

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

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

I write to express my support for the long overdue reforms to Victoria's Fire Services.

My name is Craig HARVEY and I work as a fire fighter with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. I work at fire station #35 in Windsor and have been employed for 12 months. Prior to this I was a serving member of Victoria Police for 12 years and had many interactions with Volunteer CFA and paid CFA with in my roles there. I have seen and experienced first-hand just how essential it is to have an appropriately trained, ready-to-respond fire service in what is currently Melbourne's metropolitan fire district. The fact that in 2017, such a large portion of Melbourne's sprawling metropolis and Victoria's ever expanding regional cities fall outside of this district I find of genuine concern.

I wish to draw your attention to two considerations I believe should be at the forefront of the decisions made by this committee:

Medical Emergencies

In the 12 months I've worked as a fire fighter, I've responded to numerous medical emergencies including cardiac arrests, drug overdoses and car accidents in which occupants have been injured and/or trapped. These incidents are time critical. A delay of mere minutes can and will literally cost lives.

Since the Emergency Medical Response was instated in October of 2001 as a continuing role of the MFB by the Minister for Health it has evolved constantly to improve our response and service to the community, in 2015 a media release (www.mfb.vic.gov.au/News/MFB-firefighters-attending-increasing-number-of-medical-calls.html), by the at the time Chief Fire Officer Peter Rau, stated that the program had "Saved more than 200 lives."

Due to the current Emergency Service boundaries and systems in place that were designed to handle a very different Victoria from over 60 years in the past to what Victoria is today, it is difficult to tell my family who live in Berwick that if one of these events were to occur that potentially fewer emergency services members will be responded and that they could be potentially be waiting longer for those emergency services to arrive on scene when compared to other zones of Melbourne.

My partner is a Paramedic with Ambulance Victoria and we both know just how important it is to have rapid intervention with effective CPR. My family and hers are not guaranteed this due to living in CFA Volunteer areas despite living in built up areas.

Conducting a reform to the Fire Services can potentially increase the ability for Emergency Medical Response to Victorians from Fire services and save more lives.

Structure fires

Responding to fires that occur in houses, apartments, workplaces, schools and hospitals is the core function of fire services.

To ensure the upmost safety of the community, occupants of buildings and the fire-fighters who attend structure fires, a minimum of seven fire fighters are dispatched to all fires in order to ensure all emergency actions can be taken in the confidence that suitable manpower and resources are available to the fire fighters.

In some areas like Geelong, Bendigo, Frankston and Dandenong the response of seven fire fighters cannot be guaranteed like inner Melbourne, this not only places the fire fighters at risk but the densely populated communities that contain high rise developments, universities, and large shopping districts.

As a level 1 fire fighter I am qualified and trained in the use of Breathing Apparatus (B.A). This is a very essential piece of a fire fighters tool kit. It enables us to enter toxic environments to conduct fire duties and more importantly enter to search for trapped or injured persons. This is something that I can expect of every fire fighter that turns out to a job in the MFD or with paid CFA members. It is important that if I enter a building to search for people that there is a backup crew in BA that can respond to save me if something goes wrong, or to take over if the search is of longer duration. This is why 7 fire fighters is important, not just for the safety of the community but also to those that enter to save them. This is not the case in the above suburbs including where my family resides.

These regions and their residents are deserving of the exact same coverage that exists in inner Melbourne.

I am more than willing to be contacted for any clarification or queries relating to this submission.

Regards,

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