

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

05/07/2017

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

I am Captain/Officer in charge at Narre Warren Fire Brigade. I have served as a Volunteer with Narre Warren CFA for a period of just over 20 years. I have been Captain/OIC of Narre Warren for the past 7 years and have just been elected to serve the Brigade for another term of 2 years. I have lived in the Narre Warren area for 22 years. Narre Warren has just over 100 members made up of juniors and non-operational members who serve on our Catering unit which delivers food to firefighters at emergency incidents. Narre Warren is the busiest Volunteer brigade in the state of Victoria attending nearly 800 calls a year

I write today to speak on my behalf only in relation to the proposed changes to the fire services. I think that the climate that we see in CFA is now beyond repair. The integrated service that has been successful is now beyond repair. Narre Warren which is the busiest CFA volunteer brigade in the state for the last 12 months with just short of 800 calls a year, have a great working relationship with all of our CFA staff. Of all our calls nearly 70% of them are to support Cranbourne who are an integrated station. Of our primary calls we have either Hallam (integrated brigade) coming to support us (around 30% of calls). Berwick (Volunteer and around about 20% of our calls) and Cranbourne (around 50% of our calls). This system works great. Our primary SDS is just over 90% and our customer SDS is just over 90%.

Having staff come to nearly 70% of our calls and with Berwick who also have high SDS figures and great response rates, coming to the other 30% ensures a high quality service to the public of Narre Warren. I can see that this is not the same in other high urban areas of the state.

The current climate I think is beyond repair. I have given this lots of thought and the only way I can see out of it is to move the CFA staff to the one service with the MFB as has been proposed. This is unfortunate and a very sad time, but I can't see any other way to get the CFA staff agreement over the line after the introduction of the new workplace laws in relation to the Volunteers. The climate in CFA at the moment between large parts of CFA is toxic and cannot be repaired.

I also totally agree with the clause in relation to 7 career fire fighters on the fire ground. For Narre Warren this would ensure a response to all of our calls 100% of the time. Although both Narre Warren and Berwick provide a timely response into Narre Warren with trained crew, I cannot guarantee this 100% of the time. As long as we will still have the 2 closest appliances going to the call first up, I can only see positives in relation to this clause.

I have also heard discussion in relation to expanding the new FRV model to a 10 minute response. This would destroy any Volunteer brigade that works anywhere near an FRV station. An example of this would be Cranbourne and Narre Warren. If this was to eventuate, Narre Warren Fire Station would be in Cranbourne's primary area which would see Narre Warren with no primary area and no doubt a large drop off from members in response. This would be totally destructive to Volunteer brigades. An MVA with persons trapped is a 1 brigade response, there could be an MVA with persons trapped less than 50 metres from Narre Warren, yet they would not be responded. Cranbourne

would be there in 10 minutes, while Narre Warren could have been on scene in 4 minutes. This would also apply to any Code 3 calls that are also a 1 brigade response.

Another discussion I have had with many volunteers in the busier brigades is in relation to a retained system. This would be off a great benefit, especially to busier brigades like Narre Warren. We currently run a daytime and night time roster to ensure response from our station 24 hours a day, we have just started this, having a retained system would make this much easier to implement and ensure that it would be ongoing. The many benefits far outweigh any negatives. Compulsory training, compulsory attendance at fires, it would be much easier to manage people under a retained system than it is now. I know that most of the members at Narre Warren are fully in favour of a retained system. It would ensure a more professional service from these stations and would encourage more members to join.

The discussion of budgets for the new CFA is also a talking point. There seems to be an offer of a large amount from the government for the first year but no ongoing promise. This has raised a few eyebrows. I think there should be a promise made of an ongoing amount for the next 5 years at least.

In closing the last subject I wanted to raise, and this has caused much discussion, is in relation to that all paid operational staff like Operations Officers etc will only come from FRV. I can understand that at the start of things, but in the future why can't CFA employ people from their own ranks? We will end up back to square 1 with staff from FRV employed under a UFU agreement working in CFA?

To finish, I think it's very important to keep brigades like Narre Warren viable. We have a strong membership that is one of the first called to any major bushfire around the state as we have many people who make themselves available for deployments to fires around the state, as do many other brigades. The surge capacity of brigades cannot be affected as this would be a disaster for the state. Extending staff response boundaries to 10 minutes and placing new FRV stations in close vicinity to CFA stations would do exactly this, it would destroy CFA brigades and their surge capacity.

If you require anything further, please feel free to contact me. Thanks for taking the time

Regards

Paul Hardy

Captain/Officer in Charge

Narre Warren Fire Brigade

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