

Justin Dixon  
  


Fire Services Bill Select Committee

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Justin Dixon and I work at the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) as a Qualified Firefighter. I have been a firefighter at the MFB for five years.

I'm sure you will hear about the safety of firefighters and the community; the importance of volunteers; surge capacity; the cost effectiveness of employing career firefighters by one service; the benefit to volunteers of the fire services reform; the effect the past four years has had on my colleagues. I agree with all these points. So I will not belabour them.

I would like to highlight the historical significance of the fire services reform in correcting the stagnation of the fire services in Victoria, mainly the MFB and the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

The MFB and CFA were established in 1958, with the Metropolitan Fire District (MFD) delineating the two organisations. Since that time the MFD has only been amended once, in 1974 (Metropolitan Fire Brigade Act 1958, Schedule 2).

Greater Melbourne in 1974 had a population of 2,479,200 residents(<http://populstat.info/Oceania/australt.htm>). Now Greater Melbourne has a population of 4,670,000 residents(<http://www.population.net.au/melbourne-population/>). That is nearly double the population size, with a corresponding growth in area without changing the boundary of the MFD.

If the government of the day, regardless of what side of politics, changed the boundary of the MFD as the population and area of Melbourne grew there wouldn't be the problem with the fire services that the state of Victoria is facing. The urban areas of Melbourne, and as they grew, the regional cities, would have gradually been protected by a full-time professional fire service. The CFA would then still be a volunteer only organisation protecting rural and country areas.

Instead Victoria has had inaction from its government for over forty years. From either trying to save a penny or two, or avoiding difficult decisions. Whereas the cost, both fiscal and social, could have been much lower if the government (as mentioned previously, of both sides of the political divide) had of acted when it needed to.

This is why I support the fire services reform.

Yours Sincerely,

Justin Dixon