

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Gavin Rooney and I have been a professional firefighter for 25 years, the last 18 years with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). I am currently the Commander in charge of the MFB Building Inspection and Compliance unit based at the Burnley Complex. My team are responsible for ensuring Melbourne's Building owners maintain their Essential Safety Measures (as per the Building Regulations 2006) in a rapidly growing world class city.

I write to express my support for the proposed fire services reform.

The current structure and lack of process to formally move from a volunteer service in "country" areas to a fulltime professional service in growth areas of the state is not only embarrassing, but is definitely placing the lives of Victorians at risk. Your constituents in a rapidly growing urban metropolis deserve a professional, full time, reliable and dependable fire and rescue service 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year.

Having spent the first 8 years of my professional fire fighting career working interstate, I am well aware of the structures and governance models of many interstate Fire Services, in particular those in NSW and ACT. To say the Victorian community is currently provided a world class fire service model would be laughable if it weren't such a serious issue. The proposed reforms based on the NSW model not only make a lot of sense, they will make Victoria a safer place to live and work.

The fact that Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years and areas such as Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and Geelong are still wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential, is an indictment on our predecessors. We must ensure we address this significant risk to the Victorian Community as soon as *you* possibly can.

The huge growth areas of Greater Melbourne need a modern progressive, professional fire service as proposed by the Premier on 19 May 2017. This includes a rapid 8 minute response, with 7 professional career firefighters on two fire trucks as the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas. This will also mean your constituents will be provided a world class Emergency Medical response by these same firefighters who will support the fantastic work of Ambulance Victoria throughout the massive growth corridors of our great state.

Throughout my career, I have unfortunately experienced on many occasions the inadequacies of the current structure and the failings of the current response tables across the state. Regrettably another example occurred just last month (25 May 2017), where the professional firefighters based at South Morang responded to a house fire in Mernda in support of the Mernda Volunteers, however not only were the local Volunteers unable to respond, nor were two other nearby Volunteer brigades,

for some twenty minutes. This placed the fulltime professional firefighters at great risk, as they had to enter a burning house fire without back up. The firefighters performed magnificently and successfully rescued the occupants from the house who were later transported to hospital for smoke inhalation. Thankfully no firefighters were hurt on this occasion. This is not a slight on the Volunteers themselves, but rather the structure of the fire services, which is reliant on Volunteers to be at home in the middle of the day and able to respond within a few moments notice. Clearly they are not!

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.

I am about to commence annual leave, otherwise I would've welcomed the opportunity to appear before the Select Committee to discuss my submission and personal experiences with you. However, I trust you will take this submission into account when developing a report for parliament on why this reform is so important for the safety of the Victorian Community.

Kind Regards

Gavin Rooney

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