

30.06.17

My name is Tim Bruechert and I have been a CFA career firefighter for 31 years. I have an aggregate volunteer / career staff service period of 38 years with CFA.

I am currently a Senior Station Officer based at Bendigo Fire Station and have worked at most of CFA's integrated fire stations during my professional career. Like many of my colleagues, I come from a volunteer fire fighter background, having served for 7 years as a volunteer firefighter and officer at both Kangaroo Flat and Traralgon urban fire brigades.

The primary purpose of my role is to ensure operational readiness and provide effective service delivery and incident management to the citizens of Victoria. My additional responsibilities involve Risk Management activities and Structural Fire Investigation.

I hold promotional qualification for the rank of Operations Officer Level 2 and am the recipient of a 35 year CFA service medal, National Medal, National Emergency Medal and a Chief Officer's Commendation.

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

I have lived in Bendigo for the last twenty years and have seen substantial growth in this time. Bendigo is growing into a major regional city with a massive population growth forecast for the future. Bendigo is now privileged to have major modern infrastructure such as the new Bendigo multi-storey hospital, Bendigo Bank building, Ulumbarra Theatre and many other businesses, shopping centres and industries to take us well into the future. A recent upgrade of the Bendigo airport now allows 70 seater aircraft to utilise the facility.

In the past 20 years, Bendigo's population has increased by 30,000 residents. Now, with a population of over 110,000 residents, it is time for our city and our state to have a fire service that will match not only our current risk management / community safety needs but will continue to grow to meet the needs of the future.

As a professional firefighter in Bendigo, I have seen first hand how this growth has impacted on our job, whether it be a continual increase in the number of callouts or the increasing life and property risk. For areas around Victoria like Bendigo, we need to have a modern and progressive fire service to ensure we always remain adequately resourced and staffed in order to keep our community safe.

- 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 Under this outdated system, 35 areas are wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential.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, Bendigo, Ballarat, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia, Wodonga, Mildura, Shepparton 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.

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.

Therefore, I respectfully ask that you give consideration to my request to modernise the fire service along with the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect both fire service employees and volunteers. Both are needed to be endorsed and implemented by Parliament before the commencement of the fire season. This is important to ensure the safety of all Victorians, myself and my colleagues.

Kind regards,
Tim Bruechert
Senior Station Officer – Bendigo Fire Station

