

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am Senior Station Officer John Katakouzinis, employed by the Country Fire Authority, stationed at Dandenong Fire Station. I have served the CFA since 1991, as a Volunteer at Springvale fire brigade, before joining as a career firefighter in 1999. As part of my role as a career firefighter I hold the following specialist qualifications and endorsements:

- Emergency Medical Responder
- 37m and 42m Bronto Ladder Platform
- Teleboom
- Aerial Pumper
- State Assessor in Aviation, Road Rescue and Technical Rescue
- Road Accident Rescue, Heavy Rescue operator
- Steep Angle Technical Rescue operator
- High Angle rope technician
- Confined Space Rescue operator
- Air Attack Supervisor
- Air Observer
- POD operator
- Remote Pilot Aircraft System Pilot

Dandenong Fire Station is located right on the border between CFA and MFB. Most people I speak to are surprised that Dandenong is not in the MFB district, and it is an easy mistake to make. Our immediate primary and support area house nearly 150,000 people, predicted to grow by 22% by 2024¹. The city of Greater Dandenong; of which Dandenong fire station responds to almost all of, accounts for approximately 2.34% of Victorias total businesses, despite making up just 0.057% of Victoria itself². The suburb of Dandenong; the brigades primary response area, has a major train station, two major freeways and three major highways running through the area, a large and expanding CBD with numerous highly populated office complexes, three hospitals, numerous aged care facilities, 22 primary and secondary schools, a major TAFE campus, a large shopping complex, local courts and a performing arts centre. There are more and more high rise buildings going up every year. We manage nearly 300 premises with monitored fire alarms. Our Road Accident Rescue unit is one of the busiest in Victoria for response to road accidents and work performed at road accidents. All of this is occurring in the "Country area of Victoria" according to our fire boundaries, and it places it under greater risk then if it was five kilometres up the road in the Metropolitan fire district.

Currently Dandenong fire stations minimum crewing is 11 per shift, to cover four appliances. We support, and are supported by a mix of integrated and volunteer brigades. This provides us with uncertainty when responding to emergencies on our initial response into volunteer areas, and if a call escalates, on what support we are likely to receive. I have experienced, on a number of occasions, the stress of waiting to hear if the support brigade will respond, and in situations where the focus should be on the task at hand it is an unwanted distraction. While career staff and volunteers are able to complete the same training, the minimum level that is required to get on a truck is massive. The mix of unknown response and unknown skills mix on the responding appliance makes setting strategies and tactics on the fireground very difficult. Attached to the end of this submission is a comparison of the minimum skills for career firefighter and volunteer

¹ Statistics sourced from <http://www.greaterdandenong.com/document/10768/summaries-of-social-information-cgd>

² Statistics sourced from ABS via <http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/information-portal/home>

firefighter, just to get on a truck. Also listed are the minimum skills for a career Leading Firefighter and a volunteer Lieutenant, where a leading firefighter is the lowest rank in the career service that can act as a crew leader or incident controller, and a lieutenant would normally be a crew leader or incident controller at a volunteer station.

A couple of examples that I have experienced of the points raised above would be the Cambria Rd, Keysborough factory fire. At this fire I requested 6 Breathing Apparatus operators to attend, it required 10 volunteer stations to be despatched to achieve this number, if it was career stations 2 stations would of had the number required.

Another example is the Commonwealth Bank fire on Springvale road in November 2016, where the volunteer brigade paged for support failed to respond. We required firefighters with breathing apparatus to assist with the search, and firefighters with first aid to assist with treating a then unknown number of casualties. The volunteer brigade eventually responded, and arrived on scene 42 minutes after they were called, despite being stationed just three kilometres from the fire. Five firefighters responded on that truck however not one of them had breathing apparatus qualifications, and none had first aid skills. They then informed the me that the driver had to be at work in 20 minutes, therefore they had to return. At an incident where 29 people were rescued and treated for injuries by firefighters as well as by Ambulance Victoria, the delay in response and lack of firefighters with appropriate skills stretched the resources on scene that day to the absolute limit.

Under the proposed legislation changes, the support that was required on both those fires would have been immediately responded. One career service providing response to highly populated areas like this would eliminate discrepancies and oversights such as this, and provide an appropriate level of response for emergency situations such as was experienced above.

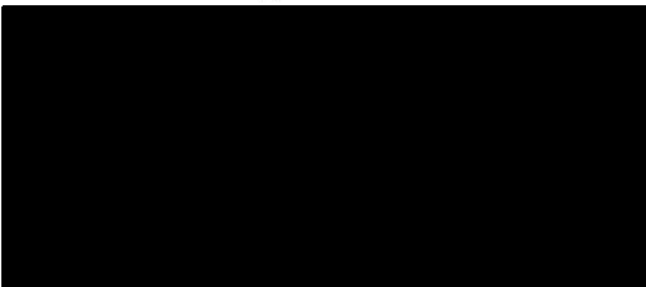
The proposed legislation does a number of things to ensure that the CFA will still be an important part of emergency response in Victoria, while assisting brigades in areas that grow beyond what any reasonable person would expect volunteers to have to deal with.

Response into areas that are on the boundary between CFA and FRV would be a dual response, however FRV would ensure that two FRV appliances are responded initially to provide the seven on the fireground that is a recognised standard around the world, and currently recognised in the MFB. When the CFA brigade responds, they would have the option of cancelling any appliances they no longer need, in exactly the same way as they do now. If FRV arrives on scene first, they will exercise the powers under the CFA Act (CFA Act 1958 S.33) as MFB currently do when responding and arriving first in CFA areas. All of this will ensure the best response for the community as well as improving safety of all firefighter on scene.

A large percentage of CFA career staff, including myself have come from volunteer backgrounds. I certainly do not wish the destruction of CFA, or the lowering of the high esteem that it is currently held in the eyes of the community, and I know many other feel the same way. However I certainly feel we have reached a point in time where we cannot continue the way we have been. Every time a CFA EBA expires, the same arguments are rolled out regarding the destruction of CFA . These continued arguments have taken a toll on many people in the organisation, including myself. Moral on fire stations is as low as I have ever seen, and I know of many friendships that have ended or been damaged between career staff and volunteers. The proposed changes will lift this cloud of anger and resentment, and the working relationship will return to what it has normally been, a very healthy and respectful one

Thank you for taking the time to consider my submission.

Yours sincerely,



MINIMUM SKILLS VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER VS LEVEL 1 CAREER FIREFIGHTER**Volunteer Firefighter**

Wildfire Firefighter Qualification (Q0002)

- PUAFIR201A: Prevent injuries
- PUAOHS002A: Maintain safety at an incident scene
- PUATEA001A: Work in a team
- PUAOPE002A: Operate communication systems and equipment
- PUAFIR204A: Operate pumps
- END TANKER (G): Operate pump on a tanker

Minimum skills Profile:

The minimum skills and knowlgade required by a CFA member to enter the fire/incident found and operate safely, effectively and efficiently as a member of a team under supervision.

**Source: Brigade skills profile*

Career Firefighter Level 1

- 1.01 Health and Fitness
- 1.02 Preparation and maintenance of Equipment, Appliances and Facilities
- 1.06 Occupational Hazards
- 1.07 Personal Protection 1
- 1.08 Occupational Stress
- 1.16 Casualty assistance
- 1.22 Work Team Communication
- 1.24 Writing Skills for Work
- 1.04 Driving Vehicles 1
- 1.05 Alarms and Sprinklers
- 1.09 Map Reading 1
- 1.10 Building Structures 1
- 1.11 Fire Suppression 1
- 1.13 Vehicle Rescue
- 1.14 Search and Rescue
- 1.15 Breathing Apparatus (Open Circuit)
- 1.17 Emergency Care
- 1.19 Communication Systems
- 2.02 Inspect and Test Equipment
- 2.05A Emergency Life Support Techniques
- 2.07 Occupational Hygiene
- 2.24 Fire Agency Awareness 2
- 2.03A Drive Vehicles on Road (Legislation)
- 2.05B Operate Life Support Equipment
- 2.06 Personal Protection 2
- 2.15A Salvage and Overhaul
- 2.15B Ventilation
- 2.16 Dangerous Substances 1
- 2.32 Fire Science - Intro B

**Source: CFA operational Staff Skills Profile - by Rank*

CFA Lieutenant**Skills**

- Wildfire firefighter qualification (Q0002A) - Mandatory
- Wildfire Low-Structure firefighter (Q0003a) - Desirable
- Crew Leader qualification - Desirable

Knowledge and experience

- Demonstrated ability to lead and manage diverse groups in a changing environment
- Demonstrated high level of interpersonal skills and effective presentation and oral communication skills

**Source: Brigade Membership Classification Role Description Lieutenant*

CFA Leading Firefighter

All Career Firefighter Level 1 competencies plus:

- 1.20 Computer Skills
- 1.21 Workplace Communication
- 2.04 Operate Pumps
- 2.25 Present Information (Public Education)
- 2.03 Operate Vehicles (A)
- 2.20 Specialist Appliances (I)
- 2.08 Detection and Suppression Systems
- 2.09 Building Evacuation Systems
- 2.12 Fire Behaviour (CFA)
- 2.21 Fire Prevention 1
- 2.28 Wildfire Behaviour 2
- 2.29 Wildfire Suppression 2
- 2.33 Map Reading 2
- 2.10 Mechanical Venting and Air Handling
- 2.11 Building Structures 2
- 2.13 Fire Suppression 2
- 2.22 Administration 1
- 2.30 Introductory Maths for the Fire Industry
- 3.01 Occupational Health and Safety
- 3.09 Workplace Trainer Category A
- 3.11 Public Speaking
- 3.15 Supervise Teams
- 3.04 Fireground Operations
- 3.05 Building Fire Safety 1
- 3.14 Leadership

**Source: CFA Operational Staff Skills Profile - by Rank*

Assessment Standard for Leading Firefighters

- Minimum of 48 months full time employment
- Completion of all above competencies
- 3 week full time development course

- 2 months station development and personal study
- 1 week of assessment including:
 - 2 exams covering Operational legislation (CFA Act, Regs, SO's SOP's etc) (4 hours total)
 - 1 exam wildfire operations (1.5 hours)
 - 1 exam Inray and Aministration (1 hour)
 - 1 Delivery of a short lesson (15 minutes)
 - 1 HR scenario practical assessment
 - 1 Rural Command and Control TEWT assessment (Tactical Exercise Without Troops)
 - 2 Command and Control Practical Drill assessments

All of these assessments are pass or fail assessments

Leading Firefighters must be endorsed by the Chief Officer

