

Dear members of the Committee.

Firstly I would like to thank you for the opportunity to have my say in the Fire Service's Review and show my full support for the reform that is being proposed by the State Government , a review which is well and truly overdue.

My name is Bernard Smith and I have been a career firefighter with the MFB for 34 years and have been stationed at numerous stations in Central and Northern Districts. I have served as a firefighter for 8 years, 26 years as a Station Officer, 25 years as a Rescue operator and 24 years as a fire investigator. The latter two taking me outside the MFB District on many occasions.

The last 3 years I have been stationed at Greensborough, being at a station that borders the boundary of both the MFB and the CFA . This means we respond with Plenty CFA (fully volunteer) and two intergrated stations Eltham and South Morang. This means that our emergency medical response ceases at St.Helena. rd which is 1400m from Greensborough fire station, it also means that the initial response to this intersection is a volunteer station which is 4.1km from this intersection and the intergrated station at Eltham which is 4.8km. The response from Plenty means that the incident controller has control of what extra response is required , meaning the closest career station is not responded, this may seem impossible but my experiences on a number of occasions have shown this to be totally accurate , which I will document later. The strangest response we endure is the response to an area north of the station in Greensborough (melways 10 H10) this residential area backing onto the very dense bushland at Plenty Gorge, to respond to this high risk fire season area we actually leave MFB area travel through CFA area and then come back into MFB area , there is only one route to take. The second point I would like to make is that if a medical response is required on the intersection of St.Helena rd and Diamond creek rd on the north side of the intersection we do not respond, yet we are only 1400m away. The residents of this area north of the station should be given the best possible service that is closest to their home. I actually live in St.Helena and Greensborough fire station does not respond to this area and is the closest fire station to my house. These archaic boundaries would be changed with the passing of this legislation, we all acknowledge Melbourne has grown and Greensborough is a highly populated area now and not the bushland suburb it was in the 1950's.

Unfortunately my experiences have disclosed a number of incidents in the Greensborough area over the years where this fire station has not been responded to actual fires and incidents in Greensborough, not to mention the cardiac arrests we do not attend due to the call being in a CFA volunteer stations area. This not a criticism of volunteers , its just the CFA have not rolled out the medical response in non integrated stations and the MFB do not get responded into CFA area for medical

response even if the call is beyond the 1400m boundary and we are the closest fire station. Just recently there was a house fire in the Northern end of Greensborough, a very intense fire which consumed the house involved, Pumper tanker 16 sat in station for the duration of this fire even though it was the second closest fire station to the fire, the call history revealed the extra response called for an aerial appliance from Dandenong! Luckily common sense prevailed and the OIC at Eltham called for the aerial appliance from Thomastown to attend. In 2008 the Apollo parkway primary school sustained a major fire, the two closest fire stations were Greensborough and Plenty CFA, the incident controller called on a number of CFA volunteer brigades to attend well before the MFB were dispatched, this delayed the proper urban firefighting skill set to attack this fire in its early phase. Greensborough Fire Station were finally responded 45 minutes into the fire, I believe this fire went to an parliamentary enquiry where problems were diagnosed, but nothing was instigated to change the assignment rules. I do not want to mention incident after incident in this submission, because the amount is overwhelming but there are many.

In summary this legislation will be beneficial to all the people living in these integrated areas where professional fire stations and volunteer fire stations share the archaic boundaries that were set in the 1950's. With the latest data revealing the urban spread of Melbourne's metropolitan sprawl, it's now time for the fire services to move with the growth. The legislation will streamline the turn out times and appliances with the closest stations being dispatched. Meaning quicker response times quicker on scene times, more structure fires being contained to the room of origin, this saves the community millions of dollars in insurance premiums. A greater number of households will receive medical response from the fire services , noting fire response is 7 mins on scene, AV have a 12 min on scene average. Where a cardiac arrest is happening this is vital for survival.

Once again, I would like to thank you for taking the time to read my submission and if you would like to contact me please feel free to do so.

Kind Regards

Bernie Smith

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