

My name is Nathan Close and I have been a professional MFB firefighter for 7 years. I am currently based at FS27 Nunawading fire station where we also provide Road accident rescue from for surrounding areas.

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

In my area of Nunawading we are being called out to areas of Warrandyte which is currently serviced by both professional full time fire fighters at South Warrandyte and Volunteers at North Warrandyte. I also work at Ringwood and Croydon Stations and are being called out to areas that are serviced by Volunteer Stations only. Such as Bayswater (which yesterday FAILED TO RESPOND TO A CALL due to only having 2 Volunteers show up and no driver. THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE IN THIS DAY AND AGE.

I've seen first-hand what happens when the North Warrandyte Vols are unable to attend (due to being unable to leave work to attend or have a delayed response due to having to get to the station and then wait for people to arrive). I've seen the pressure that this then creates especially when we don't know (we as in both MFB crew and CFA Permanent Full time Crews) if they are turning up or if they do what the crew's qualifications are. If something goes wrong who is going to help the helpers. Can they even go into the house in B.A? If they are not trained then the answer is NO and that puts MY LIFE IN DANGER and the lives of peoples loved ones who are relying on us in their time of need.

Why should people living in North Warrandyte and other "Country" places such as Rowville Bayswater etc have a lower standard of response than people living in Nunawading, Mitcham, Ringwood, Doncaster etc? Don't these people deserve the same standard? Vols do a great job and we (Victoria) couldn't do without them and under this reform they are better served than in previous years and can concentrate on what they do so well at which is serving Country Victoria.

Ask yourself this, when you call 000 because your house is on fire and your kids or wife or partner or whoever is trapped what do you want? I'll tell you what you want, you want Fire Fighters there within 8mins. You want a minimum of 7 fire fighters all trained and able to carry out the job and enter a burning building to save your family and your house. What you don't want is for the response to take even longer that then places your loved ones at extreme risk of injury/death and your house of being totally involved in fire.

Why should one member of the public receive this in one area but someone who chooses or is forced to outer Melbourne due to house prices not receive the same standard. When they call the police or an ambulance they are guaranteed a response. It should be the same when they need a Fire Fighter. It's time for reform! Where do you all live? If you answer within a paid MFB/CFA area then ask yourself why other people whom you represent don't deserve the same response?

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, Craigieburn, 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.

Lastly but also most importantly, I am sick to death of being called a THUG and being bullied and victimised on line and through the Herald Sun for doing my job. The disgusting attacks on my career are nothing short of reprehensible and seeing Rebel Wilson's win for defamation I expect that we will be suing the Herald Sun for the same. I want it known that what the Liberals and governments have done to the fire service MUST STOP.

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.

Kind regards

Nathan Close

Leading Fire Fighter (MFB)

Mitcham VIC

]