

Private and Confidential[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
4th July 2018

Assistant Clerk Committees
Department of the Legislative Council
Fire Serves Bill Select Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOUNRE VIC 3002

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

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

I am writing to you, in confidence, to express my full support for the proposed Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017. I request that this submission be kept CONFIDENTIAL and not be distributed beyond the Fire Services Bill Select Committee.

I am currently a County Fire Authority (CFA) Professional Firefighter at Rowville Fire Station and have held the rank of 'Firefighter' for approximately 12 months. Throughout my career thus far, I have conducted extensive training and have acquired a vast array of skills that I have been able to implement at numerous fire calls around the outer Eastern Metropolitan District of Melbourne. It is throughout my time as a Professional Firefighter that I have witnessed firsthand the need for Victoria's Fire Services to align itself with the ever expanding, heavily populated and dynamic environment that we find ourselves in today.

Under current arrangements in the MFD (Metropolitan Fire District), which are areas serviced primarily by the MFB (Metropolitan Fire Brigade) and in some areas serviced by CFA in support, residents in these areas will get a guaranteed minimum of two fire trucks turn up at an incident after they dial 000 with a minimum of seven professional firefighters to provide assistance in their time in need. Unfortunately in CFA areas, which cover over 60% of outer metropolitan Melbourne, this is not always the case.

Private and Confidential

As you may or may not be aware, Rowville Fire Station is an 'Integrated' brigade, which means it is permanently staffed day and night by at least four professional firefighters on a 24/7 basis. It is also made up of a number of dedicated volunteers who turn out to fire calls when they are available. The proposed changes to the Fire Services in Victoria will have minimal to no effect on the current serving volunteers at Rowville and their role at the station and will have absolutely no effect on the solely volunteer brigades in surrounding areas and in rural localities.

The professional staff here at Rowville have a time of 90 seconds from the time the call is received at the station to be fully dressed and have the truck on the road and en route to the incident. It is due to this rapid response time that the residents of Rowville will not only have a guaranteed professional fire truck turn up to their call but they will also get one there in a very short amount of time. It is in this line of work, where we are often exposed to dynamic and dangerous situations that the need for backup and swift support from another fire truck is essential. It has been experienced by myself and my fellow colleagues on a number of occasions where this has not happened. This has the potential to put, not only my own life and the lives of my colleagues but the very lives of the people we are employed to protect, in serious danger.

I recall on one particular nightshift, Rowville pumper was paged to a support call for Scoresby Fire Brigade for an alarm operating at a very large factory complex in the neighbouring suburb of Scoresby at approximately midnight. Rowville pumper arrived on scene swiftly with Scoresby pumper arriving on scene sometime after with a minimal crew. Luckily the call turned out to be a false alarm. All appliances (fire trucks) on scene returned to station. At approximately 0300am Rowville pumper received the same call to the same address. However this time due to perhaps the time of night and the recurrence of the fire call, Scoresby pumper failed to get on road (turn out) within the designated four minute timeframe. Knowing full well that the call would most likely be a false alarm once again, the staff on board Rowville pumper made no assumptions and assumed the alarm was real. The officer in charge of Rowville pumper had no choice but to request the nearest professional fire truck to be paged to attend the call. On this occasion the supporting appliance was Boronia pumper, this ensured that if the arriving crews were presented with a fully involved factory fire, they had adequate resources and appropriately trained personnel to undertake

Private and Confidential

safe firefighting activities. Once again the call was a false alarm; however the potential for serious danger to personnel and members of the public was exceptionally high and the 'luck' that was on the side of responding crews that night will eventually run out.

The above example highlights one of the many reasons why the current structure not only functions inefficiently but is simply unsafe for all personnel involved. Under the new proposed FRV structure, this specific call would have a guaranteed two responding fire trucks with a minimum of seven highly trained and sufficiently qualified firefighters dispatched in under 90 seconds. This gives all responding personnel the best opportunity to do their jobs and protect life and property and allows this to happen safely and swiftly and in turn maximises public safety.

The current system that the Victorian Fire Services operates under is purely unsafe to both fire personnel and members of the public. I myself live in a urbanised and heavily populated area that is serviced by a volunteer brigade and is considered 'country'. I find myself wondering if myself and my family would be safe and given the best chance of survival if there was an incident under the current structure at my residence where responding appliances may not have adequate support to safely undertake firefighting activities and responding volunteer crews may not possess the adequate skills to undertake the task at hand.

I hope that the above submission has shed some light on the issues that we as professional firefighters face on a near day to day basis. The proposed Fire Services Bill has my full support and will ensure the safety of fire crews and the Victorian Community.

Thank you for taking the time to review my submission.

Yours Sincerely,

