

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

- My name is Wayne Aylmer; I have been an employee of the Country Fire Authority since 1986.
- I have been employed at the following ranks during my career;
 - Firefighter
 - Leading Firefighter
 - Station Officer
 - Senior Station Officer
 - Operations Officer

My current role is Operations Officer Surfcoast Catchment District 7 (Geelong); my role involves providing leadership and operational support for 14 fully volunteer fire brigades across all risk categories;

- Torquay a high residential and commercial built environment
- Bellbrae to Lorne, tourist towns bordering the Otway National Park
- Winchelsea, Wingeel and Inverleigh with open grasslands and farming communities

My qualifications included;

- Certificate of Proficiency Electrical Mechanics
- Diploma of Management
- Certificate IV in training and assessment
- Operations Officer Level 3
- Planning Officer Level 2
- Incident Controller Level 2
- Logistics Officer Level 2

I have been awarded the following service awards;

- 40 year service award
- National medal
- National Emergency Medal
- Life member of the Corio Fire Brigade

- I joined CFA as a junior member at the age of 12, I transferred to the fire fighting ranks at 17 and did 4 years' service as a volunteer fire fighter, prior to my employment. I did a further 13 years as a volunteer fire fighter during my employment.

- I currently live in Highton a suburb of Geelong

Surge Capacity

I believe there are two types of surge capacity although I cannot find any definition for the term surge capacity.

Bushfire Surge Capacity (summer season)

I believe that this is something CFA does well, but it is based on expectation of an event occurring in relation to forecast weather, at a District level in CFA we have readiness arrangements based on the predicted fire danger index (FDI). The higher the FDI, the more difficult it is to suppress or contain the fire with the first responding resources i.e. direct attack will fail.

The readiness arrangement interaction with volunteer and integrated brigades at the higher scale includes;

- Headquarters Brigade on standby at District HQ
- Groups to advise district of the availability of their;
 - Divisional Commanders
 - Sector commanders
 - Strike team leaders
 - Command & control vehicles
 - Strike team/Task force brigades and crew
 - Staging area crew availability
- Teleconferences for Groups organised

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) have a graphical explanation of surge capacity on YouTube based on several days in January 2014, the FDI on those days placed CFA on a high level of readiness and I also note that this time was during school holidays and the traditional summer holidays for many working people.

It is also worth noting that the entry level training at CFA for volunteer members “minimum skills”, gives all operational members the skills to combat bushfire.

I don't see how any proposed change will affect this type of surge capacity. The increase in funding for infrastructure and training / recruitment can only enhance this capability.

Structural Surge Capacity (24/7 fire season)

The service delivery standard (SDS) data clearly indicates many of our volunteer brigades in urban areas struggle to deliver a service without the readiness triggers I described in the bushfire surge capacity paragraph. The example here that I often use is the house fire at 10.00am on a Monday morning in winter

The only readiness arrangements we have in place is the computer aided dispatch (CAD) data which is the pre-loaded data in the CAD, this will respond brigades as per the data for each particular event type in a certain location.

My experience across our district is that it is common for a brigade to fail the allocated brigade turn out time or not respond at all. This is a daily occurrence, unfortunately one of my brigades failed to respond 48 times in the previous financial year, these calls were mostly in the structural environment, also as I sit here to write this submission I have a CFA radio in the background a brigade has responded to a confirmed structure fire in a sea side town, the turn out message from the brigade indicated that have only one breathing apparatus (BA) wearer. This shortage of skills is also common and not measured in any data.

 View Supporting Evidence
  View Failed to Respond Incidents

The following data relates to incidents occurring during the 12 month period leading up to the date this report was started:			
Name	No. of incidents	Pass %	Meet Standards
Turnouts to all Primary and Support Response	67	8	NA
Turnouts to Code 1 Primary SDS Incidents	7	14	✘
Number of incidents where brigade failed to respond	48	0	✘

Actions arising from this question			
Action / Item	Fin Year	Responsible	Edit
Discuss Turnout Requirements (Discuss turnout requirements with Brigade.)	16/17	WAYNE AYLMER	

(Section 29 data)

The structural environment requires fire fighters to have a greater skill set than the bushfire environment, this skill requirement is greater than the “minimum skills”, and therefore not all operational CFA volunteers have the skills to combat structural fires.

It is one of my responsibilities as an Operations Officer to assist brigades in dealing with the issues described; this is done through the section 29 process which is basically a yearly inspection of my brigades.

Whilst I was stationed at Corio Fire Station from 1993 to 2005, we had six (6) fire fighting vehicles in the station with 4 career staff, effectively we were unable to respond the required fire fighting appliance on numerous occasions and I recall a large structure fire where one fire fighter responded three (3) fire fighting appliances to the scene, returning to the fire station in a Police car each time to pick up another vehicle.

The increase in staffing and the move any from fire station based crewing to appliance based crewing has significantly increased surge capacity across the busiest CFA locations, this increase has not only been in primary response but also specialist response such as ;

- Aerial Appliances
- Hazardous materials
- Technical rescue

Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) will only increase this capability.

The negative impact on CFA members (career and volunteer) regarding the ongoing EBA negotiations and political interference will be removed by the introduction of Fire Rescue Victoria.

It is not an option to go through this level of disharmony again.

The Chief Officer of CFA Steve Warrington paints a bright future for CFA and I am enthusiastic myself about working in CFA going forward.

I have seen no evidence of CFA volunteers leaving the organisation based on the events of the past 18 months in my area, but there are frustrations about the process, moving forward is the preferred option I hear from CFA members.

The additional funding should help with volunteer recruitment and retention.

Thank you for the opportunity to express a view in this important matter, I am happy to discuss this further if required.

Wayne Aylmer

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