

Sunday 2nd July 2017

Dear Committee Members

Re: Fire Services Reform

My name is Stephen Brown of 26 Cumberland Cres Thomastown.

I am a professional serving leading Fire Fighter of 38 years service, employed with the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire and emergency Board. I am the recipient of the National Medal for service, Medal for Long Service and Good Conduct, and the National Emergency Medal 2009 Victorian bush Fires.

My current role is as an Instructor delivering Leading Fire Fighter Promotional Courses conducted at the Victorian Emergency Training Facility Craigieburn.

Having served many years in the outer Northern Melbourne growth corridor I have serious concerns for the safety of the community residing in these growth corridors and for residents in growth areas of rural cities of Victoria. The service delivery model from the fire service for these areas does not meet the service delivery model for fire service of inner Melbourne.

My Concerns to Community safety are:

The Lack of career staff to meet minimum response times in these areas

Distance between nearest career staff stations for back up, putting lives at risk.

Career fire fighters are reliant on volunteer response to sustain safe levels of crewing to combat a fire emergency

No capability to respond to Medical Emergencies which is provided to inner Melbourne residents.

Current CFA service delivery model requires specialised appliances to respond from the nearest CFA station not the closest available specialised appliance.

In Melbourne outer belt, the current system only provides for one professional fire fighting crew to attend a fire or emergency, backed up by volunteers, if they are available. This is insufficient to successfully protect families and properties in these areas.

Growth areas of Victoria not only deserve but require a modernised fire service that delivers a better community safety model, also providing a safer working environment for all Fire Fighters who risk their lives responding to these under resourced growth areas throughout Victoria.

Victoria's fire services are outdated. The fire service boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years.

Historically, boundaries have been established to help emergency services - like Fire Fighter's police, ambulance and SES - respond to emergencies.

Victoria's fire service boundaries were established in the 1890s when our population was smaller and concentrated around Melbourne.

Today, Victoria's population is booming - the state is home to more than 6 million people. Melbourne has seen massive development over the past century, and is now home to heavily urbanized growth corridors and sprawling suburbs - which continue to grow.

What is the 'urban fire response' that these areas need? An 8 minute response time and 7 professional firefighters on two fire trucks - this is the minimum standard needed for emergency response to maximize the potential to save lives and minimize damage to property. Fire crews must respond in 8 minutes because after that, a fire reaches the flashover point – the point of “no return” where the property and people inside are at a very real risk.

Volunteers do a great job to assist but cannot be expected to be constantly on call or trained to the same standard as professional career firefighters. On many occasions, volunteers can't respond to emergencies due to commitments like work and family. This leads to delayed response times and under crewing - when not enough firefighters deploy to fight a fire. This is an unacceptable risk, both to our community and firefighters, which is a result of the antiquated fire boundaries.

Victoria not only needs but Deserves Fire Service Reform now.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Brown

Leading Fire Fighter Instructor Training Delivery

VEMTC

Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre

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284-290 Hume Hwy, Craigieburn, Vic 3064

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