Kirra Vanzetti

From:	██████████ ██████████
Sent:	Sunday, 2 July 2017 1:14 PM
To:	LCSC
Subject:	Fire Service Review Submission

Good afternoon,

Please find below our submission for the Fire Service Review Parliamentary Inquiry. As the author of this email and submission, my contact details are as follows;

██████████

Telephone number ██████████

FSCC submission for the Fire Service Reform Parliamentary Inquiry

On behalf of the UFU members employed as CFA Fire Service Communications Controllers I wish to say thank you to be given this opportunity to have input into the future of the fire service in Victoria through this submission. We request that this submission be treated as confidential by the committee.

The Fire Service Communications Controllers are CFA employees who are based at the ESTA Mount Helen Communications Centre.

The FSCC provides advice and guidance to ESTA operators, we are the contact point between the field and the communications centre and we basically try to ensure the correct trucks / brigades are responded to calls to assistance within the right time.

We have full visibility of all call taking and dispatch functions for CFA state wide, that are undertaken from ESTA's Mount Helen and Tally Ho communications centre.

Whilst we have seen significant debate and enormous amounts of detail about what happens in the field and on the fire ground, we the FSCC's are in a unique position as we sit within the Communications centre watching calls being dispatched.

From an initial response perspective CFA utilise manually populated data to dispatch brigades.

To try and simplify it, a brigade will list what supporting brigades they want to respond to calls within their area.

The manual population of this data is tedious, prone to error and very prehistoric. CFA do not utilise the Emergency Service Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) environment to its fullest potential of allowing a road network based system to determine the next nearest available supporting brigade/s to be dispatched.

There are also anomalies between CFA and MFB in how each service utilise the computer aided dispatch system which are not conducive for public safety.

As CFA utilise the prehistoric means of using data sheets, if an MFB appliance is moved into a CFA station or if MFB replace an appliance type with a different appliance, for example a pumper is replaced by a pumper tanker, this appliance will not be selected during an escalation. This was highlighted during a fire in a bank in Springvale Road Springvale where a fully crewed appliance at MFB fire station 29 was overlooked for a volunteer crewed appliance from Noble Park.

MFB had replaced the pumper tanker at fire station 29 with a pumper and it was overlooked as it was not in CFA data. The volunteer appliance from Noble Park had a considerably delayed response.

ESTA are not flexible with the CAD system in meeting today's changing environment, the CAD rules we use today were developed around 1994 and have not been updated or reviewed since then.

From a dispatch perspective we see a number of anomalies which cause frustration and in some instances the outcome may be socially unacceptable, especially in this day and age.

When an event is dispatched within CFA area, the responding brigades are not necessarily the closest or most appropriate brigades. Sadly we see areas where volunteer brigades will be dispatched to a call when there's a fully crewed fire appliance in a neighbouring staff or career station that is not utilised.

All too often brigades consciously choose to ignore the career staff appliance because they feel threatened or fear not being able to run a call as opposed to what's right for the public.

Whilst this anomaly is slowly being addressed following a directive from the Emergency Services Commission Mr Craig Lapsley who has called for career crewed appliances to be responded all calls within a 10 minutes radius this directive also presents unique anomalies.

There has been significant discussion surrounding the wording of the enterprise agreement in relation to 7 dispatched to the fire ground but in reality the fire ground as we call it is one of the most dangerous work sites any one could ever encounter.

You have on average 4 fire fighters on a primary appliance, an OIC, pump operator and 2 fire fighters to undertake an internal attack.

Fire appliances from a career fire station are being dispatched because there's a concern a volunteer crewed appliance will not be able to respond so the career staff are supporting the volunteers but all too often no one is responding to support the career staff to what is potentially one of the most dangerous work places encountered.

As an FSCC when I see an event being dispatched I look at the details of that job. I look and which brigade has been dispatched and then I look at the time of day and day of the week.

What are the volunteer members doing, are they working, what is the traffic like in the area. In most instances the volunteers have 4 minutes to get to their station to respond an appliance.

What's the traffic like, is it peak hour, are there school zones, it is single carriageway are there any traffic anomalies that'll hamper or impede their travel to the fire station.

Whilst this is going on not only is the response timer counting down, the fire is also building in intensity.

As an FSCC we're watching the additional calls being received, we're being told a volunteer appliance has not responded and we're scratching our head wondering how this is best practice and no this is not a dramatization. This is reality.

The hidden risk once a fire appliance is on the road is the crew capacity of that appliance. We know an appliance crewed by career staff will have a qualified and competent crew leader and all crew on that appliance are qualified in the wearing of breathing apparatus allowing an internal fire attack and all crew on

the appliance are qualified in the wearing of splash and gas suits. These qualifications are gained during their recruit course.

CFA volunteers can respond to fires once they complete their minimum skills which are all wildfire based. There's no BA qualification and there's no gas suit qualification these are done later on and only if the volunteer decides they wish to do so.

Effectively a volunteer appliance can turn out a structure fire with no structure qualified crew on board resulting in another appliance having to be responded and if this appliance was responding to support career staff at a structure fire then they are pretty much of no use to those on scene.

There has been significant debate and discussion about "surge capacity". I am not sure what this is but I do know when there's a significant factory fire and crew are required for breathing apparatus a number of brigades are paged. Those brigades that have member's available turn out to the fire and the members are utilised.

During the declared summer season when strike teams are required brigades are paged those with available members respond. We also know the longer a fire season or the when campaign fires are active, the longer the need for crew members, the less members are available.

Whilst I am the author of this submission on behalf of my colleagues, I'd like to also share my comments on being a volunteer fire fighter, because I was one for 28years.

During my 28 years I had a job, I had a family and I had commitments. I wasn't always available to respond to fire calls and I felt guilty when I couldn't.

As a former senior Lieutenant I knew I could not put my hand on my heart and guarantee I'd get a truck out the door to every call and when a truck did respond I couldn't guarantee it had suitable crew numbers or crew capacity. To try and overcome this we had a career station respond to all our calls.

Career staff eventually came on board and when they did it was like an enormous weight was lifted off me. I still had a role and I still had responsibilities but I also had the benefit of career staff to share the load.

Regards,

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Fire Service Communications Controller / UFU Shop Steward

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