

Assistant Clerk Committees Department of the Legislative Council Fire Services Bill Select  
Committee Parliament House, Spring Street EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

My Name is Mick Sporton and I am a Senior Station Officer (Currently Acting Officer in Charge) stationed at Mildura fire Station.

I have been a Career fire fighter with CFA for the last 30 years as well as starting off as a Volunteer at South Warrandyte before that where my father and grandfather were founding members.

My career has seen me work at most locations around the state over the years as a State wide relieving Station Officer and have witnessed some remarkable changes to Victoria's fire services in that time.

I would like to put forward my support for the proposed Fire Services Reform and offer the following experiences;

In the "good old days" I used to be "one up" which means that I was a Station Officer working alone at a fire station and when we received a call (which I had to take as well) then activate the volunteers paging system and wait for a vol crew to respond to the station to man the watchroom and hopefully provide a crew for the truck. This sometimes worked, depending on time of day, vol availability and workload. There were times where I could see the smoke from the fire from the front of the fire station but could not leave before a vol crew arrived.

Times have changed since then, with more manning and a central despatch centre allowing us to respond quickly, rather than wait.

The point to this is that times change. And Victoria has outgrown a fire service model that has evolved on crisis management, rather than strategic planning.

What we need now is to evolve to a model that will strategically provide "future proofing" of our protection model for Victorians.

How it affects Volunteers? In my view there will be no change in the way Volunteers respond to fires in their own and surrounding areas. The benefits I can see, having worked all my years in integrated stations, are that these Brigades get some autonomy back. By this I mean that they will become masters of their own destiny again. Proudly serving their community with the re-election of a Captain a leader not only for the brigade, but the community, not just an appointed member from the career staff.

I look forward to the day when my Volunteer Brigade get “home rule” returned to them. This will improve the prestige of the volunteers in the community who, look upon the local brigade as community members to look up to.

A “Welcome Back” torchlight parade through the streets of Mildura with the new captain leading the parade would be a great thing to see.

Integrated brigades has been an interesting concept and haven’t really worked well over the years mainly due to the introduction of more staff to service the communities needs where Volunteers (through no fault of their own) cannot commit to the time due to work and family commitments in today’s world.

The introduction of the reform will not only better serve the community but also still provide Volunteers with the training and technical support that career staff have provided and will continue to provide for years to come.

I urge you all to support the Fire Services Reform so that we may better protect Victorians and give back our Volunteers the prestige they so richly deserve.

I invite you to contact me at any time should you wish to discuss this matter further.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient servant,

**Senior Station Officer Mick Sporton 18244**

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