

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

My name is Paris Philippou, I am a Career Fire fighter for the Country Fire Authority, working out of CFA Springvale.

I have been employed by CFA for 2 years now, following 7 years as a volunteer for CFA.

In my time as a volunteer and career fire fighter I have trained hard and obtained many competencies over my career, as they are listed below.

#### Competencies

- ADMINISTER OXYGEN IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION (EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE /EMR)
- ADVANCED PUMPING ENDORSEMENT
- CFA CHAINSAW OPERATOR
- CHAINSAW PROGRAM
- CHECK INSTALLED FIRE SAFETY SYSTEMS
- CLASS A FOAM
- COMMUNICATE IN THE WORKPLACE
- COMMUNITY EDUCATION FIREFIGHTERS (PART)
- DRIVE & OPERATE PUMPER HEAVY SCANIA 2009
- DRIVE & OPERATE TANKER 3.4C
- DRIVE VEHICLES UNDER OPERATIONAL CONDITIONS
- EMPLOY PERSONAL PROTECTION AT A HAZMAT INCIDENT
- FIRE SAFE KIDS PRESENTER
- FIRELINE LEADERSHIP (L-380)
- FOSTER A POSITIVE ORGANISATIONAL IMAGE IN THE COMMUNITY
- HAZMAT AWARENESS
- IDENTIFY, DETECT AND MONITOR HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AT AN INCIDENT
- MAINTAIN SAFETY AT AN INCIDENT SCENE
- MANAGE INJURIES AT EMERGENCY INCIDENT
- NAVIGATE IN URBAN & RURAL ENVIRONMENT
- OPERATE & MAINTAIN CHAINSAWS
- OPERATE A SEMI AUTOMATIC DEFIBRILATOR IN AN EMERGENCY (EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE /EMR)
- OPERATE BREATHING APPARATUS OPEN CIRCUIT
- OPERATE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS & EQUIPMENT
- OPERATE ENHANCED FORCIBLE ENTRY EQUIPMENT
- OPERATE MSA SIRIUS GAS DETECTOR
- OPERATE PUMPS
- OPERATE TANKER (GENERIC)
- OPERATE THERMAL IMAGING CAMERA STRUCTURAL
- OPERATE THERMAL IMAGING CAMERA URBAN
- PARTICIPATE IN A RESCUE OPERATION

### Competencies

- PERFORM CPR (EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE /EMR)
- PLAN & CONDUCT A PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAM
- PREPARE, MAINTAIN & TEST RESPONSE EQUIPMENT
- PREVENT INJURY
- PROVIDE BASIC EMERGENCY LIFE SUPPORT
- PROVIDE CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION (EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE /EMR)
- PROVIDE EMERGENCY CARE
- PROVIDE FIRST AID
- RENDER HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INCIDENTS SAFE
- RESPOND TO ISOLATED/REMOTE STRUCTURE FIRE
- RESPOND TO URBAN FIRE
- RESPOND TO WILDFIRE
- SUPPRESS URBAN FIRE
- THERMAL IMAGE CAMERA OPERATION
- TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT
- USE SOLBERG RF 3X6 ATC FOAM
- UTILISE INSTALLED FIRE SAFETY SYSTEMS
- WORK IN A TEAM

In this time, I have been awarded Fire fighter of the year and runner up Fire fighter of the year at Emerald Fire Brigade, received an Individual achievement award for my efforts at a wildfire, and the Brigade encouragement award.

I live in Emerald, and work in areas such as Springvale, Dandenong, Hallam, Pakenham.

I am writing this letter in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

- Having volunteered in the community I live in I know firsthand that there is no guarantee of a fire truck getting responded, especially during the daytime on a week day. At this point in time there is no standard response area for staff stations. For example Pakenham staff responds to support volunteers all the way up to Cockatoo and down to Heath Hill (a 44km drive) to respond to fire calls. Rowville, the other closest integrated station to where I live does not respond on a scale like Pakenham, but if it did, would ensure a firetruck is on its way to where I live, in addition to the volunteers, if they volunteers do not respond. The system right now, is volunteers will get paged and if they don't respond after 6 minutes, the next brigade will get paged and so on and so forth. 6 minutes going past every time they "time out". Now if Rowville was on the response table it would be on the road from the initial call, and at least there is certainty of somebody responding. But! Disregarding what it best for the community, the Volunteers are allowed to have a say on who responds to their areas, and are allowed to say no to a staff support into their area, even if it would provide a better service to their community.

- Another inconsistency is Staff firefighters are responding out to a 10 minute drive radius for Emergency medical Response (EMR) calls, in support of Ambulance Victoria, but are still constricted by neighbouring volunteer brigades for response to fire. For example, Rowville may respond to Belgrave south for an EMR call, but not for a fire.
- With my volunteer background I have seen firsthand that Volunteerism is dying. The culture of today is not to work for free. Everything costs more, people are working 40, 50 even 60 hour weeks, then coming home and just wanting to have personal time or family time and not be volunteering their little remaining hours a week to the CFA. People no longer live and work in the same towns. Gone are the days where the butcher, the post office worker, the grocery boy and the local policeman would drop tools and respond on the firetruck when needed. No, people live often over an hour away from work, and simply cannot respond back to their towns CFA shed in an emergency.

So with that is the change in volunteer numbers. The media may throw around numbers of active volunteers around the state but in actual fact if you talk to the members of the stations around the state you would find 95% of the stations, integrated and fully volunteer have 10-12 active volunteers, with maybe a core 6 responding to most fire calls. That's just not good enough. Let alone the numbers aren't enough, it then puts too much strain on those doing all the work, they start to lose interest and the system fails.

- Another point is firefighter safety. Volunteer response cannot have any guarantee of numbers, they are volunteers, they cannot be told to respond or kept on a roster. However career firefighters are employed to respond, and with that we deserve better safety measures for firefighter safety. Such as a minimum 7 career firefighters responded to fire calls. If 7 are responded in addition to volunteers, it ensures that support is on the road. If the call turns out to be a house fire, and the crew inside need support, or its your family trapped inside, wouldn't it be better to have a guarantee of firefighters who are qualified to handle the fire on the road and headed your way? Not have the system of 6 minutes to time out, next brigade, 6 minutes to time out, next brigade etc.
- More career firefighters responding to more areas of Victoria, in support of the volunteer's means more highly qualified personnel providing a better service to the Victorian community.
- The forming of Fire Rescue Victoria will be a positive move for Victorians. It will recognise the growth of Melbourne, not only into areas like Caroline Springs, Hoppers Crossing, Boronia, Springvale and Dandenong, but rural Victorian cities like Traralgon, Bendigo, Mildura, and Warrnambool. These rural cities have a large population base, critical infrastructure, and are in the primary response area of Career Firefighters. These areas also have volunteers in each and every integrated station, which respond to emergencies alongside the staff, and even out to other areas, on strike teams, being involved in CFA's surge capacity. The development of FRV will not affect the volunteer's ability to respond alongside staff, from the same buildings, on the same trucks, or be a part of strike teams and

surge capacity. The staff will literally just have a different uniform on, the trucks will be re-signed, and then business as usual.

They will continue to be supported and managed by staff members at Operations Officer level, the OO's will be seconded back to CFA, and then, as I said before, business as usual.

- The areas where the 35 integrated stations are located are no longer rural Victoria. They are in much need of re-classification, to reflect their large populations and critical infrastructure. The fire security of these areas is dependent on a minimum crewing on shift for staff and then volunteer support. Some minimum crewing can be as low as 3 career firefighters! And they could get no support from volunteers for hours on end, because as I said, I'm from a volunteer background, I know that people work out of the towns they live in, and cannot respond to Emerald from the CBD. I am not accusing them of being back firefighters, but they have full time lives to live. And when the cheese holes line up as they say, it can be a very bad day for us, if we don't have the guaranteed support we need.

To summarise I am just speaking of my experiences and backgrounds, and what I observe is the system is outdated. It needs staff support more than ever. It needs to wipe the system clean and build new response models, use the staff more wisely to support the volunteer areas and provide a better service for the community.

The staff cannot do the whole state without the volunteers and the volunteers cannot do the whole state without the staff, a balance is a given, but the response structure of the fire services is nearly 70 years old, and Melbourne is growing every day and the organisations need to adapt to change with it.

Thank you for taking the time to read what I have written, and hear the point of view on the fire services reform proposal by both a volunteer and career fireman.

Yours sincerely,

**Paris Philippou** Firefighter



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Protecting lives and property



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