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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 3 July 2017 11:34 AM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Services Reform Bill 2017

Confidential

To Members of the Select Committee of the Fire Services Bill

I write to provide input into the Fire Services Bill

I will only attempt to cover a few points as many points will be covered by other submissions supporting the Bill.

I Have been an Operational Firefighter of the MFB for almost 34 Years. I have held the position of Station Officer for about 27 Years and I am Stationed at Glen Waverley Fire Station. I am the holder of The National Medal for Service, The National Emergency Medal and the Long Service Medal and was the recipient of a Chief Superintendents Commendation as part of a two man team saving a female jumper from a multi-storey building in the late 80s.

While I am grateful to be in receipt of the above standards of recognition I don't place any importance on medals as I, like many other Career Firefighters just want to be able to do our jobs to the best of our ability safely.

I have been deeply saddened with how the Fire Services have failed to keep up with the needs of the public we serve and has been allowed to stagnate by Corporatising one service (the MFB) and holding back the other (the CFA) through the influences of the VFBV.

The proposed Fire Services Bill is the most exciting progression of Fire Services of Victoria during my service period. Decades of inaction and Political influence has resulted in Victoria an Australian powerhouse State having one of the most backward and inefficient Fire Service Structures in Australia. Victoria is well overdue to bring the Fire Services into the 21st Century.

Volunteers Firefighters in the CFA do a great job and they have my respect but are simply not capable of providing the level of cover needed in many growing areas of Victoria. The system is broken and has been for many years.

Employment of full time Firefighters has been blocked by many self interest groups within the CFA over the years which has resulted in many pockets around Melbourne being supported by a Volunteer System that is antiquated and not in the public interest. Despatch times have been hidden along with insufficient response of appropriate Vehicles, Firefighters and Equipment along with the public being mostly unaware of the danger this response problem poses. Its astounding the risk that exists through Scoresby and Knox areas as an example nearby to Glen Waverley Station.

I find one person Despatches in a car from a CFA Volunteer Station totally inadequate as a back up to my crew. While this may count as a "Response" for reporting purposes it does not provide a response in any practical terms from a Fire and Rescue perspective.

On other calls in a CFA Volunteer area at Incidents I find it astounding that the public accept the risk of lack of Structural Breathing Apparatus wearers within these Volunteer areas adjoining the MFB Boundaries.

A caller called "Kim" from Geelong in the SES called into Jon Faines ABC Radio Morning show recently upset that the CFA were going to carry extra equipment on their Pumpers to assist in Road Rescue. Jon Faine was at pains to point out to her that surely the needs of the public in getting trapped people out of a car quicker was more important than protecting the her SES Patch.

History paints a poor picture when one uses the Volunteer System on large structures within Melbourne as seen by the Knox Municipal Offices Fire a few years ago where there was a concerted effort to keep MFB away until the fire got out of hand and they had no choice but to ask for MFB help.

The CFA Systems of the Captain making up their own assignment rules is also antiquated. So many mistakes are made and petty jealousies over and above the public interest are allowed to fester.

In order to start any internal attack on a Fire you need to be sure you have adequate back up responding. As the Station Officer at Glen Waverley my ability to perform this function is compromised in certain areas abutting our area as I do not know what type of assistance is going to be provided if any.

In the MFB areas I can start with an Internal attack with full knowledge another truck with trained Structural Breathing Apparatus Firefighters is coming as our back up.

The Operational Implementation Committee chaired by Mr Greg Mullins AFSM is an excellent progressive move that will ensure population densities along with risk profiles are addressed as they change to meet community expectation of safely providing its citizens and assets with the level of Fire and Rescue cover that is needed.

Antiquated Fire Service Structure and heavy self interest led to a huge recent problem that being at the Fiskville Training College. The wilful exposure of its and the MFB Firefighters by the CFA Board of the time along with that of the VFBV is an outrage. The draconian culture of the CFA Board of the time even led to many within the CFA calling for the Fiskville College to be reopened!

It took a huge effort by a dedicated group of Firefighters to expose the culture and the deliberate exposure of Firefighters and the Environment to the decades of unidentified chemicals being dumped for training purposes in and around the site. Poor Management led to contamination through all areas of the College.

Amazingly a Manager of the College during this time went on to become a Chief Officer of the MFB!

The MFB went on a deliberate Corporate makeover during the 1990s becoming the MFESB. Along with a Corporate logo the MFB commenced a long war on its own Firefighters. Countless disputes resulted and this led to the huge chasm that exists between MFB Corporate Managers and its Firefighters today.

My Station at short notice received a visit in 2015 by then Board Member Lt General Des Mueller. It was the first visit by an MFB Board Member I have received in over 30 years. Mr Mueller stated reason to visit Fire Stations was to find out first hand the problems the "troops" had with MFB Management. He couldn't believe the culture he encountered on the Board and he soon found out by his Station visits it wasn't the Firefighters fault which was what he was being told at Board level. LT-Gen Mueller left in December 2015 highly critical of the running of the MFESB.

Fire Stations got built costing many dollars over budget with on going problems as the Corporate side of the MFESB failed to consult or pay scant regard to suggestions put forward by its Firefighters.

The MFB established its own TV network in the 90s only to ruin it by using it as an Industrial tool against its own Firefighters. Even in retirement the same Executive Manager sought airplay on ABC talk back radio still trying to denigrate Firefighters of the UFU incognito until the announcer got him to reveal his identity.

During the 90s MFB management employed an organisation to train its management how to pretend to care about the welfare of Firefighters and their families employing their trust while at the same time trying to strip away conditions of Employment that directly effected the Firefighters and their families. The highly profiled Executive Manager mentioned above displayed all these attributes leading to the FireVision Network popularly been referred to by Firefighters as LiarVision

The recent resignation of an MFESB Manager who left after feathering her nest and that of her sons and received a glowing reference by her Director is a prime example of the MFESB losing its way.

MFB Firefighters have long suffered under the Corporate ambitions of a number of its Management. I abandoned my promotional aspirations some 20 years ago as I found it difficult dealing with Managers I did not trust. The last four years has been the worst I can remember. There has been a concerted well planned campaign to denigrate Career Firefighters in the publics eyes. MFB Corporate Managers have largely been silent on defending its

Firefighters against these attacks as it spent many years planning for war on its Firefighters in a bunker in the CBD. They displayed the planning that went into it during an attack on our conditions in the Fair Work Commission when they marched in surrounded by Body Guards as a show of strength. This campaign has produced the lowest morale I have seen yet. It has directly effected families and friends of Firefighters with most colleagues I know carrying unhealthy amounts of stress 24 Hours a day. It has been a disgusting campaign against Firefighters in many cases waged for political gain.

The campaign has sought to use anything to denigrate Firefighters including, Gender, Bullying, 37 Front pages of the Herald Sun, Federal Interference, Political funding of a divisive "Hands off CFA", Lying under Parliamentary Privilege being a few of the tactics.

I note the magnificent jog CFAs Chief Fire Officer Warrington is doing travelling extensively to all points of Victoria dispelling the many myths that have been perpetrated by the vested interest groups. He is highly respected by Volunteer and Career Firefighters and his clear message is how the CFA will prosper under the Reforms proposed.

The Fire Services Reform Bill will do away with all the Corporate wastage and refocus the Fire Services to a modern professional organisation along with a fully Volunteer Service that provides the structures to adapt to the changing needs of the Communities of Victoria as well as providing much improved safety to Firefighters providing the service.

I respectfully urge the committee to support the Bill and provide a long overdue and long lasting contribution to the Fire and Rescue Services of the State.

Regards

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