

To the Fire Services Reform Bill Committee,

My Name is Brian Rogasch and I have been a professional Firefighter in the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) for 31 years. For the last 4 years I have held the rank of Commander. My specific job description is Operations Commander Eastern District D Platoon which involves overseeing and supporting 11 Fire Stations within the Metropolitan Fire District covering the areas of Hawthorn, Balwyn, Box Hill, Ringwood, Burwood, Oakleigh, Croydon, Nunawading, Vermont South, Templestowe and Glen Waverly. Over the last 31 years I have spent time as a Firefighter and Officer responding to emergencies in all areas of the Metropolitan Fire District and through this experience in all of these locations I am always proud when I look back on the great service and professionalism we (MFB) have been able to provide to the community via the guaranteed response that can only be fully achieved by career staff 24/7.

I believe that the current emergency response arrangements don't provide the best service delivery model for communities across Victoria, particularly to those on the urban/rural response interface and the larger regional areas. Since 1989 I have lived in the small coastal village of Somers, living in this area I have had real experiences to know that the current model can be deeply flawed. My own home will remain in CFA area under the new proposed model and I am well aware that the nearest fire appliances that should be able to respond to my home cannot guarantee **(a)** if indeed a crew is available to firstly to allow them to respond and **(b)** how many if any at all of the responding crews are qualified Breathing Apparatus Operators with 7 being the minimum number to undertake Structural Fire Fighting utilizing Safe Working Practices. I can only hope that the responding appliances and crews are available which is becoming increasingly difficult considering all the demands and pressures placed on families.

Under the proposed new legislation, Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) will transition to 82 stations and 2800 career firefighters. FRV will still work beside CFA brigades; co-located rather than integrated. A guaranteed response will be provided 24/7 52 weeks a year which will include an Emergency Medical Service response capability to support Ambulance Victoria in areas that FRV will service.

If I could take you back 31 years to when I started with the MFB and show you the fringe areas of the MFB and how much of it was paddocks, small farms and satellite cities. These areas have now moved ahead at a rapid pace and are full of dense housing, industrial estates and an ever increasing number of high rise buildings. Community expectations have changed and fire service reform is essential to ensure the community is provided with a contemporary service delivery model. It must reflect the changing demographics of communities and risk profiles of the areas in which they live. This is particularly evident in the growth corridors surrounding Melbourne and the larger regional areas. The proposed reforms will provide flexibility within legislative framework to allow the FRV footprint to expand to meet the changing needs of the community as the risk profile changes.

I would ask that you support the restructuring of Victoria's fire services and ensure Victorian communities are protected as the emergency services sector continue to meet best practice, whilst battling the challenges of population growth, urbanisation and changing community expectations and participation.

Please feel free to contact me regarding my submission on [REDACTED]

Regards,

Brian Rogasch. Commander Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board.