

By email: [LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au)

6<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

**INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS  
COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
(REFORM) BILL 2017 1.**

I am Geof Bassett, volunteer member and Captain of Lakes Entrance Fire Brigade.

I have been a CFA member for over 30 years, Captain of Lakes Entrance for 13 years and commenced as a junior member when 11 years old.

**I am writing this submission to oppose, and voice concern for the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:**

To propose such reforms to the fire service without the input from key personnel from fire agencies and key stakeholders defies logic and shows a lack of respect and almost contempt for these agencies and personnel.

The line of we need to reform or modernise Victoria's fire services seems somewhat strange considering a review was done just last year and it was determined to leave the fire services as they were. I believe this is an attempt to overcome the industrial issues that have been causing issue for the fire services and government alike. I don't believe these proposed amendments will overcome these issues and furthermore will inevitably put a further divide between the fire services setting up, a them and us culture.

CFA has for many years worked on a model of integration where volunteers and career staff work together to protect Victoria and its communities. This has been based on a continuum of support whereby as the workload or demand on brigades and its volunteers increase, so can the level of support by staff. This may start off with some simple admin support and scale up to having full 24/7 shifts of staff responding to call alongside volunteers. Whilst this model is not perfect due to a number of factors including personalities or industrial restrictions, the basis of working together seamlessly remains. By changing the model to having a volunteer only service and a career only service by pure human nature will create barriers. The best analogy of this would be to look back at how a number of brigades that were co-located as a Rural and Urban brigade operated. Some of these had a line down the middle of the station and you dare not cross the line.

Whilst we do not currently have any integrated stations in our District, the concept of having our District staff seconded from FRV to run the district is a little like having the fox in charge of the hen house. Whilst initially we may have staff that we know and have the culture of volunteers engrained in their ethos, inevitably these people will move on and be replaced by those who do not. As I understand the staff seconded back to work in districts will remain employees of FRV where their EBA will be negotiated and signed off on. I would therefore deduce that regardless of a contract between agencies or MOUs the EBA would still have precedence and CFA's Chief, CEO or board would no longer have any input into this EBA. However they and CFA will still need to comply leaving us in the same or worse situation than we are already in.

In regard to the 35 current integrated stations, by splitting the staff from volunteers will reduce flexibility appliance availability and use for both. We will no longer be able to cross crew (an EBA

requirement). CFA volunteers will only be able to use CFA appliances and vice versa. I have heard from across the state where discussions have taken place for integrated stations there is a common theme of either the staff or volunteers relocating to a separate station and commitments for a second Pumper of equivalent type to be provide so both staff and volunteers have one to respond in. With this in mind, the \$44 million made available will not go very far and seems to be a waste and un-necessary duplication.

If this and the other money that has been promised was injected into the fire service as they are would see better value for money for the community.

There are still many questions regarding how things are to operate or who will be responsible for what. Many of these need to be answered with clarity prior to legislation being passed. Staff, volunteers and the community need to be provided with clear details of proposed reforms prior to any legislation changes.

As volunteers, our remuneration is goodwill. This goodwill comes from our communities, partner agencies, employers, family members, friends, partners, those within our brigades and CFA, and various levels of government. If these reforms are ill thought through, or don't have the support of those who provide the goodwill, eventually the goodwill, will run dry.

I would implore your committee to ensure you take the time required to explore exactly what these reforms mean and the implications it has on the ground for individual communities and brigades.

Thank you for your time

Yours Sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted contact information]