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Monday 3rd July 2017

Assistant Clerk Committees

Department of the Legislative Council

Fire Services Bill Select Committee

Parliament House, Spring Street

Melbourne VIC 3002

LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Fire Service Bill Select Committee Members,

I wish to advise my support of the proposed fire service reforms. My partner has been a career firefighter with the CFA for 7 years and was a volunteer for 2 years prior to this.

I believe that the proposed fire service reforms will not only address the growth of Melbourne and keep the community safer, but will also help to keep our firefighters and volunteers safer whilst attending incidents. Last year a man entered a bank in Springvale and set himself alight and injured 27 people. Luckily, no one was killed. The 3 staff from Springvale responded to the incident within their usual 90 seconds, however it took 40 minutes for the nearest volunteer station, Noble Park, to respond. However there was an MFB truck available at Clayton which could have responded much sooner to assist the staff from Springvale, however it was not dispatched as it did not show up on the CFA's database. If Clayton and Springvale had been a part of the same fire service this would not have been an issue. This is just one example of when firefighters have been left without adequate back up, leaving them in danger of severe injury or worse.

Volunteers are a vital part of the CFA and are valued and respected by the career staff (despite media reports to the contrary). In fact, many of our close friends are volunteers. Their role within the CFA

will not be affected by these reforms. Those in regional areas which are volunteer only will carry on as normal. Those in integrated stations will continue to work side by side with career staff. However, as valuable as these volunteers are, they cannot be relied upon to respond in a timely manner to every incident and this affects the safety of the community and the career firefighters. This is not a criticism of volunteers, it is just a simple fact. They all have their own jobs, families and other commitments that understandably take priority over their volunteer work. However, if they do respond the presence of more career staff on the fire ground will only make everyone safer and this cannot be a bad thing. I really hope it does not take a catastrophic event such as we have seen with the Grenfell Tower in the UK, to make everyone realise that reform is essential here in Victoria.

For the past 4 years, the CFA career staff have been in dispute over their EBA. This has had a profound impact on the morale and mental health of the staff and their families. Something has to be done to end this dispute and prevent it happening again. Other than the formation of Fire Rescue Victoria and making the CFA fully volunteer I cannot see another way around this. Career Firefighters are not union thugs, militants, terrorists or any other of the shameful and hurtful things they have been called by the media. They are just everyday people who want to be able to earn a living and come home safely to their families after every shift. The introduction of presumptive legislation to both volunteers and staff is a long time coming, especially for those firefighters (my partner included) who spent months living and training at Fiskville after it was known to be contaminated with cancer causing chemicals. So far, all we have had is an apology, but this does not change the fact that my daughter could lose her father much earlier than she would have due to the negligence of the CFA.

Finally I would like to draw your attention to 2 recent polls in the Weekly Times and the Wangaratta Chronicle (please see below for reference) which both overwhelmingly show support for the reform to the fire services. I believe that this proves that the majority of the public want this dispute resolved once and for all and are happy for the CFA to return to its roots as a volunteer organisation.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind Regards

Sophie Brichta



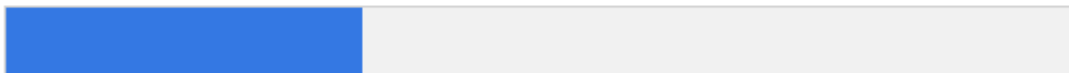
QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Do you support the Government's fire move?

Yes 66.58% (1,341 votes)



No 33.42% (673 votes)



Total Votes: 2,014

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WANGARATTA CHRONICLE

web poll



RESULTS from our latest web poll show that an overwhelming majority of people believe the CFA should be split into volunteer firefighters and paid firefighters working separately.

Of the remaining answers, 90 per cent of voters believed the CFA should be split, while just 10 per cent believed volunteers and paid firefighters should remain working together.

To vote in our latest web poll, do you think the council should transform Maloney's Arcade carpark into a green space, visit:

wangerattachronicle.com.au

