

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

My name is Paul Purcell. I am a level two firefighter with the Country Fire Authority. I have been employed by the CFA since August 2015.

I am currently stationed at Sunbury fire brigade in District 14. I commute from my home in Bendigo for my shifts in Sunbury.

I believe that Victoria's fire service is in need of reform, and I would urge the committee and parliament to adopt the proposal for the formation of Fire Rescue Victoria.

As a career firefighter at an outer metropolitan integrated station I work with career and volunteer firefighters. I have great respect for both, but as Victoria's population increases places like Sunbury will expand in size and population, causing a strain on our current emergency response. As we currently operate we have 4 career firefighters on the appliance. Now that is 4 firefighters who are qualified in using a Breathing apparatus (BA), continually train and operate the sets and are all cleanly shaven, a requirement of use. If we were to arrive on scene at a house fire all that we can guarantee is that we have each other. It is not guaranteed that another appliance will arrive and if they do are they qualified in BA? Have they maintained their skills in BA? Are they cleanly shaven? These things are not guaranteed, and I am going to be entering a burning building with no guaranteed backup apart from my own crew, with two of us inside searching for any occupants / fighting the fire, another who is busy operating the pump which is supplying me with water and the incident controller who is overseeing the entire job and all the complexities involved.

Seven career firefighters dispatched will provide that guarantee that I speak of. Knowing that I have another crew that are all BA qualified, who have maintained skills and are cleanly shaven ready to assist if myself or my crew got into trouble is a tremendous relief.

However the requirement that 7 career firefighters be dispatched has never been introduced operationally to our procedures due to the inability of our EBA to be signed. With the formation of FRV, my EBA will be able to be signed, there will be no effect on the Volunteers, and I can continue my career with the knowledge that a staffed appliance from Greensborough, Deer Park, Tullamarine, Melton or Caroline Springs etc. would be on there was to assist if required.

Volunteers do a great job but they have lives and jobs outside of the CFA. With the growth of Melbourne and Victoria's regional centres it is imperative that these areas receive a fire service that suits the population and asset protection that they require and I will have a safer workplace that will ensure that I return home after my shift to my wife and baby.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Purcell

