

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

Dale Versteegen



Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

I hereby wish to submit my own submission into the above stated Reform Bill 2017.

My Background/Service History:

Service History					
Start Date	End Date	Rank	Employee	Location	Location Type
07/01/1991	19/10/1998	ACTIVE		KANGAROO GROUND /DEREG	
20/10/1998	30/06/2001	3RD LIEUTENANT		KANGAROO GROUND /DEREG	
01/07/2001	30/06/2005	2ND LIEUTENANT		KANGAROO GROUND /DEREG	
15/09/2003	11/01/2004	RECRUIT FIREFIGHTER	E	FISKVILLE INSTRUCTRS	FV
12/01/2004	20/07/2004	FIREFIGHTER 1	E	DOVETON /DEREG	
21/07/2004	14/09/2004	FIREFIGHTER 1	E	HALLAM	F/B
15/09/2004	14/09/2006	FIREFIGHTER 2 (RELIEVER)	E	HALLAM	F/B
01/07/2005	08/09/2010	1ST LIEUTENANT		KANGAROO GROUND /DEREG	
15/09/2006	07/11/2006	QUALIFIED FIREFIGHTER (RELIEVER)	E	HALLAM	F/B
08/11/2006	08/11/2006	LEADING FIREFIGHTER	E	HALLAM	F/B
09/11/2006	21/06/2007	QUALIFIED FIREFIGHTER (RELIEVER)	E	HALLAM	F/B
07/07/2007	12/05/2008	QUALIFIED FIREFIGHTER (RELIEVER)	E	DANDENONG	F/B
13/05/2008	06/04/2014	QUALIFIED FIREFIGHTER	E	DANDENONG	F/B
01/07/2009	30/06/2015	GROUP DELEGATE		KANGAROO GROUND /DEREG	
09/09/2010	30/06/2015	1ST LIEUTENANT		KANGAROO GROUND	F/B

Awards Received		
Award Date	Award	Awarded By
15/05/2007	12 YEAR BADGE	DISTRICT 13 HQ
20/03/2011	20 YEAR CLASP	DISTRICT 14 HQ
04/06/2014	NATIONAL EMERGENCY MEDAL - VICTORIAN 2009 FIRES	JOHN PEBERDY, CFA DEPUTY CHAIR
05/09/2015	NATIONAL MEDAL	DCO BRUCE BYATT
03/12/2016	10 YEAR MEDAL	AOM P CARRIGG - D08
03/12/2016	25 YEAR CLASP	AOM P CARRIGG - D08

Awards Due	
Award	Years of Service
There is no award due record found.	26.47

As you can see from the above, there is not much I have not been able to achieve in my lifetime since joining CFA as a Volunteer in 1991, then going on to join the Paid Staff ranks of CFA in 2003. During this time I have, and still do serve CFA as a Volunteer at the Kangaroo Ground Rural Fire Brigade, which is situated North East of Melbourne near Eltham. I have been involved with CFA for 26.47 years and my father has served for some 40 years.

During this time I have served as a long time Lieutenant of Kangaroo Ground, Training Officer and member of the Brigade Management Team for around 18 years. Since joining CFA Paid Fire fighter Ranks in 2003 I have had the chance to move my way through the ranks and currently hold the rank of Station Officer. I am currently stationed at Springvale Fire Station, on B Platoon. Throughout my years of service I have seen so much change throughout CFA, some of those changes are:

- New Protective Structural Clothing
- Emergency Medical Response
- New Training Programs (Introduced after the Linton tragedy)
- OH&S (Our safety is No.1 and is paramount on any fire ground)

With these changes came uncertainty, negativity and the real saying of “Why do we need to do it, it’s fine the way it is.” This was wrong. All the listed changes have improved the safety of both the fire service and the community. This new Bill is going through the same discussions now and I believe this will improve the safety of all Victorians if implemented.

Why do I support the proposed reforms within the Victorian Fire Services?

1. With the outer suburbs population of Melbourne ever increasing as per all the Data suggesting we will be a larger city than Sydney within the next 20 years, so are the Houses, Factories, Road Networks, Shopping Centres etc. With these increases the risk of Emergencies also increases. Fire fighters were just fire fighters, but with these increases we now are doing Emergency Medical Response to all Cardiac Arrests, why you may ask? To assist the Victorian Public in their time of need. Why don't we do the same for fire calls? Because current CFA Brigades can choose who or what trucks come to their calls, yet Ambulance Victoria want us to travel anywhere within a 10 minute travel time radius to assist them in CPR and in my experiences we quite often beat AV to these calls. We should also be doing this for Fire Calls.
2. Volunteers do a great job and there is no way in the world our state could be fire ready without them. Has anyone actually considered how much strain is being placed on some of these brigades though? Take Narre Warren for example. 20 years ago the Brigade were doing under 100 calls per year due to having a large part of their area being Rural Farm areas and most Volunteer members working locally. In 2015/2016 financial year the Narre Warren Volunteer Brigade responded to 702 calls for assistance. This call rate is ever increasing. The pressure on these volunteers to respond from home to the station in 4 mins, then respond the Truck and get on scene, leaving their own families every time the pager goes off must be telling.
3. Some volunteer brigades are asking for help out there to place professional fire fighters at their stations. A perfect example of this was South Warrandyte where the Volunteer Brigade asked CFA for help, as the station was too busy for the volunteers but they also could not achieve turnout times placing public of South Warrandyte at risk. This brigade asked for help and now have it under the form of an Integrated Brigade. There are now 34 Integrated Stations within CFA that would now transfer to FRV out of some 1200 CFA Brigades, which is a very small minority.

-Impact on Fire Service Delivery across Victoria.

Under these reforms the impact on our current fire services can only improve giving the community of Victoria in the outer suburbs of Melbourne and our higher populated regional areas a reliable fire service, with a guaranteed response. Unfortunately volunteers are just that, volunteers. With this in mind they are unable to respond to calls all the time. Some eg: The VFBV/ CFA Volunteers will state they only need help during the week as they are working out of their Primary area. They will state that on weekends and nights they are OK to respond to calls. This is not true.

The example on the next page shows that Warragul CFA Volunteer Fire Brigade were paged to a Gas Leak at a United Petrol Station on a Saturday morning.

Here are some interesting facts about this job:

Saturday 01/07/2017.

1. 0828hrs Warragul Paged to Gas Leak at United Petrol Station Albert St Warragul.
2. 0836hrs Warragul Re Paged to this event requesting a Driver as no Driver for the appliance had responded to the station, so the trucks are unable to leave the station.
3. 0844hrs Warragul Pumper finally responds to the above job. Some 16 minutes after the call being sent out.
4. 0845 Warragul Pumper finally arrives on scene to a Gas Leak from the main tank at the Petrol Station.

This call was a major leak, on a Saturday morning, 16minutes for the brigade to respond and the job ended up taking up to 3 hrs for the brigade to manage. Throughout this Gas Leak the CFA even placed a Community Warning out for the General Public of Warragul.

The 2 photos attached on the next page show the paging messages that were sent out and their times, the second photo is a screen shot of the community warning that was sent out.

This is just proof of 1 instance where a brigade has failed to get out the door on their allocated time. I can assure you there are many more. Would you like to live in an area where it could take your local brigade 16 mins to turn out to a fire in your Family's home when you're not home? We can change this.



This evidence is from a Pager App that most CFA Members have showing most pager messages that go out across the state.

Like

Comment



CFA (Country Fire Authority)

8 mins · 🌐

COMMUNITY INFORMATION - HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Incident Location: Corner of Albert and Normanby Streets

Incident Name: AlbertStreet

Issue Date: Saturday 01 July 2017, 09:42 am

Next Update: Saturday 01 July 2017, 12:50 pm

This message is being issued for Corner of Albert Street and Normanby Street, Warragul.

- There is a hazardous gas leak at the service station on the corner of Albert and Normanby Streets.
- Emergency Services are currently attending to this incident.

There is no threat to communities.

More details at <http://emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/#!/warning/1446/moreinfo>

❤️👍 3

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Adam Small replied to a comment on this.



Brigade Turnout Time Definitions

TURNOUT TIME (MIN)	BRIGADE TURNOUT TIME DEFINITIONS ⁴
1.5	Brigade with more than one career officer / firefighter on duty at the fire station.
4.0	Brigade (fully volunteer or with one career officer on duty) with Emergency Reporting System (ERS), siren, full complement of pagers and incorporating any hazard class 2 locations in their response area.
6.0	Brigade (fully volunteer) with ERS activated siren, or a full compliment of pagers and incorporating any hazard class 3 locations in their response area but no hazard class 2 locations.
10.0	All other brigades incorporating only hazard class 4 and 5 locations in their response areas.

I would like to say this type of thing does not just happen at Volunteer Stations it also happens at Integrated (Volunteer/Staff) Stations. We assist the Volunteers as much as we can with Fire coverage, Training and Brigade Management. But unfortunately we cannot rely on the Volunteers as much as we used to be able to at an Integrated Station.

An example of this was on Tuesday 6th June at 8pm we as a shift ran some training drills in the back yard here at Springvale for Volunteer Training. We had 12 Volunteers attend and they seemed to have quite a good night. At 0228 hrs the next morning (approx. only 4 hrs after the volunteers had left the station) we were paged to a House fire @ 39 Philip Cres Springvale.

Further information on turnout was Mother and 5 month old baby possibly still inside with flames issuing from 1 window. We arrived on scene, forced our way in to extinguish the fire keeping the damage to basically 2 rooms. Mother and baby were found out in the back yard. She was unable to get out the front door so she went out the back. This fire was extinguished by Career fire fighters of Dandenong and Springvale. This was a Springvale primary call but I did not have 1 Volunteer turnout to this job either by car or appliance. Why? Probably because unfortunately they are all required to get up early for work . This is fine but how would this be seen out in the community if they were aware this is happening. The community don't care who turns up to a fire call as long as a truck arrives as quickly as possible.

Under an FRV arrangement when that truck arrives it will have 4 fully trained and accredited Structural/Wildfire trained personnel on the first truck with a second truck coming giving us more members on the fire ground. Most volunteer brigades would not have this. Most are great for Rural environments but not structural. There are brigades out there that will respond to house fire, turn up but will be unable to go inside, search the house and put the fire out. I ask you, is this how you would like this current CFA model to work if this was your family's house and your outside with some of your family members still trapped inside. I am telling you this is actually happening now, you have a chance to change this under this new Bill.

I am not trying to put Volunteers down in anyway, especially as I am still an active volunteer, but this is what is going on out in the real world and we need to ensure this change goes through for us Victorians.

-Effect on Volunteer Engagement.

If there is to be any effect on this, it will come from the Volunteers who do not want to see change. Some may walk away but I would doubt it. If they are there for their community at the moment, they should still be there if the Reform goes through. The small amount of Brigades this is going to effect is around 5% of current CFA Stations. The volunteers here at Springvale have no issue with the new changes. They understand some things will change and there is some uncertainty but they are willing to work through this with us career fire fighters. They have even discussed the possibility of asking Noble Park and Keysborough fire brigades to merge as one. Why?? This is due to them understanding that the current arrangement doesn't work.

The volunteers at Springvale are not members of the Volunteers Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV). Why?? This is due to them never supporting the volunteers here at Springvale, as the volunteers here support the career fire fighters.

When they did ask the VFBV for help they were ignored. We had the same with them at Kangaroo Ground. After the Black Saturday Fires we approached the VFBV on a number of occasions for certain things.


The biggest issue we had was that during those fires we needed Oxygen for either us or other civilians. We sent up a Business Plan on allowing Oxygen to go on Tankers but the VFBV did not even want to take it to CFA on our behalf due to the cost. Cost?? So we don't care about our safety or the lives of others?

Even today throughout the media you will hear this is cutting the volunteers and CFA in half. This is not correct. Most just want the best decision for the community they live in. CFA's slogan is "Protection of life and Property" so lets allow this to happen.

It will allow FRV to support into their own Brigade areas as we do now. If we beat them to a call, how can this be seen as a bad thing. Water is being placed on the hot stuff as quick as possible. Once the local brigade get there the job is then there's, and they are in charge and we can return to station if they wish or continue to help them out. Exactly the same as what we currently do now. The following photo is proof that the community want this to work. The Pie Chart is a photo taken from the Wangaratta Chronicle, country area of Victoria, quite overwhelming result you would think.

WANGARATTA CHRONICLE

web poll



Response	Percentage
Believe the CFA should be split into volunteer firefighters and paid firefighters working separately	90%
Believe volunteers and paid firefighters should remain working together	10%

RESULTS from our latest web poll show that an overwhelming majority of people believe the CFA should be split into volunteer firefighters and paid firefighters working separately.

Of the remaining answers, 90 per cent of voters believed the CFA should be split, while just 10 per cent believed volunteers and paid firefighters should remain working together.

To vote in our latest web poll, do you think the council should

... Meleney's Arcade carpark

-Short and long term cost impact on fire provisions

The quicker the response to a fire:

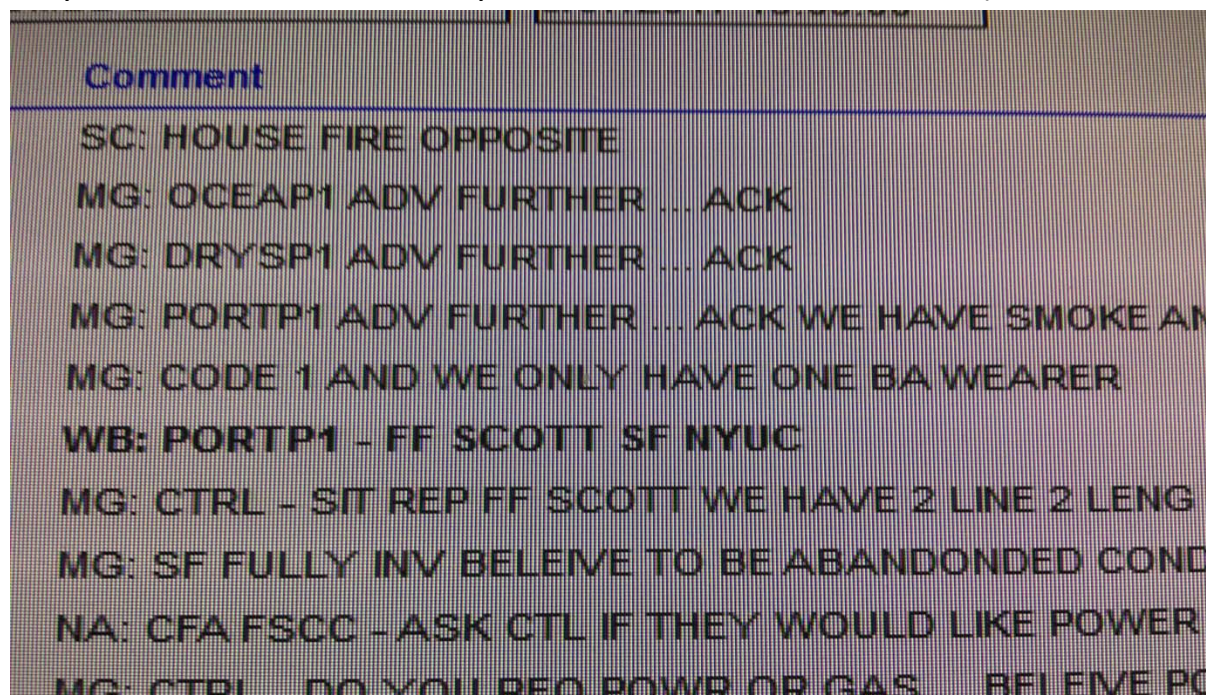
- The less damage caused lower insurance costs.
- Smaller Stations then being built with a smaller amount of vehicles in FRV.
- More fire fighters on the ground less injuries caused lower Work cover claims.
- All equipment stays the same under new Bill, no cost.
- Merging of career fire fighters no cost as training is the same now under combined recruit courses.
- Badges on uniforms to change but that would be minimal.

-Underlying policy rationale

Most of what we are hearing out there is what people will lose. Lets look at what the larger communities of Victoria will gain.

- Quicker response to fires with a minimum of 7 fire fighters coming.
- Guaranteed 2 BA Operators on each vehicle.

(As I sit at work tonight there is a house fire in Portarlington. The radio transcripts are below. You will notice 5th line down it states the brigade only have 1 BA Wearer. Under our CFA Standard Operating Procedures we must have 2 operators before making entry into a house. So even if they get there they cant enter what could be your house. How can this be ok??)



- EMR certified fire fighters responding to your areas and your family.
- FRV vehicles supporting other CFA areas.
- A modernised Victorian Fire Service delivery model.
- The community of Victoria better served.

-Closing Statement

Each and every politician in this state has a say in this Bill. I just hope you all make the best decision for the “Protection of Life and Property” within this state. Continue to think about if your family were involved in a fire or cardiac arrest what you would want coming to your house. Something that is guaranteed, or something that may turn up. I know what my answer would be.

I thank you for this opportunity and if at any stage you need something discussed or clarified, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Dale Versteegen

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

CFA Station Officer Springvale Fire Station B Platoon.

CFA Volunteer of 26 years at Kangaroo Ground Fire Brigade.