

**Prue Purdey**

**From:** MILNER, Joseph [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 28 June 2017 8:25 AM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Fire service reform

Hello,

My name is Joseph Milner and I have been a professional MFB fire service employee for 28 years. I am currently based in the Dangerous Goods Department at the MFB Burnley complex. I have previously been stationed throughout Metropolitan Melbourne and spent many years at Somerton Fire Station in the northern suburbs, on the metropolitan fringe. I write to express my support for the proposed fire services reform.

The area surrounding Somerton Fire Station is bordered by CFA stations, that for many years were volunteer services only. Some of those areas, including Roxburgh Park, Craigeburn, Greenvale and Epping are now manned by CFA professional firefighters; however, they are backed up by CFA volunteers and cannot guarantee the recommended 7 firefighters are responded in 8 minutes. All of these areas are mainly residential or industrial areas and deserve a full time fire service that can respond in the appropriate time.

I've seen firsthand what happens when volunteers from these areas are unavailable or slow to respond due to commitments they all have in their day to day lives. On more than one occasion, I attended calls in CFA areas where a CFA volunteer had provided a wordback of "Stop", meaning that no further appliances are required to continue to the fire scene, only to find that on our arrival the volunteer was on their own and in their private car without a fire appliance on scene. This appeared to be a common tactic by some CFA volunteers to prevent the MFB professional firefighters from arriving on scene first. As you can imagine this is an extremely dangerous practice and could put lives and property at risk. When the MFB station was first opened at Somerton, we would often hear and then see CFA appliances from Craigeburn, a volunteer only station at the time, turning out to attend fire calls in the neighboring suburb Roxburgh Park. It was clear that the Craigeburn CFA volunteer policy at the time was not to respond the MFB full time fire service until they had arrived on scene themselves, again an extremely dangerous practice.

I would hope that these types of situations are rare and understand the volunteers do a wonderful job and are required throughout Victoria in the rural areas; however, built up areas throughout Victoria require a full time professional service, that can deliver a timely response with enough personnel to adequately combat any emergency.

In my current position as a Fire Safety Inspector in the Dangerous Goods Department, we provide advice to industry throughout the Metropolitan Fire District. As part of this advice, we would always encourage industry to control their risk with both installed fire protection systems and on-site trained personnel. Due to the financial constraints on many of these companies to compete in a global market, they will always be looking to reduce costs. In many cases this may mean they reduce or even remove their on-site emergency response teams, placing a higher reliance on the local fire authority. Many of these types of facilities can be located in industrial areas on the outskirts of Melbourne.

Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this outdated system, 35 areas are wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigeburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and Geelong are just some of the 35 'country areas'.

These areas need to be modernised as they are highly urbanised areas as part of the reform of the fire service. A rapid 8 minute response, with 7 professional career firefighters on two fire trucks is the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas.

All Victorian, professional and volunteer firefighters, deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities. To ensure the safety of all Victorians - including me as a firefighter, I ask you to please seriously consider your support for the proposed fire services reform. Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of your constituents, and all communities in our growing state. Additionally, it will ensure the safety of our firefighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer firefighters because of the enormous urban growth resulting in increased emergency calls. I also respectfully submit that you give consideration to my request to modernise the fire service along with the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect fire service employees. Both are needed to be endorsed and implemented by Parliament before the commencement of the fire season. This is important to me and my colleagues. I would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to talk to you further about my personal experiences as a professional firefighter and why this reform is so important.

Regards

Acting Station Officer Joseph Milner  
 Dangerous Goods Department | Fire Safety  
 Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board

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