

Dear Members,

I am an MFB Station Officer and have been employed by the MFESB since 1984, I have lived in CFA area for the majority of my life and have a good understanding of how both organisations operate.

First I would like to say that all firefighters, volunteer and paid, are proud to help the community by protecting life and property and assisting people in their time of need.

I support the changes being proposed by the government as it will give better protection to the community and also the firefighters attending the emergencies. I have witnessed first-hand the pressures that CFA volunteers are under to respond to call-outs in suburban and urban areas in Melbourne's east.

1. Volunteer appliances responding to an emergency under "normal road conditions", no lights or sirens, because no trained driver is available.
2. Trucks not responding at all or responding with a crew of 1 or 2 on board, because people are not available at certain times to attend emergencies
3. Crews attending calls but with limited training, not trained to wear Breathing Apparatus (BA) when attending car and house fires. I had a crew of 4 volunteers attend a going house fire, when I asked for 2 of them to put on BA to assist MFB firefighters inside the burning building, none were trained to wear BA, this compromised the safety of those fighting the fire and limited what could be done safely.

Let me make it quite clear this is not the fault of the volunteers who do the best they can under very difficult circumstances, **it is the system that needs to change**. Expecting volunteers to drive to the fire station in four minutes through heavy peak hour traffic in suburban areas is unrealistic and potentially dangerous. It is dangerous for the volunteers and the community to have a no turn out or a delayed turn-out with a crew that has limited training.

All MFB and CFA career firefighters are trained to wear BA, have driver training to go lights and sirens to emergencies, turn out with a minimum number crew, usually 4, and are at the fire station ready to respond immediately. The community and firefighters in suburban areas should expect the same level of fire cover afforded to those in the metropolitan area.

Many areas in Wantirna, Bayswater, Ferntree Gully, Mooroolbark, Lilydale and Chirnside Park etc. were orchards and farmland in 1958 when fire cover boundaries between metropolitan Melbourne and country areas were last changed, it is certainly time that these historical borders are changed and the fire service changed to reflect the needs of the community.

I will just mention the surge capacity of the CFA, which according to some, will be drastically effected if changes are made to the current system of fire cover.

The surge capacity of the CFA is well documented and a valuable resource to combat large fires and incidents. Below is a quote from the CFA website regarding the tragic Black Saturday fires which devastated large parts of Victoria over a five week period.

About Black Saturday

The 2009 bushfires in January and February ravaged many parts of Victoria and touched directly and indirectly many millions of people in the State, across Australia and internationally. One hundred and seventy three people died, thousands of homes and other dwellings were destroyed and over 400,000 hectares were burnt.

More than 78 communities across Victoria were directly affected. On 7 February, Black Saturday, Victorian townships including Marysville, Kinglake, Kinglake West, Narbethong, Flowerdale and Strathewen were devastated.

More than 19,000 CFA members were involved in frontline firefighting, incident management and support behind the scenes.

The work done by everyone , CFA volunteers, CFA career, MFB and now DELWP, was outstanding, but it shows that about 70% of the 60,000 volunteers were not involved, so even IF a few leave due to the changes being proposed, I see no reason why they would leave, it will have no effect on the surge capacity of the CFA.

Regards

Frank Maguire.