

**Prue Purdey**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 7 July 2017 11:55 AM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** RE: INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017  
**Attachments:** Appendix 01.pdf; Appendix 02.pdf; Appendix 03.pdf; Appendix 04.pdf; Appendix 05.pdf; Appendix 06.pdf; Appendix 07.pdf; Appendix 08.pdf

**\*\*I request that the committee with hold my name from any publications.**

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

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

I am Leading Firefighter [REDACTED], I'm a career firefighter with CFA currently stationed at Pakenham Fire Station. I have been with CFA for 10 years, 3 years as a volunteer firefighter and 7 years as a professional firefighter. I have worked at many locations around the state such as (but not limited to), Hallam, Frankston, Springvale, Bendigo, Shepparton, Warrnambool and Traralgon.

**I am qualified as;**

- Rank of Leading Firefighter, requiring the successful completion of; recruitment and selection for the fire service, a recognised recruit course (16 weeks)and assessments, a minimum of 4years full time service, a minimum of 50 modules and the successful completion of the Leading Firefighters development and assessment courses.

**I have specialist qualifications;**

- Hazmat Technician (CBR-Chemical, Biological, Radiological)
- EMR (Emergency medical response)
- Rope Rescue Operator
- Trench and confined space rescue
- Workplace trainer and assessor

I was also a volunteer in my community at Clematis Fire Brigade for a period of approximately 3 years.  
**I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:**

In my time with CFA I have conducted numerous internal structure fire attacks, where I have entered the burning building alone with the assumption that there are persons trapped inside. There have only been a few times where I have been able to enter a burning building with a second firefighter with me. The fire service reform will ensure that I have the appropriately trained and number of persons with me to conduct an internal fire attack and/or rescue.

I would like to share with the committee, of a situation that is not uncommon for career firefighters to find themselves in.

**Cockatoo Structure Fire.**

A structure fire was reported at Seaview Road Cockatoo on the 18/08/16 at 15.52hrs. The fire started as the result of cooking in the kitchen.

- Cockatoo and Gembrook brigades were paged along with the career staff at Pakenham at 15.52hrs.
- Cockatoo Tanker was the first fire appliance on scene at 15.58hrs followed by Gembrook Tanker at 16.05hrs.
- The kitchen fire had now developed to a fully involved house fire due to no intervention.
- Pakenham Pumper with 4 career staff all structurally and BA (Breathing Apparatus) qualified arrived at 16.08hrs.
- On arrival I found that there was 1 hose line just sitting on the ground with no water being applied to the fire, nobody operating this hose.
- At this point if a rescue was to be performed, myself and my firefighter would have to make entry to a burning building without a rescue measure of 2 further BA operators on standby should we need rescuing. This is a standard that is stipulated in CFA's own SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) that is currently not able to be achieved in a lot of cases around the state
- The volunteer members, at no fault of their own, didn't have the required skills or knowledge to be able to deal with this type of event. In the 10 minutes that the volunteer tanker had been on scene nothing had been done to slow or stop the spread of this fire, which is now impinging on the neighbouring property.
- It was a further 11 minutes until both Emerald Pumper and Macclesfield Tanker arrived with more BA operators after Pakenham Pumper.
- Please see supporting documents from CFA's data. **Appendix 01.**

By having a guaranteed response of two career trucks responding with a minimum of 7 career firefighters would not only give me the protection of having a guaranteed number of trained firefighters responding, it would also greatly increase the level of protection to the public and increase the chance of survival of any trapped occupants.

CFA's own data shows that brigades are constantly failing to respond within their required time frames or failing to respond at all. These failures are not only occurring during the working week but also on the weekends or afterhours.

Please see the attached CFA documents as an illustration. **Appendix 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 & 07.**

Below are examples from my experiences which demonstrates the failures of the current structure: Appendix 08 is a record of some responses by volunteer brigades from the Pakenham area. This table is to illustrate the frequent lack of response from volunteer brigades and the inability to respond appropriately skilled or qualified volunteer firefighters.

It is important to note that this by no means a complete list. It is a quick snap shot of 'our world'. One which provides the best examples of the shortfalls within the current system. It's not when we get support but its if. And in what form will that support be? Will they be fully qualified and experienced to handle the intricacies of the incident or will they further compound a dangerous situation.

I attach the following documents:

**Appendix 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07 & 08.**

Our job has become safer with the new equipment and procedures, much like cars have become safer with new materials, that

is however until you add the human factor.

I know we all say we are not trying to degrade volunteers, and we really aren't. We know the commitment and effort they put in while at the same time working, maintaining a home and trying to have some sort of a social life. And for the most part they commit to the level their circumstances will allow and some will still try to commit more.

But you can't safely protect lives and property on best intentions. We have a system that seems to be happy to view that the incidences I have described are acceptable. That having either unqualified personal respond or failing that, no-one respond. All this while working in an environment that has been created and perpetuated stating that a volunteers and career staff skills are the same. We struggle to train people now as they are labouring under the assumption that they know it all already. You can't grow or develop with that attitude. And it's an attitude that has been created by well-intentioned but poor management in an antiquated system.

We are all well aware that career stations everywhere would not be practical, but this reform will at least provide us with consistent, skilled, qualified, timely support. It will work towards allowing us to respond further to help more people, without the confines of not being allowed into an area because of egos. CFAs own data highlights these problems over and over again . Numerous reviews have also highlighted the problems. People have been working with these problems for their whole career.

An emergency service cannot continue like this, something needs to change.

Yours sincerely,



**Leading Firefighter (Reliever)**  
Pakenham Fire Station – 780 Princes Hwy, Pakenham VIC 3810

Protecting lives and property



[cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au)