



**Alex McKinney** [REDACTED]

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To Consultation/DTF@DTF  
cc  
bcc  
Subject Submission in support of reform to fire services

1 attachment



Fire Services Reform Submission.docx

To whom it may concern,  
Attached is my submission in support of fire services reform.  
Regards,  
Alex McKinney

[REDACTED]

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS

COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT

(REFORM) BILL 2017

I am a Leading Fire Fighter with 11 years of service within the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). I have numerous qualifications, including structural firefighting, wildfire firefighting, multiple driver/operator qualifications (pumper, pumper tanker, water tanker, *etc.*), Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) qualification, amongst others.

I live in Heathmont and am currently stationed at Glen Waverley Fire Station, although recently I have also been stationed at Croydon Fire Station. Both of these stations, and indeed my home, are on the Metropolitan Fire District (MFD)/CFA boundary, and we regularly turn out with both paid and volunteer CFA members.

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

Our job is a dangerous one, with many associated risks. Any time we are called to an emergency, our lives, or the lives of the public, are most likely in jeopardy. As firefighters, we place ourselves in these situations for the good of the public, and of course can mitigate the associated risks through training, experience, equipment and procedures. I write this not to glorify what we do, but to simply state the facts, in the hope that I convey the reality of the situation and the urgency with which reform of the fire services is required. I believe this fact has been forgotten by all sides of politics and that this debate has dragged on for far too long.

As the situation stands with the current fire services model, I am required to respond to emergencies within the MFD and CFA area and work alongside CFA firefighters (whether professional or volunteer) who have different training, equipment, and procedures than I do. This creates doubt, confusion and sometimes the inability to act whatsoever due to the safety risk to us as firefighters. This to me is an unacceptable situation. Why should people's lives (including my own and my colleague's) and public property be put at this risk simply because of an outdated fire services model and an antiquated urban/rural boundary. The public deserves better from its emergency fire service, and in heavily urbanised areas I think they would expect a response from a single, professional fire service using common equipment and standardised procedures.

Unfortunately, I have many examples of where this current model has broken down, and much as it pains me to admit, we as fire fighters have been unable to deliver the service which the public would expect (and indeed deserves). I will not list those examples in detail here as they are too numerous and complex to describe in this format, but I will say that the problems begin when crews responding to the same emergency do not even operate on the same radio system and compound from there! I would be more than willing to discuss these matters in great detail with any member of the Committee. Please note that I believe the failings are due to the current fire services structure, and not the fault of any individual fire fighters involved in these incidents.

This debate has been used for political advantage by all sides for far too long. It is not a matter of 'taking over' the CFA, gaining ground or power, or any other reason perpetuated by misinformed members of the media or public. CFA volunteers provide an invaluable service to their local communities in rural areas, as well as to greater Victoria during bush fire season. All Victorians

understand this, and I understand this very well, having grown up in a rural area myself, an area where my brother has been a volunteer firefighter for almost 30 years. Career fire fighters also provide a vital service to the community and as a group we are sick to death of this verbal to-and-fro. This unjustly protracted debate is an unwanted and unwarranted distraction, and is placing additional stress into our already challenging workplace. We chose this career path to serve our community, and believe me, we would not advocate a solution which is detrimental to that same community.

This matter is simple. How can Victoria's fire services best serve the community? Having a single, professional fire service with common equipment and procedures responding within boundaries determined by an independent panel, mutually supporting and being supported by CFA volunteers in those areas which do not meet the targets for professional response. It is time to put an end to the misinformation around this matter, to make fair judgement based on the facts and bring the reform that will greatly improve an already world class fire service.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Joseph McKinney

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