



[REDACTED]
06/07/2017 10:11 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject submission for consultation on the
victorian fire services reform

Please find my attached submission for the fire services reform.
Your sincerely [REDACTED]

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

Hi, my name is [REDACTED].

I live in Warragul Victoria, I am currently a qualified fire fighter with CFA, stationed at Dandenong Fire Station. I have been stationed at Dandenong for the last two years and before that was stationed at Traralgon Fire Station in the Latrobe Valley. I have been with CFA for nearly 12 years. I was a volunteer for 10 years and have been a career fire fighter for the last 6 years.

Specialist Qualifications:

- Emergency medical response responder
- Qualified, high and steep angle rescue operator
- Confined space rescue operator
- Aerial appliance operator including: 42 metre ladder platform, Teleboom, and aerial pumper
- LPG flare off operator
- Ground observer

During my time in CFA I have seen the state of Victoria change. The dynamic of the fire services and their requirements have changed drastically. I truly believe that reform within the Victorian fire service is needed to refine and un-complicate a system that has been out dated for quite some time.

The dramatic urban growth of Melbourne and Victoria's rural centres means areas that were, 10 or less years ago, either paddocks or small country towns, are now suburbs and cities. These areas that were doing low numbers of calls and had a low risk profile are now struggling to make turn out times. They now have major residential, commercial and industrial risks. The fact that these areas are expected to have a strictly volunteer response is ludicrous. These volunteers are being expected to keep giving more and more; causing great strain on their families, employers as well as their own health and wellbeing.

If the reforms currently being proposed were to come into effect it would result in a single career service covering the entire state. Trucks will be crewed by career fire fighters trained to the highest level. If there is a continuity with equipment and standards throughout the state, it will be easier for career fire fighters and trucks to move within the state in the event of major incidents or for surge capacity. It will also mean that we have a board of reference for the fire service. Any areas within Victoria that reach the point of needing extra fire service coverage, will be highlighted and rectified.

I would like to address some of the points as to why this is the case based on my experiences as both volunteer and career member within the Victoria fire services.

Impact on fire services delivery across Victoria:

The fire service delivery within Victoria, in its current state, is far too complicated and inadequate in some areas. Whilst the current CFA model works very well in our rural areas where call numbers are low and impact on those members is low. Within our rural centres and our urban fringe the current model leaves many areas either greatly under resourced or it has created a great strain on the volunteer members expected to pick up the slack of these rapidly growing areas. Having worked in both a rural centre and a major urban area both covered by CFA, I have seen on many occasions areas that are primarily covered by volunteers left with no coverage due to those brigades been unable to get a truck out the door due to members having commitments that they are unable to leave, such as employment or families. In these instances the career manned trucks have been the first arriving appliance on scene, outside of their currently restricted primary area. Due to the 90 second response, allowing us to arrive on scene with the appropriate number of structurally qualified fire fighters who were immediately able to begin operations in breathing apparatus we were able to bring these incidents under control.

One particular incident was a house fire I attended. Our pumper was the first appliance on scene to a fully involved structure fire. Due to extreme winds, it was beginning to impact on the neighbouring properties. If our response had been dispatched and responded to even a few minutes later the neighbouring property would also have been well alight. Having the correct number of fire fighters and a fast response allowed us to save the neighbouring property and bring the fire under control within a matter of minutes. We received back up from the nearby MFB station who were only minutes behind us, allowing for the needed change over crews and number of fire fighters to safely complete overhaul of the property.

By implementing the Fire Service Reforms, the service delivery to the community will be adjusted and delivered to a standard and level that Victorians living in our built up and busiest areas deserve. Not only will it save property and lives, it will give all Victorians peace of mind. The peace of mind that when they phone for a fire truck, it will be there in a timely manner and with a crew who are competent and qualified fire fighters to deal with the incident at hand.

Effect on volunteer engagement and participation in service delivery:

Current volunteer engagement in the areas mostly effected by the reforms to the fire service are at best a struggle. Many volunteers within these areas are just too busy and unable to meet participation and workload needs within brigades. At my own brigade, on most training nights we have a very low attendance due to members having other commitments. This then means that their skills are not at a sufficient level to be actively and efficiently involved in fire service delivery. By changing the response tables and lowering the workload expectations and time requirements, it will mean that those brigades will be able to make their training more flexible and allow them to focus on specific skill sets, for a more focused response. This may allow these brigades to then focus on bush fire fighting or support rolls and be part of the summer needs or surge capacity.

Also by creating an entirely volunteer based CFA, it will allow all members to reclaim the identity of the CFA and volunteers. This in its self will serve to increase volunteer engagement by having all the resources of the organisation focused upon, volunteer training, recruitment, and promotion.

Closing statement:

As a career fire fighter who has had to deal with political nightmare of been used as both a target by political parties and the volunteer association to try and justify their existence and try to remove the focus from the failings of the current fire services system within Victoria and the risk it possess to the greater community of the state. I have been targeted and victimized, this has not only taken a toll on my mental health and wellbeing, but it has also taken a massive toll on my family. They have been confronted, on many occasions, because their son, brother or boyfriend, is a career fire fighter and how dare he want conditions that will improve community safety.

I implore all those with a say to pass this legislation, for the sake of Victoria and its citizens!

Yours sincerely [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I request that my name address and contact details remain confidential