

Dear Members of the fire services bill committee

We write to you to put forward our submission in regards to why we feel that the fire services bill is required for the benefit of the community and their firefighters.

We are the relievers platoon from Rowville Fire Station we are five members of the career firefighters that work out of the fire station.

We have decades of experience between us in the fire service some with volunteer experience prior to career staff experience as well.

There are many concerns that we have with the way the fire services are structured currently in Victoria but the areas of concern for us is the Community Safety and the Firefighter Safety.

Rowville has a huge level of risk in its turn out area from major road networks, rural interface with large volumes of population, large industrial work areas including state assets of power distribution and telecommunications (SPAusnet) and Boral and Hanson quarries with over 450 truck movements every day. There are also life risk areas like the five primary schools and four retirement homes and a further 5 that we support too.

The current assignment areas do not give the community the service that they deserve and pay for with the fire service levy. The assignment areas are not decided by the more modernised GIS mapping system but on an out dated system where office bearers of brigades have the input into what brigades respond to where.

For example: A Staff crewed fire truck may be fifth on the escalation table where it may well be under the GIS data the second fire truck due to proximity to the fire call. This is not done in malicious manner in most cases but sadly because of the lack of understanding of the response times for neighbouring brigades. We believe the change in the fire service reform would benefit this situation giving the fire services the ability to implement a modernised assignment area package to benefit the community with a higher standard of service delivery with the correct fire appliance with the correct skills and crew numbers to these areas.

The other area of community safety is the delivery of community safety itself obviously the community look to the fire service for input into fire safety whether it be bushfire safety or home fire or office fire safety. This area of education will only improve with the appropriate numbers of firefighters available to work in the Community Safety portfolio, where currently in most cases we rely on Volunteers being available to deliver the message of fire safety/

preparation. This poses a problem where in most cases volunteers are not available during business hours to deliver to those that require the education during these times. (Nursing homes, schools etc.) this will only benefit the public of Victoria with education to act and behave in a safe manner when dealing or preparing for fire.

It is the feeling only a firefighter can feel when he or she is working in an adverse environment such as an intense fire fight, so it's with this statement I wish to describe the safety issues we as a platoon go through on a daily basis.

Whilst working on shift at Rowville Fire Station it is pending which direction we respond into to determine what level of safety we have on our fire ground or for a better word our workplace. If the fire truck responds to the West or the South we have a support fire truck responding to compliment the four firefighters on the Rowville fire truck this results with 7 firefighters despatched to the fire.

This allows safe work practices to be put in place, detailed below

2 BA wearers – search and rescue

1 incident controller

1 pump operator

2 BA wearers as a backup crew

1 crew leader – safety officer

If the Rowville Fire Truck responds in an East or the North direction it is the four firefighters on the Rowville fire truck and an unknown number of Volunteer fire fighters from the neighbouring volunteer brigades including the volunteers from Rowville. This response is somewhat adequate if the appropriate amount of volunteer firefighters with the appropriate skills (ie BA search and rescue or Crew Leader) are responding but this is not always the case. The CFA rely on a large amount of Volunteers to respond to a broad range of fire calls during all hours of the day. Unfortunately this is not all always possible especially during the early hours of the morning or during the business hours of the week days. These circumstances are no one's fault they are just the issues that revolve around volunteerism in a number of volunteer work forces. These issues range from people being out of the area during these times or getting rest for their employment or simply spending time with family or friends.

Sadly there are a number of examples of where the lack of appropriate firefighters despatched with the appropriate skills have not responded and it has resulted in the public of Victoria being let down by a system that is broken. It's our view that the public of Victoria pay for a service through the fire levy, so they should receive a modernised fire service and safe work practices are able to be put in place for the safety of all firefighters both Volunteers and Career.

We are happy to discuss this further if required

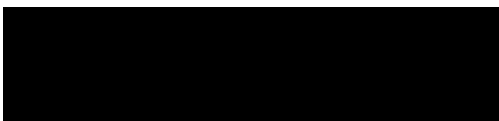
Please consider our submission when reaching a final report.

Yours sincerely

Station Officer David Black



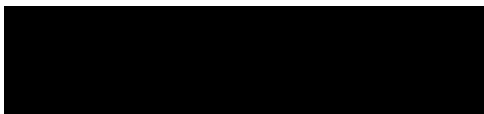
Leading Firefighter Ben Jenkins



Firefighter Seric Bozic



Firefighter Matthew Tripp



Firefighter Lachlan Butterfield



Rowville Fire Brigade

1063 Wellington Road

Rowville, 3178