



"Chris" [REDACTED]
07/07/2017 03:29 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Fire services reform bill 2017
submission

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find attached my submission for the Fire Services Select Committee 2017.

Regards,

Christopher Jardine

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Fire Services Legislation Submission.pdf

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am

- Christopher Russell Jardine
- Senior Leading Firefighter
- Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB)
- 30 years of service

My place of residence is Sunbury, Victoria and my work location is Broadmeadows, Victoria

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

- I believe the proposed reform will provided the Victorian public an improved fire and emergency response system
- I was born and raised in country Victoria and fully understand the need for a volunteer firefighting service in the past present and future of our state
- The volunteers of the CFA provide a remarkable service for their communities, but as their communities grow, the associated risks and response needs of their communities increases.
- This places those volunteers under greater pressure to provide more and more time for not only emergency response but to skills acquisition and maintenance. They are no longer responding just to grass and scrub fires in what was a predominately rural environment
- Volunteers who used to live and work in their communities now predominately travel to other suburbs for work commitments. This is most prevalent in the outer metropolitan areas where volunteer stations are often unable to provide a 24/7 response
- During my career, the MFB/CFA response boundaries have been largely unchanged
- I have worked at fire stations which bordered CFA areas of Craigieburn and Greenvale and witnessed firsthand the changes in emergency response workloads of volunteers in those areas
- Volunteer firefighters, residents or councils have had to request help after the situation has become untenable and emergency response can no longer be guaranteed 24/7
- The line on a map method of selecting either the CFA or MFB to respond to emergencies is still used by some CFA volunteer stations which can limit or delay the response by career staffed stations in neighbouring suburbs
- When Emergency Medical Response (EMR) was introduced in the MFB fire district over 15 years ago to assist Ambulance Victoria in responding to cardiac arrest patients, response was limited to these arbitrary lines drawn on a map. This meant

we would not be responded from Somerton MFB station to Roxburgh Park a distance of less than 2 km because of the CFA/MFB boundary

- This response methodology is unacceptable for the needs of the Victorian public, they deserve better than a line on a map response
- Until this proposed legislation there has been no review mechanism in place to facilitate either a change in response boundaries or the establishment of career firefighters in those communities
- The establishment of a Fire District Review Panel is an important step in ensuring all Victorians receive the best emergency response available
- Much has been said by the media and political parties of the displacement of volunteers and the reduction of surge capacity with the introduction of this proposed legislation and the creation of Fire Rescue Victoria(FRV)
- There is nothing in the proposed legislation that will adversely impact volunteers
- Volunteer CFA stations will still be dispatched as they currently are, they will still maintain their command and control authority at emergencies in their response areas
- Amendments to the Act state that volunteer stations in the FRV district will receive “Support, recruitment, development and retention of volunteer officers”
- Fire Rescue Victoria staff will be seconded to the CFA to support training and command structures as they currently are from CFA career staff
- The current Fire Services Levy introduced after the Black Saturday Royal Commission has 2 different levy structures, one for the CFA area and another for the MFB.
- This levy is used to fund both organisations for training and emergency response.
- It is interesting to note that the CFA levy is higher, meaning that as per an arbitrary line, residents will pay more for emergency response than someone on the opposite side of the road and potentially receive a delayed or inadequate response, depending on the availability and skill level of the responding volunteer crew
- This reform will remove these arbitrary lines so all Victorians will receive the best available response
- Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria campaigned vigorously through the last federal election for no union influence in the CFA. (Hands Off the CFA)
- Post the last Federal election the Liberal party enacted legislation (Respect for Volunteers) while everyone may acknowledge the spirit in which this legislation was enacted it has created an impasse for career staff of the CFA to enter into an EBA
- This reform returns the CFA to its roots of a volunteer organisation, free from all union influence, they should embrace this opportunity
- It enables career firefighters of the CFA the opportunity to transfer to the newly established FRV

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the committee on this important issue for all Victorians.

I truly believe this proposed reform will provide Victorians with the emergency response system that will have the ability to grow as they grow, will maintain the respect and value of

all firefighters both career and volunteer, and most importantly provide Victorians with the emergency response system they deserve, worlds best practice

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Russell Jardine

