

Daniel Buchan



Leading Firefighter MFB

FS09 Somerton 'A' Platoon

To the Fire Services Bill Select Committee,

My name is Daniel Buchan; I am a Leading Fire fighter with MFB and have been for the last 9 years. I am currently stationed at Somerton Fire station and I live in South Morang in Melbourne's Northern suburbs. I have lived in the South Morang Area for the last 5 years and have seen enormous growth in the area in housing and population but there has been little increase in the fire coverage in the area, apart from the South Morang CFA station becoming a fully integrated station.

I fully support the Fire services reform Bill as the current fire service model needs to be reformed so it will provide a more reliable and safer response for both, the communities and Fire Fighters safety.

Currently the CFA Volunteers do an amazing job and I don't see how the reform will affect there ability to respond when needed.

I currently live in South Morang, which if needed would have a response from the South Morang CFA Career Staff which I believe has four fire fighters on the appliance, and they would be responded with Volunteer brigades From South Morang, Mernda, Doreen or Epping. As they are Volunteer brigades a turn out is not guaranteed within the same time of that of the Career brigade. This would leave the Career staff on scene with only four fire fighters with unknown back up for an unknown amount of time. Being a MFB fire fighter myself I know the great importance having a minimum 7 fire fighters dispatched and on scene with in the response time with the adequate qualifications needed if required, (i.e. All Fire-fighters with BA qualification at a structure fire).

The South Morang, Mernda and Doreen area is a major growth area with many new housing developments, shopping centres and the new Mernda rail. I feel with the Fire Services reform the area where my family and I live will be more adequately serviced in times of emergency.

During my time as a fire fighter I have been at many MFB stations on the border with the CFA area, and have worked with Integrated CFA stations and fully Volunteer stations. There have been times when we have attended calls into The CFA area.

Many times the two services worked well together, but there has also been some times where some issues were identified.

One example, we had a call during a week night to a shopping centre which is in the CFA area in a new estate. The Closest CFA station was 1.1km away and the nearest MFB Station was 4.3 km away. On the way to the shopping centre the MFB appliance passed the CFA station where the appliance was still in the engine bay and had yet to turn out to the call. The MFB arrived on scene and investigated and found it to be a false alarm. As we were about to return the CFA appliance arrived on scene under code 3 driving conditions, which is normal road driving no lights or sirens. While talking to CFA crew it was discovered that the responding crew did not have a qualified Driver to respond under Code1 or emergency driving conditions. This raises some serious issues as if the call had been a fire, the second or backup crew did not have the required qualifications. Therefore placing the initial crew and the community at risk. I'm not suggesting in any way the Volunteers are not capable of providing a response, but there response might not always be adequate. I know they do their best, but the communities in these highly populated areas would expect the same coverage as anywhere else would receive. And I believe the Fire services reform bill would do this.

Another example, we turned out to a house fire in which is a CFA area. The CFA career staffs were attending a different call, so the other attending appliances were the CFA Volunteers. We arrived to a double story house fully involved with fire. Our MFB appliance had a crew of 4, the next appliance to arrive was a CFA appliance had a crew of 5 but we were to discover that most of the crew were not Breathing Apparatus qualified. So although that did the best they could, the initial MFB crew did not have adequate backup for quite some time until further MFB appliances arrived. This is a prime example of why the reform is needed to provide better safety for the community and fire fighters, but also more funding and training for the CFA Volunteers.

With the current fire fighting model there are many difference between the two services, this has caused some problems like currently the two services use different radios, so if the MFB goes into the CFA area we need to have both CFA and MFB Radios. If the CFA incident controller on the CFA radio gives a message, It will then have to be relayed to the MFB fire fighters by the MFB Officer on the MFB Radios. Hopefully with the reform it will improve or eliminate these issues.

Over the past couple of years during the current EBA negotiations, I have noted how political the Fire services have become. This has caused great concern to my family and myself. The constant newspaper articles saying how we are union thugs and bullies, and endless social media posts has really affected me personally and also the morale amongst my work colleagues. We are really tired of being treated like this; I joined this job to try and have a positive impact on people and the community. It's very hard to accept that some people and media outlets think they have something to gain by trying to turn the public against the people who are there to help them, in these times of need. I believe that the fire services reform will eliminate this issue.

The current Fire service boundary's and system model has not changed in a long time, meanwhile the Victoria's population and growth areas, in metropolitan Melbourne and in regional cities has grown considerably. The fire services Reform Bill will provide the fire service needed for the communities all across the state of Victoria for now and into the future.

I thank you for your time and consideration on this very important issue for the people and state of Victoria.

Daniel Buchan