

Dear Members of the fire services bill committee

Please take the following text as my submission to the select committee on why I believe it is very important that the fire services bill is supported and implemented.

I am David Black a professional firefighter of 16 years. I currently hold the rank of Station Officer in the CFA working out of Rowville Fire Station. Rowville brigade respond to approximately 700 fire calls a year ranging from structure fires, non-structure fires, grass and scrub fires, industrial and road accidents and emergency medical response calls.

Rowville have a dense population of approx. 37,000 with some large areas having dwellings in excess of 40 sq in size. The community is a mixture of elderly citizens along with middle aged and young families. This area is classified as country under the current fire service boundaries and the Rowville brigade has firefighter support from mainly volunteer brigades.

Some of the risks that Rowville Fire Station respond to are Major infrastructure road networks (Eastlink), Large Industrial Areas housing some of the world's major manufacturing companys Milwaukee tools, Hallmark, Cummins Diesel and SP Ausnet (major telecommunication hub). Nursing homes currently four, are common in this area due to the demographics of the community. Rowville also has five primary schools and two secondary schools. The rural interface at Rowville has Lysterfield National Park as an asset and a risk as well, with dense areas of the community surrounding a large wild fire risk area.

These risks require a modern urban fire service and a timely response with the appropriate skills including specialist skills like road accident rescue, rope rescue and confined space rescue. The businesses and residents of the Rowville turnout area pay a fire levy for this service so they should receive a modernized fire service that is up to coping with the ever increasing size of the urban fringe.

Over my time in the fire service I have been to many fires and road accidents some involving death, I have worked in these environments numerous times with inadequate numbers of firefighters both staff and volunteer.

#### Car Accident in Cranbourne

- Inadequate response, 3 staff on scene for 8 mins, no other staff response.
- Three persons trapped delayed response of volunteer rescue appliance.
- 3 staff had to apply fire protection, operate the pumper, first aid to 3 persons and fire ground control all in the initial 5 mins.
- Lack of skills of the rescue crews (persons trapped for in excess of 2 hours).
- Relief of the rescue crew supplied from a staff rescue appliance after 2 hrs of effort on scene.

#### House fire in Hallam

- Inadequate response three staff on scene for ten minutes.

- Volunteer support only from Narre Warren and Hallam.
- 3 staff members had to apply Search and Rescue in breathing apparatus, fire suppression and fire ground control.
- Persons reported trapped.
- Arson involved flammable liquids used.
- No pump operator, they were needed to aid in search and rescue.
- Persons accounted for but two pets were lost in the fire.

So I can confidently demonstrate the need for appropriate fire services response which is seven firefighters despatched to a fire call in the 90 second timeframe for not only the communities' wellbeing but also the firefighter's safety both Volunteer and Career.

The Volunteers at Rowville are supportive of the integrated model of the fire service and have been positive about the proposed reform; the staff and volunteers at Rowville attend training together each Sunday morning and Tuesday evenings and have a solid relationship. We all look forward for this to continue into the future.

The volunteers also understand that volunteerism has its constraints and they are appreciative of the support they receive from the on duty staff. It is worth noting that in the 1990's the volunteer brigade leadership group requested for staff to be brought into the station as the volunteers were not able to cope with the demand of fire calls that were coming in due to the growth of the area. Hence the feeling was that they were no longer able to service the community to the level they had done in the past.

There is also a strong feel of angst of how long the industrial disputation can go on for and what the environment will look like if there is no resolution in the near future. A desire to see it end is felt from all members both volunteer and staff and also their families here at not only Rowville Fire Station but across the state at Integrated Fire Stations.

I am happy to discuss this further if required.

Please consider my submission when reaching a final report.

Yours sincerely

David Black

Station Officer

Rowville Fire Brigade



