



Peter Arnett [Redacted]
07/07/2017 12:05 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Fire services reform select committee

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

Please find attached my submission to the Fire services review select committee.

Regards,

Peter Arnett
Communications Technical Services Officer
Communications Operations
ICT Services

Country Fire Authority



What we are	Vision	Missio n
CFA is a volunteer and community based fire and emergency services organisation	Working together with communities to keep Victorians safe from fire and other emergencies	To protect lives and property

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Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

1. I am a Communications Technical Services Officer (CTSO).
 - I work in the Communications Operations Department of the Country Fire Authority based in Bayswater, Victoria.
 - I have seven years of service with the CFA.

My qualifications include

- Advanced Certificate in Telecommunications – Telstra
- Investigations and Court Procedures – Australian Federal Police
- Certificate IV Government (Statutory Investigations and Enforcement) – Australian Forensic Services

2. I Live in Kilsyth South and my duties as a CTSO require me to be able to work across the state of Victoria in every CFA district, headquarters, volunteer brigade, integrated station, forest industry brigade, volunteer Coast Guard, DELWP, Parks Victoria, interstate incidents and in fact anywhere that CFA communications equipment is installed. CTSO's have a unique position in the CFA where we are in contact with such a diverse range of members and related agencies.

3. I do not see the role of CTSO and the services that we deliver to volunteers and professionals being impacted with the transition to FRV as we can continue our role through an arrangement with the CFA/FRV.

4. I live near the border of The Basin volunteer brigade and Montrose volunteer brigade. I am also serviced by Boronia professional firefighters and MFB station 26 (Croydon) professional firefighters. By car it takes approximately six minutes to drive from my home to each of these stations when the traffic is light.

5. I have concerns about the time it may take for a volunteer to get from their home or work to the station and then wait for other members to arrive that may or may not have the correct skills mix to turn out and arrive at my home and conduct the fire fight. I am not even guaranteed that a volunteer brigade will be available to attend. I am guaranteed that professional firefighters from Boronia and Croydon would be out the door within 90 seconds and be at my home in approximately seven minutes. I am also guaranteed to have seven professional firefighters to carry out the job more safely. I can also rely on the fact that I have professional firefighters who can carry out emergency medical response (EMR) to start lifesaving medical treatment while waiting for ambulance crews to arrive.

6. Twenty five years ago when my home was built there were neighbouring farms and orchards. These properties have since been subdivided and replaced by hundreds of homes. Kilsyth South is no longer 'the country' yet we still live in a Country Fire Authority volunteer brigade area. This needs to change.

- 7.** I believe that having all career staff and officers employed under FRV as being a much better model than the one that currently exists. The FRV model gives better opportunity to standardise equipment and resources, improve professional firefighter safety and improve response times which leads to safer communities.
- 8.** I believe that CFA volunteers will benefit from the fire services reform with improved funding for volunteer station upgrades and the assistance package to aid volunteer recruitment and retention. Station upgrades and more volunteers mean safer communities.
- 9.** The introduction of presumptive cancer legislation for all firefighters will finally address concerns that all firefighters have and is essential in the fire services reform to give equal rights to volunteers as well as professional firefighters.
- 10.** The ongoing EBA dispute has created a lot of tension between volunteers and professional career staff. I have personally had to put up with comments from volunteers making derogatory comments about professional firefighters/officers and our proposed EBA. Political advertising is common place in many volunteer stations. Examples include posters such as the Liberal Party's 'Hands off the CFA' which attempts to 'white ant' the fire services reform. The Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) has been behind much of this negative scare campaign which creates further tension and reduces morale. This unnecessary stress has impacted on all members' health.
- 11.** I believe that separating professional staff into FRV and making CFA one hundred per cent volunteer will take the heat out of the current stalemate and provide a process where we can transform our fire services into the twenty-first century and beyond. The change process should be ongoing and never be allowed to stop as it did in 1958.
- 12.** It is no secret that the CFA is a very unwell organisation that desperately needs cultural and structural reform in order to move forward and get better. The CFA needs new processes to give more opportunities to its younger members. The CFA needs energetic people with new ideas and enthusiasm to take a leading role. The time has come to move on the people who oppose change. The people I refer to are the people who have been in senior volunteer roles for decades and when asked, "Why do we do it that way?" reply with "Because we have always done it that way!" The CFA culture has always been to silence people with new and different ideas that may unsettle the old timers. This needs to change.

Summary

I support the fire services reform and look forward to taking any opportunity to help both organisations heal, improve and succeed, heading into the future. Having a negative outlook is not an option and change cannot be started soon enough.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Arnett

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