

Submission to Fire Service Bill Select Committee

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Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you to express my support for the Fire Service Reform Bill you have been chosen to examine.

I am a career officer with CFA and am in my twenty eighth year of service as a professional firefighter. I have also served as a junior and senior volunteer member with CFA.

The reform before you has much merit. It will reform the professional and volunteer parts of the services we currently have. The reform will simplify the industrial landscape and most importantly leave CFA intact as a stand alone service for volunteers. The CFA can focus solely on the betterment of the service for the community and volunteers across the state without the constant distraction of industrial disputation. The VFBV can then also concentrate on what is best for the community and the volunteers they serve without distraction. The CFA is a vital organisation for Victoria. The volunteers who serve the community do a fantastic job and deserve a service that focuses solely on supporting the work they do.

The advantages of the professional firefighters being brought together into one service are many. Currently there are many differences between the two services. For example, appliances, training, uniform, helmets, SOP's, equipment and the list can go on as there are many more. The reform will bring together the professional firefighters across the state. It will enable FRV to stream line all the things I have listed above and more. All the equipment and work practices will become common to all professional fire fighters. This will equal a massive saving to the tax payer as well negate any difficulties we currently experience due to different equipment when the CFA and MFB professional firefighters work together. We will be one service.

FRV will continue to support CFA in the outer fringe of Melbourne and in the large provincial cities as is current practice with CFA professional fire fighters and CFA volunteers. FRV will be able to expand on the current support models as it progresses toward appliance based staffing. This means better value and protection for all the communities currently protected by CFA professional fire fighters. This also has advantages in firefighter safety. With more available firefighters FRV will be able to combat fires with more safety and control emergencies more quickly thus resulting in less time spent at emergencies by both professional and volunteer firefighters. This will reduce the work load on some volunteers brigades who may be under

stress due to the current high work load.

Unfortunately it is a fact that volunteerism is not as popular as it was. This means that there are times when some brigades cannot respond in a timely manner to the needs of the community they try so hard to protect. FRV will help fill this gap by responding further and with more personnel. This is a primary way that FRV can protect the community every day with the increased resources it will have.

The government has pledged to increase the funding to CFA to enhance volunteerism across Victoria. This is vital as some brigades are finding it difficult to get personnel and appliances to emergencies. This work then may fall back onto other volunteer brigades exacerbating the problem. The reform will allow FRV to support some of these brigades.

The presumptive legislation is vitally important to all fire fighters, volunteer and professional. This legislation will protect all of our firefighters who contract cancer through the important work they do. I beg you to support this legislation as well as the reform legislation. I have colleagues who have had cancer at too young an age. People with young families as well as retired personnel. The late former Chief Officer Brian Potter is one who fought for this legislation to become law.

I sincerely hope you will carefully consider the merit of this reform and presumptive legislation and will allow the fire services to progress into modern streamlined services that can better serve the needs of all Victorians. I am optimistic about this reform and what it will achieve for the community, volunteers and professional firefighters in Victoria. I am looking forward to being able to protect the community I have served for so long better.

Regards,

Mark Nevill.
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