

Hi,

My name is Callum Steel and I am a professional Fire Fighter for the Country Fire Authority.

I've been 'in the job' for about 3.5 years and a Volunteer for 10. In this time I've been accredited in High Angle Rescue and endorsed to use a variety of appliances including; pumpers, tankers and aerial pumpers. I live in the township of Whittlesea, work in Eltham and was a Volunteer Fire Fighter in my home town of St. Andrews.

I'm writing to you tonight in support of the Fire Services reform legislation and how it affects to me personally if the legislation is voted through the legislative council.

As a Fire Fighter my safety on the 'fire-ground' is paramount. To conduct aggressive, but safe internal fire attack you need a minimum of 7 equally qualified and competent Fire fighters on scene in under 8 minutes to fulfil all the roles on the ground (x1 Incident Controller, x2 pump operators, x2 internal attack and x2 as a backup). Currently at Eltham, where I'm stationed, if we respond to Diamond Creek, Plenty or Research for a structure fire during business hours our support is lucky to be a Tanker with maybe 1 or 2 crew members on board. For example last week (21/06/17), Eltham Pumper and Diamond Creek were responded to a gas leak at the 7/11 service station in St. Helena at 0950hrs. Eltham pumper turned out and was on scene by 0954hrs, at 1004hrs Diamond Creek turned out and at 1010hrs they booked on scene with a crew of 2 retiree aged gentlemen. If the escaping gas had of found an ignition source, the crew on Eltham Pumper minus the Incident Controller and the Pump Operator (so, the remaining 2 Fire Fighters) would have been solely responsible for combating a fully involved petrol station fire for a full 16-20minutes. Under the proposed legislation, there would have been a second Career Staff appliance arriving a few short minutes after Eltham Pumper with a crew of 4 professional Fire Fighters, alleviating the initial stress on the first crew.

As I said beforehand, I live in Whittlesea, an area covered by the Whittlesea Volunteer Fire Brigade. Now, if for whatever reason, I have a heart attack tomorrow and there's no available ambulance in the area, thanks to the radial search model (which will be implemented for all fires and emergencies under the proposed legislation.) South Morang Pumper are guaranteed to be dispatched with 4 professional Fire Fighters all highly trained in Emergency Medical Response who will arrive at my location and start life saving work on me in under 10 minutes. Why then is it acceptable under the current system model for South Morang's Pumper (and professional Fire Fighters) to remain in station, uninformed of a structure fire during business hours in Whittlesea. While I wait for up to 15 minutes for an unknown amount of crew on Whittlesea's light pumper and then for Doreen and Mernda to fail to respond before a professional crew from Sth. Morang can be responded. Even though, they're less than 10 minutes away and a guaranteed response in the first place. The proposed Fire Services Reform will ensure a guaranteed response from Sth. Morang to Epping, Doreen, Mernda or Whittlesea in less than 10 minutes to support the volunteers at

any emergency they've responded to. The people of these towns pay the same fire services levy as the people in metro-Melbourne. It's only fair that they receive the same quality and comprehensive fire service.

When I started working for CFA 3.5 years ago, we entered into an industrial dispute and it's remained unresolved since. Personally, it hasn't been that hard to deal with until the attacks on us via the media and ill-informed volunteers and politicians started. The latest uncertainty's of a potential FRV (Fire Rescue Victoria) or whatever the outcome is if the proposed Fire Services Reform is voted down from the Legislative council have really made my work and home life exceptionally uncomfortable. Having to explain and justify myself and my job to friends and family that are misled by 'The Herald Sun', 'Murdoch Media' and the 'The Liberal Party' is a severely unpalatable experience. The outcome where all professional Fire Fighters exist as FRV employees is a kind of a light at the end of bloody long tunnel for me and I cling to the hope that it may still happen in the foreseeable future.

I really hope for my own and the millions of Fire Service Levy payers' sake that you as a select committee have the chance to examine the immense amount of factual evidence and data that suggests we take this once in a life time opportunity to bring Victoria's antiquated Fire Services Model into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Yours sincerely,

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