



Jason Lawrence [REDACTED]
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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Fire Services Legislation Reform.

Dear Select Committee Members,

I offer the following submission in support of the Fire Services Reform:

I have been an operational employee of CFA for 22 years and a member of CFA, both career and volunteer, for a total of 32 years. I fully support reforms to the Fire Services in the state of Victoria and believe that they are long overdue. My motivation for becoming a career Firefighter/Officer with CFA was and remains simple – being part of a special organisation with strong linkages to the community that provides a great service to all Victorians.

It is my strongly held view that these reforms will ensure that CFA and the proposed Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) will provide an improved and more efficient Fire Service for our State. With the establishment of an organisation (FRV) dedicated to supporting and managing all of the State's career Firefighters/Officers, the current resources allocated to CFA remaining fundamentally untouched, combined with the proposed enhancements and supplementary funding, will enable CFA to better focus on and support its volunteer personnel and therefore deliver a better service. This will only enhance the operational capability of CFA and the volunteer workforce and will not have a negative impact on current capacity; be it normal operations or the so called "surge" capacity.

Senior operational personnel will remain with CFA, albeit employed by FRV, and these long built connections will not be lost. CFA will continue to be led by a Chief Officer and supported by experienced, senior operational officers under his charge, continuing to provide the same leadership and experience as we do presently; this does not change. In fact there are commitments embedded within these reforms as I understand to further support and bolster the capabilities of CFA with volunteer recruitment, retention, leadership and practical training and female leadership enhancement.

With the growth being experienced across Victoria, the same model of Fire Services that was introduced in 1958 is no longer applicable today or in to the future. What the community often recognise as CFA, being the stereotypical "Bushfire Service" is not the reality. Nor is it that MFB only respond to "structure fires" in the CBD or near environs. The reality is that all of the State's Fire Services (CFA, MFB, DELWP, Parks Vic, Forest Fire Management Victoria) work cohesively together to provide a world class fire/recue response to all types of emergencies and as I see it, these reforms will only serve to strengthen this position. A view I am sure that I would not be misrepresenting Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley in espousing and supporting. There is no diminishment of capacity and our response to fires or other emergencies large or small.

One of the main issues of contention and upheaval within CFA over a number of years has centred around industrial agreements and the inter-play between the career and volunteer components that make up CFA's workforce. This includes both professional Firefighters as well as support staff roles (known in CFA as PTA staff). By transitioning a large portion of this workforce across to FRV, most of this internal angst and disputation will dissolve. This is not about acceding to one party or another, quite simply it allows the volunteer representative body to focus solely on advocating within CFA for those they represent and for industrial bodies to work directly with the employer over workplace agreements

without inadvertently dragging in or impacting volunteers. This destructive cycle needs to end, for the benefit of the community and everyone associated with Victoria's Fire Services.

On the introduction of the presumptive cancers component of the legislation, I would simply ask that bipartisan support for this critically important legislation remains and that its progress in to law not be impeded by this process; there can be no justification for not allowing this element to pass.

I thank you for your consideration of my brief submission and again strongly urge you to support the proposed Fire Services Reform legislation under current consideration, for the sake of a modern and progressive fire service that all Victorians deserve in 2017 and beyond.

With regards,

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