

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am a level one fire fighter in the CFA, a

I live in Geelong and am stationed at Point Cook.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

- **Backup.** Working in Point Cook I am extremely lucky to be surrounded by staffed stations. During the short time I have been on station, every time I have been first on scene at an incident; entering a smoky structure, pulling hose to a burning car or checking a patient in a car accident, I have always looked up to see my brothers and sisters from hoppers crossing and the MFB there when the task demands it. A second BA team entering a house, getting water into a truck or controlling the traffic while my crew and I continue with the task at hand. The idea of looking up one day and seeing no one is a sobering thought. The idea of a search of a burning home left incomplete after running out air, and there not being enough people to complete the task before the building flashes over. Ceasing an attack on a fire because the appliance has run out of water. There is currently no guarantee that we will get a second appliance or at least seven firefighters at a job. As much as I like and respect the volunteers of Point Cook, it is a matter of record that over the last twelve months, they have failed to respond more than eight times out of ten. This is not out of apathy or unprofessionalism, but simply a result of the realities of metropolitan living. If you commute half an hour or more, it is impossible to return to station and turn out. That is why we need to send two appliances and at least seven professional fire fighters to each call. This guarantees that the initial attack will have the greatest possible chance of success.
- **Urbanisation.** The areas that that career firefighters service are all highly urbanised. They all have tens of thousands of residents, multiple schools, large shopping precincts, factories and industrial estates and other facilities that require a rapid response from highly trained firefighters. These places are no longer small country towns, bush and farmland, and cannot be treated as such.
- **Standardization.** CFA staff firefighters already work alongside MFB firefighters, however our equipment and training is vastly different. A single, unified organization would allow us to be able to work side by side without any confusion, allowing us to deliver a much higher standard of service to the community.
- **Benefits to volunteers.** The proposed changes allocate a significant sum of money to the CFA volunteers. This would have significant positive impact on the volunteer's stations and equipment. The reform also provides a structure to formally deal with the problems many volunteer organizations face these days. Volunteers often struggle to turn out during the day, or at all if their numbers or location make it difficult. Recruitment and retention seems to be harder and harder as well. The

reform includes systems that would kick in at measureable points and provide real support in fixing these problems at a brigade level.

- No downsides. Some of the issues that have been raised are that a separated CFA will have a reduced surge capacity, and that volunteers will lose support. The surge capacity will remain unchanged; nobody is losing their job or role. At the time of writing, according to the CFA website, there are 35263 operational volunteers and 2507 CFA staff. The MFB website says that they have over 2200 staff. These numbers aren't changing, simply being rearranged. Victoria has 35263 volunteers and approximately 2700 staff today, and will have the exact same numbers after the reform. There will be no difference. The way that volunteers are currently supported by staff in managerial roles will remain unchanged as well. Operations officers and operations managers will continue to run fire districts as they always have.

In conclusion I hope that you pass the reform bill as it will have a massive positive impact, both to firefighters trying to do their jobs, and to the communities that we protect.

Yours sincerely,

Callum Murdoch

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