

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am Tom Harper a level 2 Firefighter with the CFA; I've been in the job since 4/2/16. I am currently in a Relievers position at Point Cook Fire Station and live in Ocean Grove. My qualifications include EMR certified, Level 2 first aid, Wildfire behaviour and suppression also completed the required modules and competencies to complete the 19 week recruit course.

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

I grew up in the outer suburbs of Melbourne and have seen firsthand the growth in these areas and how important it is for our emergency services to grow as well. Areas that were once paddocks are now made up of housing estates with the populations growing by the day, a lot of these areas have not changed and grown to adapt to massive urbanisation that has occurred. The CFA boundaries haven't significantly changed to adapt to growing residential and industrial risks since they were developed, but there have been so many changes in the areas they surround.

I am new to the job as a career firefighter. I originally tried to put my head down and not get involved in the dispute that is currently occurring within the CFA. This is getting increasingly hard to do and I am struggling not be affected by this dispute. Coming to work every week and having my profession attacked by the media and politicians has had an effect on my workplace and also me personally. I've had civilians come up to me on the street and verbally attack me about the reform without admittedly knowing any of the facts or even reading how the changes will change their community. My partner has noticed and commented that the stress of the dispute is affecting me. I am becoming quite sheltered when talking to people about what I do for a Job and quite often refrain from telling them I am a Career Firefighter to eliminate any risk of backlash and confrontation even though I am immensely proud of what I do for a Career.

Most importantly, safety is paramount in my profession, for the community, my shift members, the general public, myself and also my family. This is why it is vital to have at least 7 firefighters dispatched within 8 minutes as this response allows better protection for the community we serve and provides us with confidence that we will receive guaranteed support, promptly whilst holding the right qualifications and training.

Yours sincerely

Tom Harper

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