

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I Kyle McCarthy and I write to you as a Career Firefighter with the Country Fire Authority.

- I currently hold the rank of Firefighter Level 2,
- I currently live in Mildura and am stationed at Mildura Fire Station,
- I have been serving as Career Firefighter for 2 years,
- Collectively I have over 15 years of service within the CFA,
- Of which 13 years as an active CFA Volunteer holding positions as high as 1st Lt,
- I continue as a volunteer member at Baddaginnie Rural Fire Brigade's
- I have nationally recognised leadership and management qualifications.

My knowledge of CFA is vast and involves both volunteer and career perspectives. I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following main reasons.

1. Mental Health of Staff and Volunteers.

The most forefront issue is the mental health impacts, both on volunteer and staff colleagues. I believe that;

- Lengthy, failed EBA negotiations have caused a long drawn out process that is having massive impacts on the mental health and morale of staff and volunteers.
- Integration passed the point of no return when the VFBV put forward changes to the federal legislation regarding volunteer consultation in EBA's.
- This now in effect, will see future EBA negotiations similar in nature to what we are currently experiencing.
- The State Government and CFA as an employer have a duty of care to provide safe, inclusive and supportive working environments.
- I believe that the working environments, especially leading up to and during further industrial negotiations will result in unnecessary conflicts between staff and volunteers if the reform is not adopted.

2. Victoria's population growth.

- Victoria's population is expanding rapidly already putting strain on the fully volunteer, outer metro areas and regional cities not adequately covered by staff stations.

- The fire service reform has proposed legislation for the development of a fire district and boundaries review committee. This will stream line future communities that require staffing.

3. Volunteer numbers are declining in the current model.

I have experienced volunteer numbers and availability become less and less. This is a dynamic environment and very independent on location. I believe the following are some may issues for this decline in numbers.

- Financial hardships felt by employers releasing volunteers to attend emergencies.
- Volunteers travelling big distances from home locations to work, not allowing them to turnout during working hours.
- Volunteers at integrated stations getting bored, and the feeling of little value when it comes to responding to emergencies. This is due to the rapid response of staff and rapid intervention at emergencies, therefor often not requiring the assistance of further crews.

To conclude my brief submission, I fully support and trust the State Government of Victoria to implement, THE FIREFIGHTERS PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017.

Yours sincerely,

Kyle James McCarthy

