

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

### 1. I am Stuart William Spencer

- I currently hold the position of Leading Firefighter at the Corio Fire Station
- I am employed by the Country Fire Authority
- As of the 05/07/17, I have been employed by CFA for 5.5 years.
- I hold a number of specialist qualifications/increments such as HAZMAT operator, 37m Bronto ladder platform operator, BA Support operator, High Angle rescue and Ground Observer

**2. I live in** the suburb of Ocean Grove in the Bellarine **and work in** the northern suburbs of Geelong, predominantly in the areas of Corio and Norlane. I am stationed at the Corio Fire Station. The station is one of CFA's 'major' stations and does approx. 1400 calls per year. Corio has the highest number of actual fires in the state within its primary area. Pockets of Corio and Norlane hold 80% government housing.

### **3. I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:**

- The CFA model that staff are there to support volunteers across built up areas of Victoria is a completely out-of-date ideal.
- Areas of Victoria that were deemed 'country' decades ago are now highly urbanised with high residential and many other risks, pay their levy and deserve the same quality service as their neighbouring communities.
- In 1956 Geelong's population was 88 000. It is currently 240 000 and is predicted to reach 320 000 by 2036.
- There are highly populated areas of Geelong encompassing risk such as airport / prisons / Princes Fwy that pay the Victorian fire service levy in full for a volunteer response which statistically proven can and does fail to respond. The risks are increased and more diversified than ever, requiring increased demand for a high level of training.
- Decades ago minimal traffic lights in Geelong allowed quicker volunteer response to fires and incidents. Present day sees many sets of traffic lights across Geelong as well as heavy traffic around school pick up and drop off times as well as work start times in the morning and work finish times in the late afternoon. This state wide trend makes it very problematic for volunteers to turn out in a timely and safe manner. It is not practically possible to deliver a service within the 'critical 10 minute window' if a member must drive 8 minutes to the station, wait for a crew another 5 minutes and then be on scene in 8 minutes... **total 21 minutes.**

- It is commonplace to regularly attend fires and incidents in Corio's **primary** area and have no volunteer attendance. These include but are not limited to fully involved structure fires, various non structure fires including car fires, motor vehicle accidents, grass fires, gas leaks, alarms etc.
- It is commonplace to regularly attend fires and incidents in Corio's **support** areas (Lara / Lovely Banks) and have no volunteer attendance. These include but are not limited to fully involved structure fires, various non structure fires including car fires, motor vehicle accidents, grass fires, gas leaks, alarms etc.
- When a CFA volunteer appliance turns out there is no requirement for them to adhere to minimum crewing numbers (the crew may consist of only 1 person being the driver) or hold skills mix appropriate for fire fighting (the crew may not possess any breathing apparatus (BA) wearers crucial to protect airways in structural and many other types of fires).
- Employing all career firefighters in one fire service will not affect volunteer turnout or surge capacity.
- Guaranteed staff response equates to considerably better community safety and protection as well as considerably better firefighter safety.
- Reform areas are around the 35 integrated stations primary response areas = no effect on other volunteer brigades or bushfire response.
- The reform will assist with standardisation of career training/specialist response/response standards and equipment.
- The reform will benefit volunteers as it has included a package to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention across the CFA; and includes funding for volunteer station upgrades.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Spencer

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