

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

My Name is Darryn Gellie and I have been a Professional Firefighter employed by the MFB for almost 29 years. During this time I have made a career of a job that I love doing and have attained the Rank of Senior Station Officer. During this career I have attained a number of specialist qualifications ranging from the operation of appliances to more specialist ones such as Fire Investigation. Over this time I have also achieved Chief Officers Commendations recognizing my efforts and letters of appreciation from members of the public in relation to assistance given to them in times of need.

For the last 30 years I have lived in an area that comes under the responsibility and jurisdiction of the CFA and more specifically volunteer brigades on the Mornington Peninsula. During this time I have witnessed first hand the Impact of the residential sprawl that has taken place in Melbourne and its suburbs which not only has a visual Impact but an impact on the time it takes me to get to and from my work location due to traffic increases.

I am writing this submission in support of the reform to the current system and base this on the following reasons.

As an Operational Firefighter and an Officer I am responsible and accountable for the safety of all of those on the Fireground which includes firefighters, members of the public and other emergency services assisting at the time. Under OH&S It is incumbent of me to ensure the safety of those and the assurance of 7 fully operational firefighters on the fireground at an event allows me to ensure a reasonable level of safety for those who are impacted by such an event. As a Professional Fire Investigator with 21 years experience in this field I have first hand experiences where identifying delays in notifying the Fire Service can cause a significant and substantial difference to damage caused and therefore the impact it has to the public and other members of the community.

As previously stated I have witnessed the changes with the sprawl of Melbourne and its suburbs due to population increases. I find it extremely difficult to accept that the services offered to those in the outlying areas of Melbourne are not afforded the same level of protection and service as those within the existing MFB boundaries. The Emergency Medical Role, which the MFB provides, is one such example. Why has it taken the CFA so long to adapt and provide that same level of assistance to members of the public just because they live on the "wrong side of the street"?

As a Fire Investigator within the MFB I have been fortunate to have spent a number of years in a Day working position conducting numerous Fire Investigations into the Origin & Cause of many fires, from small ones that may involve sections of a room to fires that involve large multi-storey buildings. The MFB provide a dedicated 24-7 service to the community where all undetermined structure (building) fires will either be determined by the officer on-scene or by the dedicated Fire Investigator. I know the CFA do not offer or have the same service ability as the MFB. I have been made aware at times of instances where a Fire Investigator either Volunteer or Career staff have not been able to get to a scene for a number of days if at all. On the surface this may not seem to be such a great impact however when you consider that at times a crime may have been committed or that a faulty appliance may have been the cause the impact and implications to the community become a whole lot greater.

Having been employed as a Professional Firefighter for a considerable amount of time I am concerned that each time the Enterprise Bargaining process starts so does the level of concern. Over those years I have noted a vast increase in the level of media interest including the level and range of what I consider to be abuse. This does cause me concern as even though I am paid for what I do in my Profession I still come to work to serve and conduct myself to the best of my ability with a sense of satisfaction about assisting the community in their time of need.

The reform also includes the Presumptive Legislation in relation to certain types of cancer contracted by Firefighters in the line of duty. Having recently nursed and watched a loved one suffer this debilitating disease (Cancer) which eventually took the life of my wife of 23 years, I not only understand the impact this type of disease can have financially but also the mental impact it has on those around and supporting that person. I fully support the changes required to current legislation that recognizes these cancers and therefore removes the burden of proof from the employee.

Finally in support of this reform I not only fully support these changes based on the reasons listed above but because during my entire career this type of change has been rumored and its time the Victorian public were able to have a service based on current day systems and one that they deserve not one from the 1950's.

Yours Sincerely

Darryn Gellie

