



Glenn The fireman [REDACTED]
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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
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Subject Submission

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Please accept this as my submission to the committee.

Regards

Glenn Macdonald



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Dear Assistant Clerk Committees
INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS
COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
(REFORM) BILL 2017

My name is Glenn Macdonald and I am a Senior Station Officer in the the Metropolitan Fire Brigade with 15 years service. Aside from the promotional courses to obtain my current rank, I have during my career, obtained the following qualifications/skills sets:

- Aerial ladder platform (large boom appliance with operating rescue cage/platform);
- Heavy Rescue (appliance used for vehicle accidents, domestic and industrial incidents);
- Atmospheric monitoring (assessing & monitoring of potentially volatile [explosive or chemical laden] environments;
- Long duration breathing apparatus (breathing apparatus that allows 4 hour operation in 'hostile' environments;
- Shipboard firefighting skills sets (at berth & transfer from vessel to vessel);
- Mechanical loader (front end loader & backhoe utilised in a variety of response situations);
- Incident management and personnel management.

I have a mixture of operational experience and training experience in my 15 years service.

I am currently working at the Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre - Craigieburn. This facility is an MFB managed training venue where, amongst other courses, the training of Recruit firefighters is conducted.

My current role there is as the Course Co-ordinator for the first Victorian Recruit Firefighter Course which is scheduled to commence on 21st July.

This course will have MFB and CFA (career) recruits trained together in a fully integrated fashion, for the first time.

I am making this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services.

I reside in Melbourne's outer west in Melton.

This is CFA jurisdiction for response to emergencies.

The Shire of Melton, in recent years, has experienced phenomenal development and very significant population growth.

Just near where I live there are currently four new estates either being built in, having infrastructure put in place in preparation for building to commence or being planned for development.

These estates will mean

thousands more people living in the area and the next closest career staff support for the career staff at Melton

is from the station at Caroline Springs - a very significant time away, even with a 'lights and sirens' response.

This time delay has significant implications for firefighter and community safety.

The increased production of synthetic materials and the use of the materials for construction, furnishings and furniture means that fire development and spread occurs much more rapidly and with greater intensity.

What may have taken up to 30 minutes or more to develop in decades past, can now develop at such a rate that an average

room in a house is fully engulfed in fire in as little as 4 1/2 minutes and a house completely engulfed in 8 - 11 minutes.

The reform to the fire services and a guaranteed response of 7 career firefighters provides resources on the fireground

that are fully qualified in all aspects of structural firefighting and provides a consistent response. It improves

the safety for firefighters having staff that carry the same minimum qualifications to be a firefighter and

trained to the same standard.

Whilst I am a realist and certainly not suggesting that all premises will be

fully saved all the time,
I believe it is important for the commission to understand that even if
volunteer support occurred every time a response
was required, there are several levels of breathing apparatus (BA)
qualifications for volunteers.
These range from: not being qualified at all; to only being able to wear BA in
smoke, but outside a structure;
to being able to wear BA in smoke for search, but not for firefighting; to being
BA qualified for internal fire attack.
On top of this, there is no way to identify what BA qualifications a volunteer
has (if any) when they turn up on scene.
This provides no certainty of sufficient support/back up for career staff when
volunteers do respond.
For career firefighters, there is only one BA qualification - that is, fully
qualified for all aspects of BA use.
This ensures adequate support for internal operations and allows for rotation of
crews to share workloads at an incident.

The reforms will involve the areas around the integrated stations. These areas
have become highly urbanised
or experienced such significant population growth and have identified risks that
require a guaranteed career
response. Combine this with the existence of the Fire Services Levy, it is only
right that these areas receive the same
career response that similar areas receive.
For example, in Greensborough where the boundary divides MFB and CFA, it
literally comes down to which side of the
street or creek you live on. A friend of mine, also in the MFB, lives on the MFB
side of the boundary and receives
a career response from two MFB stations, whilst his neighbour who is literally
only across the street is subject to
a volunteer dependent response (10 metres difference).
Reform would ensure a career response through revision of boundaries and
response criteria.

Not one career staff member I have spoken to about the reforms denies the work
done by volunteers or suggests
that volunteers should be removed from response. All acknowledge that the state
could not get by, especially during the
summer fire season or natural disasters, without the existence of volunteers and
the tremendous work done by them.
The talk all centres on the improved conditions and safety that will be provided
to career firefighters and the community.
Placing the career firefighters into one service will allow for better
co-ordination of training, equipment and service
provision.
The reforms would mean that volunteers would be under the jurisdiction of the
CFA as a volunteer only organisation.
This is the origins of the CFA before career staff existed in the CFA, so it is
simply a return to their roots.
The reforms would have no impact on the 1200 existing volunteer brigades in the
state. These brigades would still
exist and it would be 'business as usual' for response and to surge capacity.
Only volunteers will effect surge capacity by ceasing to be a volunteer or by
choosing not to be available.
The reforms will not alter these arrangements in any way.
The reforms contain provisions to ensure ongoing training for volunteers.
Training will be provided to the
volunteer only CFA by qualified staff from the established agency of Fire Rescue
Victoria.

I believe it is important for the commission to wade through all the rhetoric
and propaganda and to see the facts and
truth around the proposed reforms.
It is time for the political grand standing and distraction tactics to be set
aside and for some truths to be revealed.
This ongoing conflict is creating a divide between career staff and volunteers

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that simply should not exist. It is being compounded by the interference of people with their own agendas to follow and not the interests of the services or the community.

The current structure of the fire services and boundaries need reform and review of practices.

The reforms are about ensuring safety for firefighters and service delivery to the community.

Yours sincerely,

Glenn Macdonald

