

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

My name is Brenton Walters,

I am a FF3 at Caroline Springs Fire station for the CFA and have been a fire fighter since 2015, I live at [REDACTED]. Please find attached a list of my qualifications and competencies.

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

- I think the reform is vital for the fire service to be able to move forward and adapt to the growing responsibilities of Victoria and its people. As a service we need to adapt and change in order to meet the demands and needs of the community. With the current model it is impossible and totally unworkable to implement change and progression into the fire service, if the reform does not happen the service will become stagnant and be years behind any other in the state and around the world. I believe Victorians deserve better.
- Another key reason is for increased safety for not only the community but for Firefighters as well. In urban and rural fringe areas where there is a combination of both volunteer and career Firefighters such as Sunbury, Eltham, Caroline Springs Boronia etc there is in my experience very evident issues to public and Firefighter safety with the current fire service model. On several occasions I have arrived to a job with my crew not knowing who was on their way to support us, sometimes we would be faced with situations of having support of volunteers with little to no qualifications to support in the tasks at hand and in some instances no support arrived at all. This is in no way the fault of the volunteers who freely give their time and efforts to help protect the community but a fault in the system itself. With the new changes that the fire service reform will implement these situations will be eradicated, with a guaranteed response time and min crewing of 7 Career firefighters to support each other. This increases our ability to greater protect the community and each other and will in no way effect the role of volunteers firefighters.
- Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this out-dated system, 35 areas are wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and Geelong are just some of the 35 'country areas'.

- These areas need to be modernised as they are highly urbanised areas as part of the reform of the fire service. A rapid 8 minute response, with 7 professional career firefighters on two fire trucks is the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas to provide support and safety for firefighters and those we are trying to save.
- All Victorian, professional and volunteer firefighters, deserve a modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities.

To ensure the safety of all Victorians - including me as a firefighter, I ask you to please seriously consider your support for the proposed fire services reform.

Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of your constituents, and all communities in our growing state. Additionally, it will ensure the safety of our firefighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer firefighters because of the enormous urban growth resulting in increased emergency calls.

I also respectfully submit that you give consideration to my request to modernise the fire service along with the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect fire service employees. Both are needed to be endorsed and implemented by Parliament before the commencement of the fire season. This is important to me and my colleagues.

I would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to talk to you further about my personal experiences as a professional firefighter and why this reform is so important.

Yours sincerely Brenton ,