

[REDACTED]  
07/07/2017 11:35 AM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF  
cc  
bcc  
Subject FRV Submission

To the Assistant Clerk Committees,

Please find attached my submission to the inquiry into Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

I have marked my submission confidential, and would like to confirm that it is only my name and identity that is confidential. I would like the content of my submission to be considered by the committee.

Regards,

[REDACTED] Station Officer (Reliever)

Geelong City Fire Station – [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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Submission presented by



# [FIRE SERVICES REFORM PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY]

A personal submission to the Select Committee of eight members of Parliament inquiring into and reporting on the restructuring of Victoria's fire services as contemplated by the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017

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## Glossary of Terms

AIIMS	Australian Inter-Agency Incident Management System
ARRF	Aviation Rescue Fire Firefighting
AV	Ambulance Victoria
BSOP	Brigade Operational Skills Profile
CFA	Country Fire Authority
EMA	Emergency Management Australia
EMA13	Emergency Management Act 2013
EMR	Emergency Medical Response
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria
FFMV	Forest Fire Management Victoria
FRV	Fire Rescue Victoria
IMT	Incident Management Team
JSOP	Joint Standard Operating Procedure
L/St	Low Structure
MFB	Metropolitan Fire Brigade
OM	Operations Managers
OO	Operations Officers
RAR	Road Accident Rescue
S/Wf	Structural Wildfire
SSO	Senior Station Officer
TRAIN	Training Record Management System
VFBV	Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria
VicPol	Victoria Police
VicSES	Victorian State Emergency Service
Wf	Wildfire
Wf/St	Wildfire Structure

## Introduction

To the Assistant Clerk Committees,

**Re: Inquiry into Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services  
Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017**

My name is [REDACTED] and I have been a professional Country Fire Authority (CFA) firefighter for 16 years. Prior to this I was also a volunteer member of CFA for 3 years. I am based at Geelong City fire station, holding the rank of Senior Station Officer. This financial year Geelong City will have responded to approximately 2450 emergencies, I have attended approximately 200 of these. My role is managerial and supervisory, filling the role of appliance Crew Leader and Incident Controller at incidents.

My urban firefighting experience extends to being appointed at major regional centres such as Shepparton and Warrnambool and also the outer-metropolitan CFA fire district at Caroline Springs and Hoppers Crossing fire stations. Throughout my career I have worked at the majority of CFA integrated career stations across Victoria. I have also instructed on two 16 week recruit courses at the former Fiskville training college.

In addition to being a qualified structural / urban firefighter, my qualifications include;

- AIIMS ICS Incident controller, Planning Officer Level 2, and Ground Observer operator / supervisor
- Certificate 3 in Firefighting (Operations)
- Certificate IV in workplace training and assessment
- Technical Rescue operator / supervisor specialising in Trench Rescue, Road Accident Rescue, Steep and High Angle Rope Rescue
- Strike Team Leader
- Aerial Ladder Platform and Hydraulic Ladder appliance operator / supervisor

Additional qualifications I hold include a Diploma in Natural Resource Management and I will finalise a Bachelor of Emergency Management by mid-2018.

## Scope / Context

This submission aims to analyse the four key points of review;

- Impact on fire service delivery across Victoria
- Effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery
- Short term and long term cost impact on fire service provision
- Underlying policy rationale

I will achieve this by incorporating my personal experiences with opinion, supported by relevant research and data. I believe it is essential to break down the hysteria, looking factually to investigate what is potentially being implemented.

## Need for Change

A study of a 75 year period (starting with the 1939 Street Royal Commission: Victoria, until the 2013 Hyde inquiry: Tasmania) found no less than 29 Royal Commissions, coronial inquests and special inquiries have investigated Australian Bushfires. These have produced in excess of 1640 recommendations for reform. That is an average of one inquiry every two and a half years, each inquiry producing 57 recommendations (Learning from Adversity; Eburn 14). Victoria has not been immune to this.

Significant events that have been recent precursors to change include the Black Saturday Bushfires of 2009 and the Major Flooding across Victoria in 2011. *'It is noteworthy that the Floods Review (2011) and the Royal Commission (2009) have both revealed significant shortcomings in Victoria's emergency management arrangements'* (Review Flood Warnings and Response; Comrie 11). A major reform program was announced in 2011 with the release of the green paper; *'Towards a More Disaster Resilient and Safer Victoria'*, along with *'Victoria Prepared: An Action Plan'*.

Since this time we have seen the introduction of EMV, the EMC and the Emergency Management Act 2013 (EMA13). Despite the emergency management sector undergoing major changes, the Victorian fire services have remained largely unchanged for the past 60 years.

Increasing fire weather through climate change, organisational issues in training and response, poor workforce planning, psychological costs to career staff, loss of community confidence and the changing regional risk profile through an increasing Victorian population are some points I will explore.

These factors are all pointing towards the need for change.

## Impact on fire service delivery across Victoria

### Training

As sighted by the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) in their submission to the 2015 Fire Service Review, *'there has been a lack of organisational and strategic planning for training'* (VFBV Submission Aug15 p13).

In my experience, training facilitated and supported by CFA management in relation to practical structural firefighting and skills maintenance has been almost non-existent. The majority of training is driven from the ground up, which results in some inconsistencies on a state-wide basis. Once a recruit finishes at the training college, there is no provision for hot fire training skills maintenance to occur. Compartment firefighting has never been delivered to career staff.

*'Neither CFA or SES have a sound understanding of the total number of volunteers needed to fulfil their operational requirements. Both agencies' assessments of current workforce capacity overestimate their emergency response capabilities'* (Managing Emergency Services Volunteers; Vic. Auditor General Feb14).

The CFA remains very Bushfire focussed. We 'gear-up' as an organisation prior to each fire season, and this provides a source of frustration for me. My work location averages nearly 7 calls every 24 hours, irrespective of time of year. Geelong City is highly urbanised, and bushfire is a very small part of the skills mix required of the individuals working there.

There is hope that reform will create an organisation that can focus on its urban workforce, providing relevant training programs that match the risk we respond to daily. This will enhance our skills, allowing us to operate more safely on the fireground due to a greater awareness, with improved skills. Consistency and organisational support on a state-wide level will enable urban firefighters to deliver quality outcomes in line with our communities' needs.



## Urban Response

For urban firefighting qualified volunteers, the role and experience remains largely unchanged, their contribution to keeping Victorian safe is just as valuable as it always was.

Volunteers will undergo the same training, utilise the same equipment, drive the same fire truck and partake in the same role on the fireground. Volunteers will work along -side the same people, cooperatively utilising the same Australian Inter-Agency Incident Management System (AIIMS) to combat incidents as per best practice. The established relationships and rapport remains.

Career firefighters will still be paid, however the difference will be that the badge on their turn-out gear and fire truck may display 'Fire Rescue Victoria' (FRV) instead of CFA or Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). Volunteers will still be overseen by the same Operations Officers (OO) and Operations Managers (OM). The same faces will provide support and strategic direction, translating the CFA's organisational goals to those on the ground. Again, the only difference here will be; that instead of being directly employed by the CFA, the OO's and OM's will be seconded from FRV into their previous positions, as is common practice by Emergency Management Victoria (EMV).

Currently we see a multitude of mutual aid agreements between emergency response agencies. CFA has many agreements between themselves and MFB, Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV), Victorian State emergency Service (VicSES), Avalon Airport; Aviation Rescue Fire Firefighting (ARFF), and Viva Refinery (North Geelong) to demonstrate some local examples. Mutual aid between CFA and MFB has proven its workability; these reforms will abolish the agreement with MFB, to introduce an agreement between CFA and FRV. The reform impact is negligent as there is no need for current practices between agencies at fireground level to alter.

Reforms will address issues we are currently seeing with brigade response in the medium urban hazard class. It will do this through the Fire Boundary Review Committee. CFA's own data reveals that many brigades are failing to meet the 8 minute service delivery standard, which is designed to ensure the protection of life and property.

The UFU obtained data from 43 volunteer brigades between Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 and Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2016. The data revealed Warrandyte failed to meet this target for medium urban incidents, 80% of the time. Lara failed to meet these standards 81% of the time, arriving on time to 19 of 98 incidents they attended as the primary brigade during this time (UFU Bulletin #153, 31/08/16).

I provide these figures not to denigrate the volunteers, but to highlight the issues that are current and the opportunity that an independent body review can enable through improved criteria. This includes issues being highlighted ahead of time, allowing support and planning to begin prior to service delivery standards being compromised. Urbanisation is placing excessive pressure on many volunteer brigades, placing their communities at higher risk when service delivery standards are not met.

As a crew leader and incident controller responding to incidents, I am constantly listening for brigade response, so that I can task my team suitably and safely and request extra support if it is required. I can never be sure if a volunteer brigade will respond or not and in the urban environment, this is dangerous.

A reform delivering a guaranteed seven structurally qualified firefighters to an urban structure fire (in VFR area) is a safety measure for all firefighters involved in structural firefighting. It ensures adequate numbers of personnel on the fireground to undertake an internal fire attack with a degree of safety. Current CFA arrangements come in the form of a 'C Response' in assignment tables where 3 brigades are dispatched to a structure fire.

The issue is that there is no guarantee of how many firefighters will arrive on scene and what their qualifications are. When their pager activates, whoever is available will respond. As incident controller, I am unaware of the skills mix I have to work with (from supporting volunteer brigades), until they arrive on scene. This makes tasking difficult and delays the response of further support if required, lengthening the incident and damage incurred.

I have many examples where support brigades have responded to structural incidents, but step out of the appliance wearing rural clothing. It is great that they are giving their time for the community but my ability to utilise these people is severely restricted in the urban environment. If anything happens to them, I may bear some liability as they lack the appropriate urban training and are wearing inadequate personal protective clothing.

The reforms may assist this by moving response in urban areas towards the MFB model of responding appliances instead of the CFA model of responding brigades. Responding brigades to bushfire events is effective, because all operational members as a minimum standard have completed Wildfire training and are issued with protective clothing for that environment. Unfortunately this translates to an urban environment in a negative way.

As I have stated above, not all personnel whom respond to the urban environment are suitably qualified or protected. Currently motor vehicle accidents attract a multitude of primary and support brigade appliances including command vehicles. From a rescue perspective, if you add an ambulance or two, several police cars, multiple fire appliances (one is sufficient for fire protection), a CFA rescue, VicSES rescue and the local traffic, you can see why accident scene congestion is commonplace, causing frustration to multiple emergency response agencies.

An overarching body to govern response (e.g. Fire Boundaries) would assist in solving these issues by dictating the response of appliances, not brigades to these types of events.

## Fire Response Boundaries

In the future, urban fire brigades and their communities that require extra support can have changes in their responsibilities reviewed with consistent criteria on at a state-wide level. These criteria can be set by the proposed '*Fire District Review Panel*'.

I believe the establishment of an independent panel is essential. My experience has seen a reluctance to change response boundaries both within the CFA and with other agencies, due to territory protection and individual selfishness, unfortunately outweighing improved service delivery to the community.

A good example of this is the reluctance of VicSES to give any primary response area to Geelong City CFA for Road Accident Rescue (RAR), despite our ability to reach many areas of Geelong before the VicSES due to a guaranteed 90 second turnout. In the past this has resulted in sound established combat plans being overturned upon VicSES arrival, simply because they are deemed the 'Primary' agency. The power and control need of individuals' has outweighed the need of the unfortunate person stuck in a vehicle.

A further example is the move by CFA to create multiple integrated brigades in the outer-metropolitan area around 2001/02. This stopped the potential spread of the MFB and ensured funding streams at the time for the CFA (based on population insurance policies). I support the concept of an independent panel, however I believe it is a mistake to simply look at 'fire' boundaries.

Emergency Management Australia (EMA) and the Victorian Emergency Management sector changes over the last few years have, like other Australian states, moved from a predominantly Response focus to encompass the principles of Prevention, Preparedness Response and Recovery.

My role has expanded considerably over the last decade, responding to fire is just one component of a long list. Some daily business (not exhaustive) for CFA integrated brigades involves support to VicSES in RAR, rope rescue, trench rescue and flooding. Emergency Medical Response (EMR) requires regular support to Ambulance Victoria (AV) and those brigades neighbouring public land also interact with FFMV. Victoria Police (VicPol) often needs our support at motor vehicle accidents, when dealing with suicide (body retrieval) and the requirement for washing away contaminants.

Craig Lapsley (2016 EMV Operations Review) has identified that we are shifting from an '*all hazards / all agencies*' approach to an '*all communities, all emergencies*' approach. I believe that review of fire boundaries is too simplistic and doesn't address what EMA and EMV are trying to implement throughout Victoria's emergency sector.

I believe to fully support this community approach, brigade response boundaries need to encompass all the incidents we attend (all hazards), and consider the capability of not just fire brigades (volunteer / career or integrated) but also other emergency agencies as they apply to emergencies that the given community faces.

For example, Corio VicSES have experienced internal division and as a result, have not responded to RAR for over 6 months. This leaves a gap for RAR response throughout North Geelong and up the Princess Hwy to Werribee. At Geelong we try to fill this gap (when staffing allows) by allocating an extra person on the rescue appliance. This brings the appliance staffing to three, with a guarantee of at least two qualified RAR operators. The potential exists for these responders to be the only qualified operators on scene, regardless of the size or complexity of the incident. VicSES volunteers are no different to CFA volunteers in terms of experiencing difficulties responding during the day and weekdays, due to changing societal demands on an individual's available time.

I have travelled as far as Lorne from Geelong City (approx. 65km) in the Rescue unit and have been the first crew to gain access to a vehicle for AV to begin monitoring. This was a 50 minute travel time and the patient unfortunately died just minutes before we arrived. A VicSES crew of three were on scene but unfortunately the complexity of the crash was above their training and experience level.

I hope that independent review addressed these issues, such as increased training provisions for VicSES, expand the training of CFA members to provide initial RAR access for AV or a strategically located rescue unit to adequately service areas such as the surf coast. Under the current system many of these issues are not dealt with.

To fully deliver the service our community requires, we need to break down the internal politics, and stop agency 'land-grabs'. I believe establishing an independent panel with transparent criteria to govern response boundaries for all emergency service organisations will improve service delivery for an 'all hazards' approach, resulting in improved protection of our communities.

## Effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery

### **Workforce Capability**

I have explored the positive effect the reforms will have on volunteer participation through response and training. Within the short and long term costs sections I further review the impact on volunteers in terms of psychological impact and fire service damage to community confidence.

Mr Rush: *'Mr Bourke, what we are looking at it an information paper of the CFA Board of 31 March 2008. The first dot point makes the observation that in 2006/07 business year, the three CFA metropolitan areas accounted for 53% of all incidents, responding with 14% of the total CFA volunteer capacity and 49% of CFA's station staff'* (Bushfire Royal Commission 04/05/2010). This demonstrates that the majority of volunteers (86%) can be found outside the CFA metropolitan areas. These reforms do not impact the majority of CFA volunteers.

To accurately review the effect on volunteer engagement, I believe we need to analyse the actual numbers of urban volunteer firefighters. This figure is often hidden under the total number of CFA members, with 60,000 volunteers being promoted in the public forum. Half of this figure is actually operational;

### **Operational Volunteers** (CFA Annual Reports)

2015/16 = 35,796

2014/15 = 35,367

2013/14 = 38,335

Further analysis reveals a further reduction when we look at volunteers that are qualified to combat urban incidents. The CFA system; Training Record Management System (TRAIN) details the training records of all CFA personnel (volunteer and career). A search using this system reveals the number of volunteer qualifications (state-wide) recorded on this system;

- Structural with Wildfire (S/Wf) = **2298** volunteers (30/06/2017)
- Suppress Urban Fire competency = **1373** volunteers (30/06/2017)
  
- Wildfire Structural (Wf/St) = 4501 volunteers (30/06/2017)
- Low Structure (L/St) = 19,352 volunteers 04/07/2017)
- Wildfire firefighter (Wf) = 40,655 volunteers (04/07/2017)

(Refer Appendix A: TRAIN Data)

Brigades classed as a '4' or '5' (Refer Appendix B: Brigade Classification) require a percentage of their membership to train to the S/Wf level as outlined in the Brigade Operational Skills Profile (BOSP). Refer Appendix B (Brigade Classification). As brigade classification uses population as one of its parameters, with statistics revealing that this involves approximately 50 brigades in Victoria (Refer Appendix C: Population Trends). The proposed reform impacts 35 of these stations.

In terms of volunteer engagement, we are realistically engaging with around 1500 qualified urban volunteers, as opposed to 60,000. As explained throughout, these 1500 can continue to volunteer as they always have, alike those with lesser qualifications.

*'...they (CFA) count non-active volunteer skills – volunteers who have attained competency but are no longer operationally active in that skill – which has the potential to overstate the number of volunteers who are available to perform a task, and they do not consider times of day and week that volunteers are not available. This practice may give false assurances that a brigade has a capacity to respond, when it does not' (Vic Auditor General; Managing Emergency Services Volunteers' Feb14).* This explains why the number of CFA operational volunteers for 2015/16 is 35,796 (CFA Annual Report); differing from the total number of wildfire qualified volunteers amounting to 40,655 (TRAIN data).



### Surge Capacity

Fire service changes ensure that 'surge capacity' is maintained. Brigades surrounding and volunteers remaining at the traditional integrated fire stations know that they are supported to assist at large campaign fires because sufficient crew remain behind protecting their local communities.

EMV have been promoting interoperability for a number of years. At an Incident Management Team (IMT) level, multiple agencies have been encouraged to collaborate and provide manning to staff IMT's for significant events at each emergency management level (local, regional and state). This change has improved incident management and also reduced the commitment of fire services to fully staff IMT's. This responsibility is now shared.

Within CFA, career firefighters have provided 'surge capacity' support to Lorne for two weeks during peak tourism season (due to heightened risk). This involved a crew of four with an appliance to assist in life and property protection. Avalon Air show is another example of providing extra support to an event due to population and risk factors. CFA firefighters have also supported interstate at bushfire events in South Australia and New South Wales and support to VicSES flood operations is increasing. Under the new fire service model volunteers and career staff can continue to deliver this essential support.

Joint agency standard operating procedures (JSOPs) have been in place for a number of years, formalising relationships between CFA, FFMV, MFB and VicSES. These JSOPs enable inter-agency support to activate quickly and efficiently. These don't need to change under the proposed reforms.

Regularly interoperability examples are demonstrated with MFB 'stepping-up' an appliance into a CFA stations to ensure fire coverage is maintained. We have seen interoperability work on an interstate scale with NSW providing appliances to fill CFA fire stations during the Hazelwood mine fire. When major events happen, such as Black Saturday, international support was supplied from New Zealand and Canada. Modern emergency management is allowing individual agencies to share their workload, no longer needing to work in isolation, autonomously.

## Short term and long term cost impact on fire service provision

### *Psychological Impact on members*

After withstanding years of politically driven litigation, I (am many of my colleagues) feel down but not beaten. I am in a unique career where my work colleagues are like a second family. We don't only work together, but the shift work means we live together; cleaning, sharing meals, etc. We need to be a strong team at both incidents and on station. We are recruited for our ability to work together, and we do it well. I believe this is why we remain a united, strong body of firefighters today.

Throughout my 16 years I have been through many Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBA's) that have utilised all sort of underhanded tactics in an attempt to break down the pay and working conditions of the time. Prior CFA Boards have utilised volunteer associations (for example former rural and urban associations and now VFBV) to spread misinformation and play volunteers against career staff. My experiences have seen many vocal anti-staff sentiments originate from volunteers at locations which have no interaction or support arrangements with integrated stations.

Poor morale has been recognised in the Fire Service Review 2016;

*'With the current state of morale and strategic and operational leadership, the fire services appear to be in an extremely unhealthy state; a situation that must not be allowed to continue'.*

The fire service review 2015 made two specific recommendations to rectify the *'fundamental collapse in trust and goodwill'*;

**Recommendation 13:** *'...CFA and MFB be restructured to reinstate the role of Chief Officer as head of the organisation...'*

**Recommendation 14:** *'a single board be established as the single governing body for the CFA and MFB'.*

I have doubted my ability to have trust in CFA management for a number of years. The Fiskville Inquiry (2016) was long overdue and confirmed suspicions that were held by me and my colleagues for many years leading up to this report.

**Finding 58:** *'That individuals at all levels of the CFA executive management – from those in charge at Fiskville up to the board – had some knowledge about contamination at Fiskville prior to December 2011...'*

**Finding 47:** *'That the CFA ignored concerns raised by the UFU and withheld important information from trainees and others. This was in breach of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 and resulted in ongoing exposure to contaminated water'.*

Everyone that trained, instructed, lived or visited the Fiskville training college was not only totally let down by CFA, but also by Worksafe Victoria. The people involved were not held to account. They avoided their day in court and this is a disgrace. This contributes largely to the state of workforce health, especially considering that Fiskville was the home for Career staff recruit courses.

The proposed reform addresses the Fire Service Review by establishing a fire service commissioner to head both CFA and FRV. Short term psychological costs to all Victorian career staff is the uncertainty centred on ongoing employment and the continued political exploitation of our profession. The strong network of fellow station staff assists in offsetting the low levels of morale that currently exist. Potential fire service reform gives hope of an improved work environment into the future.

We are already filling high stress jobs; *'The stressful nature of careers featured within our most stressful of 2017 needs no explanation, such as Firefighter... These are careers with high risk of physical harm to oneself or another, for whom the professional is directly responsible'* (CareerCast.com 17). The internal politics and lack of organisational support just adds to this stress.

Long term costs under the current regimes could lead to increases to a stressed workforce. We have already suffered many colleague suicides across both career services within the last few years. Irreversible division between career staff and volunteers is possible due to continuation of political and VFBV interference. A further reduction in morale may impact service delivery to Victorians. The introduction of Presumptive legislation is comforting for employees to know that they will receive adequate protection should they happen to fall ill from this high risk job.

Since CFA's rural inception, volunteers have enjoyed CFA Board representation. Career staff never has. I believe the basis for many drawn out industrial disputes between CFA and UFU have been caused by union members attempting to drag CFA through change to meet its urban responsibilities. The lack of organisational support to career staff through a reluctance to discipline volunteers has been constant throughout my career; *'because you get paid for it, and they don't'*. One cause is a fear of losing a shrinking workforce.

A new leadership model through this reform hopes to provide a more harmonious work environment, through separation of the volunteer and career members. Restoring trust in fire service management and actively supporting the psychological health of its workforce is imperative.

### **Community Confidence**

*'The Herald Sun has been running a consistent smear campaign against the Union in an attempt to demonise firefighters. The Herald Sun has published 34 front page stories about the UFU since its ongoing campaign escalated in June during the lead up to the Federal election' (UFU Bulletin #186 24/11/16).*

*'Independent facilitator reports show government misled public over firefighter wage claim. ...the Andrew Government leaked bargaining documents into the public arena, but did so despite knowing that the information was misleading and out of date' (UFU Bulletin #214 09/11/16).*

In terms of short and long term costs, political actions by individual parties denigrate the standing of firefighters within their community. When firefighters are wearing their turnout gear, the only difference between individuals in CFA is the rank insignia on their helmet. The majority of the general public would not recognise this; they just want a fire truck with a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced firefighters to arrive at their door in the shortest time possible to assist.

When working in the outer-metropolitan area, on numerous occasions the public were surprised when I would tell them I was employed by the CFA. They assumed we were all MFB firefighters and the CFA was 'in the bush'.

Political denigration of the fire services impact all firefighters (career and volunteer), irrespective of the fire service they serve. I believe the majority of the public doesn't differentiate between rank or individual affiliation.

As such, considerable cost is borne onto the fire service regardless of their employer or the affiliation an individual has (for example union or association). This cost incurs short term damage in terms of morale and division of firefighters. Longer term damage includes the breakdown of working relationships between staff and volunteers, and the loss of confidence and respect from the community.

At the height of the media attacks, I have experienced abuse from a passing motorist whilst training off-station. There has also been an instance when an individual actually spat on a fire truck. These are not isolated incidents. Unfortunately these ignorant people are happy to take what they read as verbatim and the truth. They remain uneducated regarding the real issue and the facts surrounding EBA negotiations.

I am now finding the public questioning our actions during operations. For example, if we are responding code 1 (lights and sirens) it is often necessary to downgrade based on further information received, to reduce the risk to other road users.

I, along with other members at Geelong City have had crews questioned and abused for downgrading and cancelling as they haven't been required to proceed. In one instance the crew took the opportunity to fill the truck with fuel after cancelling a response. At the service station they were accused of responding Code 1 to get fuel. This is ridiculous and insults our professionalism, but it stands as an example of community trust and confidence in firefighters to do the right thing has been eroded.

The '*Hands Off CFA*' was a divisive campaign to win the votes of CFA & SES volunteers, over a perceived CFA takeover. As I have demonstrated, the majority of CFA volunteers (86%) will remain unaffected by this reform. Unfortunately it has strained relationships between some career staff and volunteers. We are now seeing the biggest reforms to Victorian Fire Services in their history and those behind the campaign have made minimal comment. I believe this is evident that CFA was used for attempted political gain during the federal election.

These reforms have the potential to improve firefighters' standing in the community and reinstate a government workforce that the public trust and are proud of. All firefighters (volunteer and career) can benefit, because each respective workforce will be free to negotiate and implement change free from third party interference.

Separating career staff and volunteers will relieve tensions between the union and VFBV, which will flow into improve working relationships on the fireground. This separation will also reduce the political value of attempted splitting of the representative groups, hopefully avoiding the misuse of fire service members for political gain. Firefighting can return to being apolitical as it always should be.

The fire service as a whole needs to be a valued asset to the Victorian Community, not a political football. Community confidence is imperative to ensure a safe and harmonious work environment for all firefighters. Restoration of trust and community confidence in its fire service reopens avenues of communication, allowing for the delivery of key programs to the public, improving service delivery.



### ***Monetary Impact***

Between 2011 and 2014, the CFA and MFB management spent \$21 million on repeated litigation actions against the UFU. This money was taken from the fire services levy that could have been utilised in a positive way.

By pooling all career staff under FRV, this means that the government will have one firefighting workforce to negotiate with, one EBA to finalise instead of two. Third party interference will also be avoided for both organisations. The CFA and VFBV will also be able to implement changes for volunteers, free from the need to consider the needs of career staff within the parameters of an EBA. Cost savings will be felt by both CFA and the government through the streamlined implementation of change.

Volunteers are vital to provide Victoria a cost-effective fire service to rural and smaller urban communities. This has been recognised through the proposed \$44 million package for CFA station buildings and upgrades program. In addition there is also a \$56.2 million CFA support fund.

Fire service changes promise to provide a better understanding of workforce requirements, with the independent review committee providing clear criteria to measure brigade viability against. This will provide guidance as to how many people a brigade requires, trained to what level. This will improve cost planning for protective equipment and training.

The move away from integrated stations could also introduce the 'hub and spoke' model, where a staff station is strategically located to support multiple volunteer brigades surrounding it. This can increase the viability of volunteer stations, through improved response.

This is what should have happened to the current Ocean Grove integrated station. If it was centrally located on the Bellarine Peninsula, it could reach all of the Bellarine communities in a more timely manner. Instead it is located on the far South of its response area.

## Underlying policy rationale

### Demographics

Between 2014-15, Victoria's population increased by 99,400 people. This was the second-largest population increase of any state or territory, behind NSW. This growth was the fastest in Australia, above the national growth rate of 1.4%. Greater Melbourne also experienced the highest growth of all Australian capital cities (*Australian Bureau of Statistics 17 abs.gov.au*).

*'Sometimes growth does exceed the capacity of volunteers or community circumstances challenge a brigade's ability to sustain required level of volunteer capacity and additional support needs to be provided to the brigade. When the support solution requires additional paid firefighter support... CFA integrated brigade resource model' (is implemented) (VFBV; Fire Service Review Submission 15 p19).*

In 2006, integrated brigades across Victoria responded on 19,806 occasions. In the decade to 2016, this increased to 27,167 responses. During the same period integrated brigades in the outer-metropolitan area experienced a 56% increase in responses. Ballarat and Bendigo experienced 58% and 44% increases respectively.

In the Geelong region where I respond, the four integrated stations of Geelong City, Belmont, Corio and Ocean Grove have increased response from 2,796 times in 2006 to 4,971 responses in 2016 (*VicGov; Fire services statement p16*).

It is clear that the workload of CFA integrated brigades is constantly growing in the urban environment. With Geelong to have a predicted population of 320,000 by the year 2036 (*forecast.id.com.au*), pressures on volunteer members within, and volunteer brigades supporting integrated locations will increase. The Geelong area will also support AV with EMR trained personnel within the next few years, further increasing fires service call rates throughout the Geelong region.

I have witnessed the growing demands placed on volunteers as their brigade call-outs grow and their risk diversifies. The personal impact on volunteers is an increase in time commitment through response requirements and minimum training changes.

Multiple brigades across the state struggle to respond during the day (particularly mid-week), largely because for many people, the spare time available to volunteer simply isn't there. Some changing societal demands include the 7 day working week and a home mortgage that often requires two incomes to service it. The VFBV have echoed similar concerns by recognising '*ongoing social, demographic and other challenges to volunteering*' (VFBV; *Fire Service Reform Submission 15*).

Fire service reform will address these issues in the urban environment, by allocating career staff to support the growing communities by embracing the extra workload of response and training. Volunteers can remain at integrated locations if they choose, and volunteer retention will be improved by allowing volunteers to choose their level of training and match it to their time availability. Volunteers can serve their communities and do it with a work /life balance that works for each individual.

## Climate Change

Victoria's climate is changing, seeing an increase in extreme fire weather, including a longer fire season. *'As the emergency management sector, we must acknowledge and prepare for the impact of climate change, on all aspects of emergency preparedness, response and recovery'* (Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley; EMV).

Climate change is not only increasing the workload of a firefighter, but it is incurring a greater time commitment from volunteers that are already under pressure.

## Conclusion

Many of these issues highlighted in my submission arise when population growth causes increases in community hazards and associated risks. These begin to outstrip the volunteer based system's ability to cope in the urban environment due to further increases in workload through training and response.

We need to look after our volunteers by not overloading them with training requirements and response pressures that make them feel like they have let their communities down because the juggling of demands from modern society become too much.

As you read through the submissions, I ask you to please question;

- How is the person writing this submission impacted and in what way?
- Do they live and work in the impacted urban areas?
- What will be the best direction to take to adequately serve our communities into the future?

You will receive submissions from various groups and individuals whom are acting out of self-interest, miss-information and/or anti-union sentiment, but not experience.

I am directly impacted because this is my career. I live and work in these urban areas. These changes impact my community, the health of my workplace, direct how I will manage the fire station and supervise emergency incidents into the future. Outcomes will also govern whom I am directly employed by and how I will continue to provide for my family.

As our state evolves, so too must our fire services.


I look forward with interest to review your findings and I thank you for taking the time to consider my submission.


Regards,





Senior Station Officer (CFA) Geelong City


Appendix A [CFA TRAIN Data] (CFA Intranet)

 <b>Qualification Summary Report</b>		Report date : 04/07/2017 17:25
<b>CFA</b> Statewide, Qualification: WILDFIRE FIREFIGHTER, Current Qualifications Volunteers only; Current People only; Primary and Secondary Locations		
Qualification	Total	
WILDFIRE FF A	40,655	
<b>Grand Total:</b>		<b>40,655</b>

 <b>Qualification Summary Report</b>		Report date : 04/07/2017 17:25
<b>CFA</b> Statewide, Qualification: WILDFIRE-LOW STRUCTURE FIREFIGHTER, Current Qualifications Volunteers only; Current People only; Primary and Secondary Locations		
Qualification	Total	
WILDFIRE-LOW STRUCTURE FF A	19,352	
<b>Grand Total:</b>		<b>19,352</b>

 <b>Qualification Summary Report</b>		Report date : 30/06/2017 22:57
<b>CFA</b> Statewide, Qualification: WILDFIRE STRUCTURE FIREFIGHTER, Current Qualifications Volunteers only; Current People only; Primary and Secondary Locations		
Qualification	Total	
WILDFIRE STRUCTURE FF A	4,501	
<b>Grand Total:</b>		<b>4,501</b>

 <b>Qualification Summary Report</b>		Report date : 30/06/2017 22:57
<b>CFA</b> Statewide, Qualification: STRUCTURE - WILDFIRE FIREFIGHTER, Current Qualifications Volunteers only; Current People only; Primary and Secondary Locations		
Qualification	Total	
STRUCTURE - WILDFIRE FF A	2,298	
<b>Grand Total:</b>		<b>2,298</b>

 <b>Competency Summary Report</b>		Report date : 30/06/2017 22:33
<b>CFA</b> Statewide, Competency: SUPPRESS URBAN FIRE, Current and History Competencies Volunteers only; Current People only; Primary and Secondary Locations		
Competency	Total	
SUPPRESS URBAN FIRE	1,373	
<b>Grand Total:</b>		<b>1,373</b>

## Appendix B [CFA Brigade Classifications]

### Brigade Classification Process

The table below outlines the factors considered in determining the classification of each brigade.

#### 1. Population

The population figures were provided directly from the 2011 Census data. Each brigade was classified from one to five based on the breakdown of population figures listed in the table below.

Classification	Population
5	> 15,000
4	4,500 > 15,000
3	1,400 > 4,500
2	500 > 1,400
1	< 500

#### 2. Property

"Towns in Time" data was used to determine risk from a property perspective. "Towns in Time" is data based on the 2011 Census data.

#### 3. Specialist Risk

Specialist risks were primarily location or event based risks that were known by the team. For example, the Victorian Snow Fields were determined to be a higher risk as was Lorne and Phillip Island due to the increased population over summer.

#### 4. Local Input

Having completed steps one to three, each District and Region was provided with a draft of their brigades with their classification and asked for feedback. This feedback was considered, and in most cases, where good rationale was provided, the classification was adjusted accordingly.

### Brigade Classification Descriptions

The table below outlines the Risk Descriptor associated with each classification level.

Brigade Classification	Risk Descriptor
5	Fully urbanised environment Highly industrial, commercial and institutional environment High incidence of hazardous materials usage and transport Bushfire risks either on the urban rural interface or interspersed amongst structural areas Frequency of turnouts is high
4	Significant township, city or suburban environment with predominantly structural risk Full commercial and institutional risks Some hazardous materials risk Bushfire risks either on the urban rural interface or interspersed amongst structural areas Frequency of turnouts is high-moderate

Brigade Classification	BOSP
5	Structural Bushfire
4	Structural Bushfire
3	Bushfire Structural
2	Bushfire Low Structural
1	Bushfire

Appendix C [Victorian Population Trends] (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/>)

Rank	Urban Centre	Population	
		2006 census <sup>[1]</sup>	2016 census <sup>[2]</sup>
– 1	Melbourne	3,371,888	4,529,500
– 2	Geelong	137,220	187,417
– 3	Ballarat	78,221	99,841
– 4	Bendigo	76,051	92,888
▲ 6	Melton	35,490	59,500
▲ 7	Shepparton	29,553	49,371
▲ 8	Pakenham	18,804	32,911
▼ 9	Mildura	30,016	31,361
▼ 10	Wodonga	29,710	31,605
▼ 11	Warrnambool	28,150	29,284
▼ 12	Traralgon	21,960	24,590
– 13	Wangaratta	16,845	17,377
▲ 14	Ocean Grove-Barwon Heads	14,125	16,093
▼ 15	Moe-Yallourn	15,582	15,292
– 16	Horsham	14,125	16,451
▲ 17	Bacchus Marsh	13,261	14,913
▼ 18	Morwell	13,399	13,691
▲ 19	Torquay-Jan Juc	9,851	13,339
▲ 20	Warragul	11,498	13,081
▼ 21	Sale	13,336	12,766
▼ 22	Echuca	12,358	12,613
– 23	Bairnsdale	11,282	11,820



Appendix C [Victorian Population Trends] (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/>) continued

— 24	Colac	10,857	11,415
— 25	Lara	10,525	11,192
— 26	Drysdale-Clifton Springs	10,217	10,927
— 27	Portland	9,820	9,950
— 28	Swan Hill	9,684	9,894
▲ 29	Leopold	8,160	9,608
▲ 30	Drouin	6,858	9,368
▼ 31	Hamilton	9,379	9,346
▼ 32	Benalla	9,129	9,328
▲ 33	Castlemaine	7,248	9,124
▲ 34	Gisborne	6,398	8,057
▼ 35	Healesville	7,355	7,993
▲ 36	Wallan	5,410	7,811
— 37	Wonthaggi	6,529	7,279
▼ 38	Maryborough	7,692	7,174
▼ 39	Ararat	7,169	7,024
▲ 40	Yarrawonga	5,727	6,793
▲ 41	Kilmore	4,721	6,142
▲ 42	Lakes Entrance	5,548	5,965
▼ 43	Seymour	6,063	5,914
▼ 44	Stawell	5,877	5,734
▼ 45	Kyabram	5,623	5,642
▼ 46	Cobram	5,063	5,420
▲ 47	Maffra	4,046	5,112
▲ 48	Leongatha	4,504	4,894
▼ 49	Churchill	4,588	4,750
— 50	Kyneton	4,286	4,460