



Matt Hunt [REDACTED]

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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Reform Submission

1 attachment



Fire Service Reform Submission.pdf

Hello,

Please find attached my submission to the Fire Service reform committee.

Thank you

Matt Hunt

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

By email LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

Name: Matthew Hunt
Current Rank/Position: Leading Fire-fighter
Employer: Country Fire Authority
Specialist Roles: Air Attack Supervisor
 Thermal Imaging Camera Trainer
 CBR Operator

I have been a volunteer and operational employee of the Country Fire Authority for a period of 29 years. During this time I have been a member of both a country (rural) brigade in Gippsland and a city (urban) brigade in Ballarat as a volunteer. My time as an operational employee has been spent at Morwell and Ballarat City Fire Brigades.

I have also been a fire-fighter with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DELWP) for a period of 5 years on both their ground crews and on their Helicopter Rappel Crews.

I currently live in Sebastopol a suburb of Ballarat and work at Ballarat City Fire Brigade.

I also volunteer in my community by serving on the School Council at my children's primary school. I have been doing this for a period of 6 years with 5 of these served as the Council President.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire service for the following reasons.

The current fire service model in Victoria has served us well for a significant period of time, however the last 20 to 30 years has seen a dramatic increase in the Urban sprawl that is now pushing it to its limits. This has been particularly evident in the Greater Metropolitan area, however the major regional centre's including Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Mildura and Morwell to name a few have also experienced significant urban growth.

The below table sourced from Planning Victoria highlights the growth in population for the Greater Melbourne Area and regional centres up to the year 2051. These increases in population have already been significant and as shown below this trend is likely to continue. From a fire service perspective this all adds up to increased call rates, higher risks due to industry and longer travel times due to traffic.

This places a heavy burden on our volunteers and pushes the realm of what I believe is an acceptable ask from the state of Victoria from those that are donating their time.

Total population	2011	2021	2031	2041	2051	Average annual percentage change			
						2011-2021	2021-2031	2031-2041	2041-2051
Greater Melbourne Capital City Area	4,169,400	5,106,700	6,058,800	7,016,000	8,024,100	2.0%	1.7%	1.5%	1.4%
Ballarat	148,700	170,300	197,600	225,500	255,400	1.4%	1.5%	1.3%	1.3%
Bendigo	142,700	164,700	190,700	217,300	245,400	1.4%	1.5%	1.3%	1.2%
Geelong	256,600	303,400	358,300	418,300	485,600	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%	1.5%
Hume	161,300	172,500	188,100	206,200	227,100	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%
Latrobe - Gippsland	260,000	284,800	321,900	359,300	399,600	0.9%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%
North West	149,600	147,700	150,100	153,400	157,400	-0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%
Shepparton	127,000	134,200	144,500	154,800	165,600	0.6%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%
Warrnambool and South West	122,600	121,400	123,400	125,200	126,400	-0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
All Regional SA4s	1,368,500	1,499,000	1,674,500	1,859,900	2,062,400	0.9%	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%
Victoria	5,537,800	6,605,700	7,733,300	8,876,000	10,086,500	1.8%	1.6%	1.4%	1.3%

Source – Victoria In The Future 2016 – Population and household projections to 2051

The CFA was created as its name suggests as a 'Country' Fire Authority. In reality it is no longer such an entity. Due to the growth of the population the CFA has had to expand to an integrated model to ensure fire coverage is maintained where call rates and risk get to great.

The greater Ballarat area covered by the Eureka Group of Brigades has a number of significant risks, including

- 2 Major Hospitals
- 1 Cancer Treatment Centre
- 1 Psychiatric Care Facility
- 5 Large High Care Nursing Homes
- 4 Major University Campuses
- Numerous Urban/Rural Interface areas
- Heavy and light Manufacturing including Haymes Paint, Mcains and Mars
- 2 Major Shopping Malls
- 3 Major Boarding Schools
- 1 Operating Gold Mine

Similar risks can be found in all the current 35 integrated stations areas, should a fire or incident occur in a building such as these they warrant a timely and well resourced response. This can only be guaranteed with a staffed fire service, the current volunteer model cannot guarantee a response of an appliance or correctly qualified members. This is not a bad reflection on our volunteers, they have their own lives and work commitments so there are numerous times when they are not going to be available. As of this you will not always have available the appropriately qualified volunteers for the role required. For example those that can wear Breathing Apparatus which allows them to enter smoke safely.

Fire Service reform will ensure that these highly urbanised locations get the service delivery they require. It will ensure that the appliances responded are crewed with sufficient numbers to operate them safely and that they have the appropriate skills and training to combat the fire.

The dispute over the last few years has had a great toll on my workplace, myself and my Family, I have seen Morale drop at work due to constant attacks in the press. I have both family and friends who are volunteers, the disputes of the last few years have seen these relationships strain.

I believe that this reform will have benefits for both our career fire-fighters and our volunteers.

For our career fire-fighters it will provide safety in the workplace by providing sufficient career fire-fighters to do the job from the time of call. It will align both the CFA and MFB staff and help to finally realise full inter-operability.

For our co-located volunteer brigades I believe it will see them grow, they will their own equipment and appliances. This will mean they have clearly defined and meaningful roles to undertake, for recruitment this will see a positive effect. Any transition from CFA to FRV would be clear cut and follow a defined process. This will provide clarity to all and ensure everyone is informed and transitions are done based on the best outcome for the community.

For the community this reform is going to provide better service delivery. More fire-fighters to respond enhanced volunteer capacity due to increased funding and clearly defined roles. This will all equate to better outcomes for the community. For me the end of disputes between the two parties will restore the great workplace that I used to enjoy.

I would like to finish with an example of how our current response can fall short, which can be highlighted from a fire in 2007. This occurred at St John of God hospital in Ballarat.

On the day there were 6 Career fire-fighters on duty at Ballarat City to staff 6 appliances capable of carrying 21 Fire-fighters. The integrated model allows for responding volunteers to make up the numbers on the fire ground as and if they respond. The surrounding volunteer brigades are not responded to automatic alarms in Ballarat City's area, this is to help keep the call numbers down on the volunteer Brigades, the belief that 6 could handle the initial call and that they could call the volunteer brigades if needed.

Four of these fire-fighters were responded to a car fire on the north side of Ballarat, leaving only two behind at Ballarat City for any further calls. The remaining two fire-fighters were paged to an automatic alarm operating at the Hospital which is approximately 500 m from the station. On arrival approximately 1 minute later they observed a fire in a room on the 5th floor of the hospital.

Now I ask that you pause and picture what I have just outlined. Two Fire-fighters in a fire truck that can carry five have just arrived at a 5 story hospital with hundreds of people inside, many who cannot get themselves to safety. They have found this building **On Fire**. This is the reality of an integrated response and the situations we as CFA career fire-fighters are faced with on a weekly basis. Daily and weekly CFA appliances are responding without the required numbers or qualified crew to operate them efficiently or actually enter a building that is on fire.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit to this committee, I believe we have a great opportunity here to ensure our fire services are reformed. The future brings us many challenges, now is the time to ensure we are positioned to meet those challenges.

Yours Sincerely,

Matthew Hunt