

Submission: Fire Services Bill Select Committee 2017

I am Station Officer Travis Klein, Station Officer on C Platoon Warrnambool Fire Station. I have been a member of the CFA since 2003 (14 years), during this 14 year period I have worked on station at Shepparton, Sunbury, Ballarat, Greenvale and Warrnambool Fire Stations. I have also been a part of 3 recruit courses at Fiskeville between 2012 and 2014 as an Instructor.

I currently hold qualifications in fire behaviour and suppression, ground observing, steep and high angle rope rescue, confined space rescue, trench rescue, aerial operations and instruct / assess driving for the CFA.

I have played a role in many large campaign fires including 2003 North East fires, 2009 Black Saturday fires, 2014 Grampians fires and was awarded a Chiefs Commendation for Service during the 2014 Hazelwood Coal mine fire.

The Fire Services of Victoria in my opinion and through my experience desperately require reform. The reforms proposed by the current Labor government would provide a long overdue improvement in community and fire fighter safety. In my time I have experienced attending fires in large communities as a part of a 2 man crew where no further help arrived for the first 10minutes of the incident resulting in a highly unsafe firefight for myself. This cannot be allowed to continue.

In recent years at Warrnambool Fire Station a new CFA appliance was brought online after 5 years in a shed due to incompetent management. This Aerial Pumper was brought online with manning of 3 on the 1st of August 2015. This appliance was supposed to be used to improve response within District 5 Warrnambool to Hamilton and along the coast for about a 100km radius from Warrnambool Station. However even today the 26th of June 2017 no turnout table changes have occurred. This appliance only services the Warrnambool area and may be requested to attend elsewhere. This is because of an outdated system which gives every brigade its own patch of land which they defend at the communities cost. Reform can change this.

In the last couple of months there have been 2 occasions where within district 5 the CFA turnout tables sent only Tankers and rural bushfire trained firefighters to structure fires, these Tankers and firefighters do not have the appropriate equipment or skills to fight a structure fire in an urban environment.

Reform can change this.

The Claim that all volunteers are trained to the same level as Staff is completely incorrect, staff undertake a 16 week intensive recruit training course followed by years of modules and further training, some courses are over a week long Hi Angel rope rescue for example. Staff train in all aspects of firefighting, rescue and scene safety for between 10 -30Hrs per week while Volunteers undertake no recruit courses and attend one training night per week

for 2-4hrs.

Reform can change this.

At Warrnambool Fire Station I am happy to say that staff and volunteers work well together on the fire ground and will continue to work well into the future with or without reform. Do not allow lies by warring parties to blind you from this reality. In Fact at Warrnambool we have a great working relationship with surrounding brigades it's only the very few that do not want to co-exist and are willing to try and sink this bill through any means.

Hon James Merlino visited Warrnambool Fire Station to consult with staff and volunteers prior to the reform bill and spoke well. He explained a lot during his visit and clarified all questions. During his talk he spoke about a disconnect between CFA Station Staff, CFA Management, CFA Volunteers, the UFU and the VFBV. This is broken and needs a fix as he said and I strongly agree it's time that every group was reset and allowed to form good working relationships rather than the continuous industrial dispute that has plagued 10 years of my career.

Reform can change this.

Please work hard to allow this reform bill to pass and increase the publics, my colleagues, and my own safety and allow this current government the opportunity to correct the currently outdated broken fire services of Victoria.

Station Officer Travis Klein

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