

Fire services Review Submission

My name is Andrew Currie, I am a Leading Firefighter at CFA, attached to Pakenham Fire Station.

I have been a member of CFA for over 26 years, 22 of them as a career firefighter, receiving 20 year Service Medal, National Medal, and National Emergency Medal, (Black Saturday), I have held accreditation in EMR, Road Rescue, Hydraulic Platform Breathing Apparatus Response Vehicle, and Teleboom. I am also qualified in confined space rescue, gas suits, and breathing apparatus, have performed those roles too many times to mention. Responding to around 10,000 emergency, and non emergency calls.

See appendix 1 for full list of qualifications

I currently reside in outer south east Melbourne in Berwick for the past 20 years, and in that time, I have seen it go from a mainly rural settings to urban sprawl, with little to no upgrade to fire service.

My suburb has major risks, including, Casey Hospital, a new multi-story cancer treatment building, many large universities and schools, along with a growing industrial area.



My residence lies within Beaconsfield's primary response area, supported by Pakenham career staff.

Beaconsfield has a response of a Tanker, and Pumper/tanker, and a non guarantee of response, which in this day and age, is unacceptable, I pay a levy, I expect to rapid response

In Pakenham where I am stationed, there are;

- 27 alarmed premises
- 5 alarmed retirement nursing homes
- 12 kindergardens
- 12 child care facilities
- 10 primary schools
- 9 secondary schools
- 3 train stations
- 2 major freeway/ highways
- 7 shopping centres
- 45244 residents
- 11773 households
- 2312 Businesses

- 39942 registered vehicles
- Major bushfire risks
- The construction of a major rail yard and workshop facilities
- Responding to 940 calls this financial year, up by more than 100 over last year

Pakenham, like many areas of Victoria is growing rapidly, and the stress and strain it is putting on volunteer resources is becoming too great, and also on their employers. Victoria needs and deserves the best fire service model, and currently, it is sadly lacking, and if allowed to continue the way it is, it is going to collapse. The fire service boundaries even within our own organisation are ludicrous, here at Pakenham, I look at my admin office window, directly across the

Princes hwy, is Toomuc brigades area, including Bunnings, Masters, Homemaker centre, Gyms, residences. And yet they are responsible for it, with one Tanker, and with a woefully poor response history, to the point, they fail more often than not, how is that value for money? The residences have only just been included in Pakenham's EMR response area, and even that was fight to secure for the those living there

I support the fire service reforms, why?

At Pakenham, I have no guarantee of back up, we respond with 4 crew, not the internationally accepted response of 7, many times we have had to enter burning structures with no back up, the nearest guaranteed response is Hallam, which is around 30 mins away, too late if anything happens

An example from the a few nights ago, Pakenham responded to a structure fire, Bunyip, some 30 km's away, my crew donned BA (breathing apparatus), as the 4 other supporting brigades could only muster 4 BA operators, and of those, 2 where brigade captains, one a lieutenant, and one with a beard, where was the leadership, if they are in BA?

Many times we have responded to long distance calls, and been first or the only ones to be in BA, with the local brigades failing to respond, or responding with below minimum crew requirements, this is an all too common occurrence for us.



A serious admission they are struggling? ^^^

Having 7 at Pakenham would see the response and health and safety of fire crews greatly improved, and more value to the community.

The Volunteers here at Pakenham are looking forward to a bright future under Fire Rescue Victoria, and have decided to relocate to their old station, which they have also been working out of since career staff moved to integration.

The damage that has been inflicted on the CFA career staff has been immense, we have endured brutal attacks in the media, especially the Herald Sun, attacked by our own volunteers including the VFBV, on social media, including facebook pages set up just to attack and denigrate the good work we do. Brutally attacked by Liberal Politician facebook pages and in public, and the fake profiles that people have made to attack the good name of firefighters.

Many have accused staff for only being in it for the money, and that we don't care about the community, that is an insult to all

I have been personally abused on social media, and even worse, in public, I know my fellow firefighters have been deliberately shoved, verbally abused, spat on, and the impact it has had on my family has been immense. I have had to try and explain the real situation to them, but the relentless and brutal attacks have taken their toll, to the point I walked out on family on Christmas Day. Many firefighters like myself are at breaking point, and I hate to think of the toll if this does not get thru.

Some facts as I see them,

- Splitting the service is the best outcome from this point on, it is no longer workable as it is
- No, people are not going to die because of the split, that is just stupid to suggest ,and anyone who thinks that is deluded or scaremongering

- Volunteers get a massive injection in funding, including new and upgraded infrastructure and recruitment
- Volunteers get to set their own direction, with no union or career staff interference
- This is a win / win for staff and volunteers

I just want to go to work, do my job to the best of my ability, and be able to come home safely at the end of the shift.

I wish my submission to be confidential for committee use only, and not published

Regards

Andrew Currie



Appendix 1

Qualifications:

22 years as career firefighter

Emergency medical responder 2016

Cert 11 in firefighting operations 2003

Cert 111 public safety (fire and operations) 2005

Leading Firefighter assessment 1999

All station officer modules 2009

Crew leader wildfire 2003

Strike team leader wildfire 2010

Sector commander wildfire 2010

Operations Officer A 2009