

# Daniel Maynard



Date: 27/6/17

Fire Services bill select committee

Gordon Rich Philips  
Daniel Mulino  
Colleen Hartland  
Daniel Young  
Cesar Melham  
Harriet Shing  
Luke O'Sullivan  
Wendy Lovell

Dear All,

My name is Daniel and I am a Professional level 1 Fire-fighter with the CFA, I am an 'Above Strength Fire-fighter' based in district 13 and my base location is South Warrandyte fire station.

As an above strength FF, I have spent time at other stations including Eltham, Rowville and Boronia. In doing so I have seen many different dynamics presented along the urban/ rural interface and am surprised with the density of housing in areas that are surprisingly deemed 'Country'.

I'm writing to express my concern for the immediate need for fire services reform, I have only been in my new career in the fire service now for approximately 12 months but it has become extremely apparent to me the need for change. While the political games and inflammatory comments have been pushed through the media of late to divide people and make them choose sides, the real concern seemingly has been lost, community safety.

As a resident in a volunteer response area (Mount Evelyn) the suburb has grown immensely since the 1950's when the current fire service model was implemented, census figures indicate that in the 1950's the population of the area was around 1400 people, compared to 2015 statistics of just over 9600 people. Now that is just one suburb in the Yarra valley, in the 50's it was predominately farming, vineyards, estates and public land. Fast forward to now and surrounding suburbs including Lilydale, Mooroolbark, Chirnside park, Bayswater, Wandin and Seville have seen populations grow at enormous rates as house pricing has increased and people being forced further from the 'Metropolitan area' if they were to own there own home.

Now I'm a big supporter of the amazing work that Volunteers do for all communities not only in the fire service but many other areas. However, People only have a finite amount of surplus time these days. Volunteers with the CFA are passionate about what they do, they enjoy helping to serve the community and will always be required through out the state of Victoria. But in the instance of an Emergency, that can not be pre-planned, it is never known what hour of the day or night some body is going to be in desperate need of the Fire service and with increased population figures the chance of incidents are only heightened. Gone are the days of members working where they live where the 4 minutes to drop what they are doing, get to the station, change in to there turnout gear and respond to an incident with 4 or more other members are viable in the urban areas.

Volunteers who are just normal members of the community who have commitments like work, family, weekend sport, school duties, days of sickness or holiday are expected to attend station one night a week and one day on the weekend for training



and station duties. Outside of that the onus is on them to study, learn and up skill themselves to be suitably qualified in things like, structural fire fighting, Breathing apparatus use, Thermal imaging camera interpretation, Hazardous atmosphere detection, Motor vehicle accident understanding, Bushfire fire fighting just to name a few. So should the pager go off and volunteers are to respond again, the skillset of the volunteers that respond will vary and may not be suitable. Should a crew of 4 members turn up to the station for the incident of a house fire (for example), the hope is there that one is accredited to drive the truck and use the pump, two are accredited to use Breathing apparatus and enter a structure with the confidence and knowledge about what they are doing and one member is of experience and rank to lead the crew and control the incident- these are too many variables and unknowns to provide a capable and appropriate response.

Why should these urban communities fire service hinge on the hopes that all these things fall into place?

Within the Yarra Valley the specialist response is a volunteer service, with the SES and the CFA providing road and technical rescue, meaning that should a person be involved in a traumatic and serious road accident, the services are hinging on the hope that trained, capable and even more qualified volunteers are able to respond to aid that person, time is always critical in these instances for not only the ability to preserve life but for incidents not to then escalate in to lengthy road closures, delays to travel and work within the area becoming greatly effected.

Why should road users in urban communities be subject to those unknowns?

Working at an integrated fire station where volunteers and professionals share location and equipment it is understood by those volunteers that their response will be a second truck response, meaning that they are there to provide support to the initial truck (professional fire-fighters) , These supportive roles including, securing reticulated water for the pump operator, scene preservation including the deployment of witches hats and barrier tape to create safe working areas, setting up first aid and medical triage points should people be injured, staging as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Breathing apparatus (BA) team ( should they be qualified), manning hose lines for exposures like neighbouring buildings, cars and factories, creating BA control points, the list goes on. These are all critical and important tasks, some which if their response doesn't turn up, is then lumped on the initial crew who are already working at getting the incident under control. The importance of 7 professional fire-fighters on the fire ground is not one to denigrate the work the volunteers do, but one to ensure that there is adequate response for all tasks required. It ensures the safety of all initial crews knowing that support is there or coming, it ensures that all critical tasks will be undertaken by appropriately trained people and aids the efficient management of emergency situations so they do not escalate further.

Why should Fire-fighters safety be unnecessarily risked when they are focusing on helping others?

The talk of 'Surge capacity' will be diminished is simply untrue, along with reform surge capacity too is to adapt. Members at 'co-located' stations should be encouraged to focus on their bushfire fire fighting skills, people living in metropolitan communities that are not within a volunteer CFA area should be able to join, train, learn and become bushfire trained volunteers with the CFA so that come the summer fire danger period the volunteer fire-fighter pool is larger and more people are at the ready to be deployed where ever their area needed to provide that surge capacity.

I could go on with more examples and reasons why reform is due but I think if you break it down simply to the fact that a 1950's fire service model designed to protect communities and people in the 1950's is exactly that.

Its 2017, our population is only growing, Country areas are no longer country and community risk is continually evolving, its time that the fire service evolves to meet those needs. Change although scary to some is imperative to all.



I ask you to think factually and for the benefit of the community of the greater urban area of victoria, not only your electorate or the groups of people with in that you represent. People of urban Victorian deserve equal and modern coverage no matter what electorate or suburb they live in, people can only benefit from these reforms, volunteers will adapt, Professionals will adapt and communities will grow.

I am open to be contacted for further clarification, or of any way I can aid in making an informed decision on these matters.

Sincerely,

Daniel Maynard

Level 1 Firefighter, CFA