

My name is Tom Hoppner and I have been a professional CFA fire-fighter for 25 years. I am currently a Senior Station Officer based at Frankston fire station.

I write to express my support for the proposed fire services reform and submit the following to the select committee for Fire Service Reform.

#### Impact on fire service delivery across Victoria

In my area of Frankston which I have worked and protected the community. I have seen what happens and the risks my colleagues take when arriving on scene at fire calls being under staffed and relying on volunteer support. Not only are we relying on support that is never guaranteed but I have seen firsthand the pressure I place on my professional colleagues when support is not there. As career fire fighters we respond within 90sec of receiving a fire call. This means that we are on scene and on our own for several minutes before support is responded (not guaranteed) and attends. The community of Frankston deserves a professional fire service to protect and support supporting brigades and provide a SAFE as possible environment for professional fire fighters to work and risk their lives. Having seven career fire fighters responding to call will ensure I provide the safest possible environment for my colleagues I am responsible for. At Frankston our current manning is five and we are expected to man two fire fighting appliances. This means that for the major fire station I work at we are sending our Teleboom fire fighting appliance to support volunteer brigades around Frankston with two career fire fighters. They rely on volunteers at these stations to respond. On numerous occasions our Teleboom is first on scene and our two career fire fighters are put in a unsafe situation with a number of factors they are confronted with.

- Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this out-dated 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 fire fighters on two fire trucks is the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas.
- All Victorian, professional and volunteer fire fighters, deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities.

#### Effect on volunteer engagement

At Frankston and across CFAs integrated fire stations I don't believe we will see any change with the engagement of CFA Volunteers. I can say first hand that I have discussed the possible reform with the volunteers at Frankston and neighbouring brigades and the view is extremely positive. They applaud the possible change and agree that this is well overdue. They also don't believe this will impact on their role in the community as a volunteer fire fighter.

CFA volunteers will still provide a vital surge capacity within the community and still respond in conjunction with career fire fighters within the integrated areas they are stationed.

CFA volunteers will be supported by Fire Rescue Victoria providing a enhance community service within their area they live and volunteer.

### Short and long term cost impact on fire provisions

Having professional fire fighters FRV would certainly save community money in a number of areas including:

- The ability to conduct more community safety engagements and educating the community about fire safety
- Increasing fire fighters number would mean that we have additional fire fighters and resources on scene. This will ensure that we can combat the fires /incidents quicker which would save community and State money. It will also provide us a safer work environment then we currently have. As a Senior Station Officer I am constantly putting my fire fighters lives at risk by being understaffed or when the volunteers arrive.

### Underlying policy rationale

Policy rational will certainly develop a better service delivery to the end user “The Community”. By increasing our assignment boundaries

I would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to talk to you further about my personal experiences as a professional fire-fighter and why this reform is so important.  
Kind regards

To ensure the safety of all Victorians - including me as a fire-fighter, 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 fire fighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer fire fighters 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.

Tom Hoppner  
Senior Station Officer

Frankston Fire Brigade