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From: Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017 [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 6 July 2017 11:00 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

Miss Mac Hanson
[REDACTED]

Senior Station Officer, Metropolitan Fire Brigade
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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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To the Committee,

I make this submission in support of the fire services reform (Firefighter's Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment Bill) and the introduction of presumptive cancer legislation in Victoria for firefighters. I am a full-time firefighter for the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). During my 18 years of service I have mostly worked in the Melbourne's central and inner south-east. I currently hold the rank of Senior Station Officer and am also a specialist in Rope Rescue. This rank means I am the one in charge when my crew and I arrive at a fire or other types of incident.

Like every firefighter, volunteer or full-time, I am passionate about delivering the best possible service to the community of Victoria. They are the reason we do this job. I support the fire services reform because it will result in a better standard of service across all areas of Victoria. I am originally from South Australia where the same model exists. There is one full-time fire service for all urban areas across the state and one volunteer service which provides support and looks after rural areas. I know the proposed reform works from experience.

It is an 'insider' secret, seemingly known only by firefighters and certainly not reported in all the media hype this reform has generated; currently which urban area you live in changes the level of fire protection you get. It is completely illogical. The fire service boundaries are just an arbitrary line drawn up 60 years ago. In my experience the public don't know which side of the boundary they live on or which fire service (MFB or CFA, full time or volunteer) turn up to rescue them and put out their house fire, they're just grateful firefighters arrive. Those currently protected by volunteers do not realise the critical difference a full time fire service makes. Fire trucks arrive quicker and enough firefighters arrive to safely put on breathing apparatus and enter the structure. Us 'insiders' know this directly affects our chances of rescuing them from a house fire, of stopping the fire spreading and 'flashing over' to involve the whole house. To me

this reform is about saving lives and properties. This reform will result in a fairer level of fire protection to all urban areas in Victoria.

No matter how dedicated, long serving and well trained volunteers are, they cannot guarantee they will be available to respond, how many will respond when called, how long will they take to get there, or that they will have the qualifications needed to put on a breathing apparatus and enter a structure on fire. They have jobs, lives, families so it is totally understandable. As an officer in charge I need to arrive quickly and be one of seven qualified firefighters at a structure fire before I can safely send my crew inside wearing breathing apparatus. This is only guaranteed with a full-time fire service for all urban areas. This reform will save the lives of Victorian public and firefighters.

Every full-time firefighter in Victoria I know supports this reform. This is not only because we are sick and tired of being political footballs, sensationalised front page news and talkback radio fodder. It is because over the last few years all full timers have already assumed we would be one fire service eventually. We will continue to value the support and assistance provided by working with the CFA volunteers. We will continue to support them during bushfire events. Since the Black Saturday Royal Commission many of our procedures, equipment, training courses, protective clothing and uniforms have already become aligned (between MFB and CFA). As a Rope Rescue specialist I have already attended rescues in a 'CFA area' where they didn't have the numbers or qualified personnel to do the job. When we become one, full-time fire service the alignment process will accelerate and will further increase financial and operational efficiency of the new organisation. It will save Victorians money.

I also strongly support 'Firefighter's Presumptive Rights Compensation'. A firefighter friend who joined the MFB just after me is currently dying from one of the 12 cancers included in the Bill. He is married with five children. He is literally running out of time to benefit from this Bill. Instead of focusing on family and his health he is spending time meeting lawyers and WorkCover to attempt to prove he has a work-related illness and access compensation. The presumptive rights will protect both fulltime and volunteer firefighters who contract the cancers where there is overwhelming evidence they are caused by occupational exposure. It gives new, important protection to all firefighters. It is reasonable that volunteers will have to demonstrate their level of exposure as unlike full-timers, they don't have an employee record of how many fires they've attended. WA, Qld, Tas, SA, NT and ACT have already enacted this legislation. Please do not delay this important, long awaited Bill. We deserve it.

Mac Hanson
Senior Station Officer, Metropolitan Fire Brigade

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File1:

File2:

File3: