Submission to the Parliament of Victoria

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

by
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We strongly object that firefighters are divided into two groups in the Bill: "career firefighter" and "volunteer firefighter". The only material difference is that the former are, quite rightly, paid — firefighting is their means of income. All firefighters perform the same tasks, and should be treated equally. To do otherwise will likely have an *"effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery"*.

We suggest that clause 4 Definitions simply define thus:
> "firefighter" means a person who is or was a volunteer or employee of a fire service, engaged in firefighting duties.

In addition, all mention of the phrases "career firefighter" or "volunteer firefighter", be struck out, and simply refer to "firefighter". The Bill should make no distinction between firefighters.

We are concerned by Schedule 1 to the Bill.
- There is little heed given to cancers of the respiratory system, despite the likelihood of harmful airborne chemicals found at incidents attended by firefighters;
- The disease qualifying periods listed in Column 2 are all multiples of the number five. This seems very strange. Why is the actual epidemiological period not used? Better still, considering the nature of firefighting, entering hazardous situations, subtract a few years from the period indicated by the epidemiological studies; and
- The *"underlying policy rationale"* of no explicit inclusion of asbestos diseases is of great concern. While mining of asbestos ceased in Australia some years ago, firefighters face risks from asbestos, due to it's presence in dwellings, outbuildings, and other structures. Fire can release asbestos from a previously inert state.