

**Submission to the Committee of Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.**

From Alan Hamill, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Retired Electrical Operations Officer and former 44 year CFA Volunteer and Officer.

**Committee Members,**

**Part 1 of my submission:-**

**The Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation**

In my reading of the "Terms of Reference" it states:-

*and, in particular, the –*

- a) impact on fire service delivery across Victoria*
- b) effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery*
- c) short term and long term cost impact on fire service provision*
- d) underlying policy rationale*

causing me to believe that the committee of inquiry will not look at the Presumptive Rights Compensation section.

I wish to request you separate the two components and treat each on their own to allow fruitful discussions about each. The Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation should be debated fully, openly and separately. It is actually close to being able to be put and passed with some possible amendments requested by the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV).

**Please split the Bill!**

**Part 2 of my submission:-**

**Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform)**

In my view the optimum outcome from this inquiry would be for the Committee to recommend the Fire Services currently operating on public land in Victoria (MFB and CFA) and the Ambulance service be amalgamated into one organisation possibly called "Fire and Ambulance Victoria".

If it was not for the flood and search activities of the SES I would have brought them across as well.

In my view the best option now to put on the table would be to join these groups together.

**Rationale:-**

The CFA and the MFB do the same job, just in different uniforms and under different logos

It would have a lesser negative effect on volunteers compared with segregation and downsizing

In my 44 years with the CFA there was always animosity between the CFA and MFB and bringing them under one banner would improve personal perspectives and lead to better industrial harmony. The UFU would still represent paid firefighters and the VFBV would represent volunteers and would all report and liaise with a common management

The only method of preventing a large exodus of volunteer firefighters would be to have all firefighting brought under the one organisation

There would be no need for boundary re-alignment as existing CFA brigade response areas would be retained and the existing MFB response areas would remain the same. The only difference would be that all areas are serviced by the same organisation

Where urban growth requires permanent staff be posted at a former fully volunteer brigade it would be simply a matter of appointing and manning the upgraded station and improving facilities where needed and still retain the volunteers

The methodology for calculating the Fire Services Levy could be similar to, or even retain, the current formulae

Ambulance Victoria currently uses MFB and CFA as first responders already and to have these groups united would streamline the response and possibly increase productivity of both groups. I liken this to what is seen from America where the Firefighters and Paramedics are housed in a common station and cross support both functions with available station staff.

Many property sites would be become available to be sold off

In relation to costs projections, I can't put it into figures as I don't have any access to existing arrangements but I believe that costs could be cut significantly as there would be a single management, single site appliance and personnel garaging, no need to review boundaries, no need to change Fire service Levy arrangements, common purchasing, and a multitude of duplicated activities would be streamlined into a better common system

The new agency would develop common Standard Operating Principles and Procedures which would operate state wide

Equipment would be standardized across the state, and this would be done on a station by station basis over time. Some equipment such as adaptors would need to be added to each unit so they could operate anywhere, I am thinking of the city versus country council fire hydrant standards.

**Conclusion:-**

- 1) Please split the Bill and evaluate the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation separately to the Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform).
- 2) Combine MFB, CFA and AV into one fire and medical organisation across the state.

Thank you in anticipation,

Alan Hamill