



**Costa Katsikis** [REDACTED]

04/07/2017 10:30 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF  
cc [REDACTED]  
bcc  
Subject Fire Services Bill Select Committee  
2017 - Submission

1 attachment



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To: LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am Commander Costa Katsikis of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). I am an active serving firefighter with the MFB since September 1988 (29 years). I reside at [REDACTED] and work in the Metropolitan District (MD).

I have read various literatures on the proposed Fire Rescue Victoria. This submission is based on my interpretation of my readings and articulates my opinion.

**Educational Qualifications**

- Aust. Institute of Police Management - Graduate Dip. Executive Leadership 2013
- Mission Centered Solutions – Incident Leadership 2013
- Barrington Centre, Executive Consequence Management course 2013
- National Counter Terrorism Committee – National CBR Incident Manager's - Skills Enhancement Course, Holsworthy, NSW 2012
- Victoria University – Graduate Certificate in Applied Management 2011
- Aust. Institute of Police Management - Graduate Cert. Applied Management 2006
- Melbourne University - Diploma of Training and Assessment Systems 2005
- Melbourne University - Diploma of Business Frontline Management 2005
- Swinburne University - Associate Dip. Applied Science- Fire Technology 1998.

**Specialist Qualifications**

- Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) Technician
- Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Cat, 2 Technician
- Trench Rescue Technician
- Long Duration Breathing Apparatus (BA)
- Fire Investigation and Analysis
- Chemical Biological Radiological (CBR) Trainer

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

- The current fire services arrangements originated in the 1950s and have remained largely unchanged for the past 60 years whilst the Victorian community has grown and diversified. It is my opinion that these arrangements are no longer contemporary.
- Victoria's population is projected to increase by 4.6 million people between now and 2051, with growth concentrated in major regional centres and Melbourne's outer suburbs. These areas are outside the MD.
- The MFB services the MD through a network of 47 stations staffed by career firefighters. However; the urban sprawl has seen large communities expand beyond the MD. It is my opinion that the MD is no longer contemporary.

- 15 of the hottest years on record occurred in the past 16 years. Heatwaves are lengthening fire seasons, and bushfires will likely increase in frequency, intensity and affect more densely populated areas. Similarly extreme weather conditions create widespread community consequences impacting personal safety and wellbeing, primary residence, livelihoods, critical infrastructure, economy and the environment.
- The nature of the emergencies has also changed. Fire services are constantly managing the consequences of emergencies such as: significant structure and non-structure fires; malicious and/or hostile acts; hazardous materials (HAZMAT) incidents; emergency medical response (EMR), including assisting ambulance paramedics during mass casualty incidents, etc.
- It is essential to have sufficient capability and capacity for response to an incident or fire in an urban setting due to the complexity of risks and broad community consequences. This is particularly beneficial in a hostile act environment where malicious acts can lead to significant community and infrastructure impacts. Similarly sufficient and timely backup capability with equivalent skills sets is essential to ensure firefighter and community safety.
- Eight different reviews into Victoria's fire services have made recommendations to modernise fire services legislation and to establish a process for reviewing the MD.
- A uniform approach to skills, knowledge, resources and response across all firefighting capabilities would be of significant benefit to the Victorian community. However; a cost effective model needs to be established to ensure future sustainability.
- Similarly, a common approach to fire safety and community safety would foster stronger resilience and promote greater efficiencies.
- I do not believe the proposition to employ all career firefighters in one fire service will have an adverse effect on volunteer turnout or surge capacity, as the state's resources are finite.
- The reform areas focus on 35 integrated stations and their primary response areas. These are located in highly urbanised and residential areas with diverse risks. These areas have significant supporting infrastructure that supports livelihoods and economic wellbeing.
- These integrated areas would benefit by a permanent fire service presence with targeted response times and specialist capabilities including Emergency Medical Response (EMR).
- I believe the reform benefits volunteers as it supports volunteer recruitment and retention in the CFA. This includes funding for volunteer station upgrades and resourcing. Similarly presumptive legislation benefits all firefighters.

Yours sincerely,

Costa Katsikis

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4 July, 2017