role and function of all firefighters [both volunteer and career], to this end reform is needed to ensure that all continue to work in harmony, professionally and safely to meet a common aim – this being to provide for the protection of life, property and the environment for all Victorians.
20. It is my experience that training is not equal between career and volunteer staff, nor within the volunteers across different areas of the state, nor does it adequately reflect the role of urban, rural firefighters or crew leaders / fire controller.
21. While career firefighters undertake an initial 16 to 18 week training course, volunteers do not, likewise there is little if any requirement for continuation training – this short coming needs to be addressed
22. It has been my observations over the last 17 years that training courses are not equal in their course content and assessment criteria yet the same qualification is awarded.
23. Due to these differences in course content and assessment standard, the net result or product of this training are firefighters of different abilities and competency yet all holding the same qualification.
24. This needs to change, all training whether it be for career or volunteer firefighters need to deliver the same outcome and competency across the breath of the fire service irrespective of where a person works or resides.
25. During my employment, I have witnessed the under capitalisation of training and training facilities / training grounds or campuses.
26. The State need to invest more into the upgrading of training, be it courses and/or training grounds – these need to ‘state of the art’ [an example is the MFB facility at Cragieburn].
27. A capital replacement program is needed to ensure props, buildings and equipment is replaced in a timely manner and firefighters are not forced to make do [by way of example, at my facility the fire truck is 26 years old and then only a tanker as there are no spare pumpers for firefighter to train with!].

28. I take some comfort from the announced commitment to invest a considerable amount of monies in to CFA volunteer training [\$43 million], and training facilities.
29. On the subject of integration of career and volunteer firefighter working together as one within one location, all be it under two management structures [being Fire Rescue Victoria and a volunteer only CFA], I support this, as we work together currently in my Brigade of Springvale and am confident will continue to do so into the future.
30. I have experienced career and volunteer members working cooperatively since 1980 and it works and works well, and should be encouraged to continue irrespective of the EBA implications.
31. I can but repeat that career and volunteer firefighters work together now and will into the future and I support the reforms proposed by the Bill as I am confident that we all will work as one maintaining the common aim – this being to provide for the protection of life, property and the environment for all Victorians.
32. The community still needs our help in their time of emergency, irrespective of what transpires in the political or industrial relations / EBA arena, our commitment to protect the community remains unwavering, our service must and will continue.
33. From my discussions with numerous fellow volunteer firefighters, be it at work at the Huntly Training Campus or at the Springvale Brigade, I have come to the conclusion that the existing surge capacity provided by the volunteer members will be retained post the proposed reforms, I can state this because....
34. No member has indicated to me that they are contemplating walking away from a reformed CFA.
35. Yes, some have expressed a feeling of uncertainty as to how the future fire service delivery is to look and work as Fire Rescue Victoria and CFA [within the City of Greater Bendigo and Springvale areas], all have said to me they feel comfortable/confident with the leadership within the District HQ and Brigade [be it career or volunteer officers] to lead and manage this change into the coming months.
36. Likewise, discussions have been had as to the commitment from Government to invest \$100 million into a reformed volunteer only CFA, all agree this will greatly enhance and support the reform to enable volunteer to continue to provide the service to the community.
37. To ensure the safety of all Victorians - including myself as citizen and a firefighter, I ask you to support for the proposed fire services reform Bill.

Thank you for allowing me to present my views.