

Ian McKenzie

Station Officer 3832

Somerton Fire Station



To Parliamentary committee for Fire Services reform

My name is Ian McKenzie and I am the Station Officer on A platoon at the MFB station, Somerton, in Melbourne's outer north.

Our station is on the border of the Metropolitan Fire district and therefore a large number of our calls go into the CFA area. The adjoining suburbs of Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park are serviced by the integrated CFA stations of Craigieburn and Greenvale and we support those brigades into those areas.

I strongly support the amalgamation of the fire services for a number of reasons, the area that is covered by the CFA brigades at Craigieburn and Greenvale have grown rapidly in the last ten years and the fire call volume has increased with that growth.

The volunteers assigned to those areas often at times, especially weekdays, will take a considerable amount of time to get a crew together and respond with the permanent crews and if there is more than one call in Craigieburns area and we are responding with Craigieburn to one of the calls then there is a considerably longer response time for an adjoining brigade to attend the other fire call.

In a situation such as a house fire or a life threatening incident such as motor vehicle entrapment then response times must be quick to enable the patient's quick access to care or in the case of a house fire to reduce the chance of someone trapped in a fire losing their life or of the dwelling being completely destroyed.

The other issue we have is two completely different and incompatible radio communications networks between the two services, as the officer in charge of my appliance if I am responding to a fire or incident with the CFA I need to be able to communicate easily with the Incident controller and to be able to communicate effectively with my crews, We only carry one CFA portable radio on our appliance so if my crews were in breathing apparatus inside a house fire for example and there was an important message about safety for example passed onto the CFA crews on

scene unless the message was passed onto me to transmit on my own radio network then there could be potential safety issues involved.

The other issue we have is different types of appliances and equipment and radio procedures.

In regards to the implication for the fire services changes on volunteer fire-fighters, I believe that the changes are positive for them as well. Since being stationed here I have responded with the volunteers from those stations regularly and have developed a rapport with them and in my experience they are very happy with the changes that may occur and believe that they will still work alongside the permanents in an integrated setup. They are in support of the proposed changes and the people I have spoken to understand that we are paid professional fire-fighters and that the EBA agreements and awards of career staff shouldn't be affected or decided by volunteer staff.

I believe the changes to the fire services can only be a positive one to allow Victorians to have a quality fire service that reflects on the growing population and growth of Metropolitan Melbourne and our regional centres.

Yours Sincerely

