

FIRE FIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS
COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICE
LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL
2017

Submission to
Fire services bill select committee

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Qualified Fire Fighter - Volunteer Lieutenant
Junior Leader

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My background

I live in Safety beach and work at Patterson River.

I am a Qualified Fire Fighter with the Country Fire Authority and have been so for 5 years

I also volunteer with the CFA at Boneo as a Lieutenant, Brigade Training Officer and a Junior Leader

I have been a volunteer for 16 years over 3 different stations and also dual responding with another.

My membership started with the Somerville CFA as a junior at 15 years and at age 16 joined as a senior, and stayed for a further 2 years. After that I moved back to the Mornington peninsula, I transferred my memberships with the CFA to Rosebud where I held the volunteer ranks of fire fighter, Communications Officer and Lieutenant. I was a Lieutenant at Rosebud during the integration of career staff. In 2012 after successfully completing a CFA recruit course I transferred my volunteer membership to the Boneo CFA and am currently hold the rank of Lieutenant, the Brigades Training Officer and a junior leader. I have also dual responded with Dromana CFA with their response to road accident rescue and low angle rescue since July of 2009, and have attend numerous amounts of calls with Dromana.

My father is the ex-captain and current Lieutenant of Rosebud CFA where he has been a member for over 40 years. During much of my child hood I spent it with my father at the fire station and was involved cleaning the trucks and fixing hose on a Sunday or sitting at the fire station with the partners of one of the other fire fighters waiting for my father to return from a call.

Qualifications

Certificate III in Public Safety (Fire & Emergency Operations)

Certificate IV in Training and Assessing.

Awards

CFA Long Service Award

2009 Campaign Fires Badge

Nation Emergency Medal, Vic Fires 09 Clasp

National Medal

Impact on fire service delivery across Victoria

During my time in CFA both as a Volunteer and as a Career staff member I have witnessed volunteer brigades respond with inadequate crews for the fire/incident they were responding to on numerous occasions. As a professional fire fighter I have been in situations where as a crew we have been unsure if an additional appliance is going to respond, and if so, is it with suitably trained crew.

As a professional fire fighter I have been responded to a structure fire to support a volunteer brigade, and when we arrived on scene were met by two members in the brigades' car due to the fact that neither one had a truck licence and they had already waited at the station for 8-10 minutes. When it came time to enter the structure I was informed by one of the member that they didn't have their breathing apparatus qualification and couldn't enter the house with me, making it hard for the officer to task appropriately. This brigade is usually ok with their responds, but as a lot of volunteer brigades do they struggle during the day during the week.

Effect on volunteer engagement and participation in the fire service delivery

Being a volunteer at a fully volunteer brigade and a professional fire fighter at an integrated brigade in CFA I don't see how this will affect the volunteers response capability, surge capacity or membership status. The support from career staff to volunteers will still be there on all levels. Operationally we will still work together on the fire ground as we do now. It would be no different to MFB and CFA volunteer brigades on the perimeter of the MFB boundary now. Managerial support will not be lost because Operations Officers and Operations Mangers will be seconded back to CFA and continue to do their current roles, Instructors and PAD operators will do the same and be seconded back to CFA and continue to do their current role.

Short term and long term cost impact on fire service provision

As a fire fighter to be honest I haven't looked into the budgeting and costings of these additional changes either long term or short term, but the cost saves to the public and to insurance companies in these heavily populated areas will reduce due to quicker intervention by the upgraded response. They say you can't put a price on someone's life and that is what this process should be about, if this updated response saves one life that it might not have been saved before hasn't this been worth it?

Underlying policy rationale

Presumptive legislation should be for all firefighters, if you have contracted cancer due to the fact that you have been helping your community it shouldn't matter weather professional or volunteer fire fighter. I believe that there definitely has to be a process involved with presumptive legislation

The establishment of an independent panel to assess which communities in Victoria require their fire service to be upgraded to a professional fire service is an excellent way to guarantee that all areas of Victoria get the fire service are required. At this time there isn't anything in place to review this and in my opinion this is why there are some areas that have been missed and require evaluating.