

Submission for Fire Services Reform

03/07/17

My name is John Stanton. I'm employed by CFA as an instructor at Shepparton, working in the North East Region.

My history is:

Joined CFA as a volunteer in 1979

Joined as a career Firefighter in 1985

Took up an Instructors job in 2015

I have been a volunteer at Flowerdale, Phillip Island, Hastings, Shepparton and am currently at Shepparton East. I have worked at Doveton, Frankston and Shepparton, so I believe I have a good insight to both volunteerism, and permanent staff. CFA has been a big part of my life.

Earlier this year, I was devastated by the "ripping" apart of CFA, (Board being sacked, CEO resigning, Chief Officer resigning, and the Minister resigning). The infighting was terrible.

But with the Government's new Fire Services Reform, I can see light at the end of the tunnel.

I can only comment on the integrated fire brigade at Shepparton. Over the years, I have seen a gradual decline in the Shepparton Volunteers and an increase in the staff at Shepparton. This is due to a few reasons. But the main one I can see is as follows:

When a fire call comes in at Shepparton, the staff turn out accordingly, but when the volunteers get to the station, there is not the appropriate fire fighting appliance to take to the job. This causes discontent in the volunteer ranks. If the volunteers go directly to the job, (as is normal if they don't travel past the fire station), there is not a lot to do as far as the fire fight goes, because the staff have already used most of the equipment. The only thing for the volunteers to do is pack up.

Over the years, this has caused a lot of volunteers to not turn out, or to transfer to other fire brigades.

I believe, if this reform goes ahead, the volunteers at Shepparton would be known as CFA and the staff would be known as FRV. If the Shepparton CFA members had their fire fighting appliances, when they got to the station for a call out, they would be able to turn out as a support brigade, and upon arrival at the job, they would have their own appliances and gear to use. There would be renewed purpose for the volunteers, as well as some ownership and responsibility. I believe this could only be

good for the volunteers at Shepparton, and there would be an improvement in their attendances and standards.

As far as I can see, there will be an improvement in the fire coverage for the Shepparton area, with more fire fighting appliances and more fire fighters on scene.

Reminding, this is only my opinion for the Shepparton integrated fire brigade, I can't comment on the other 34 integrated brigades.

As far as the other towns in our District who have full volunteer membership, I don't believe there be any change to their fire coverage at all, apart from some more training avenues because of the extra money that has been promised for training.

As far as the presumptive legislation for cancer sufferers amongst fire fighters goes, it should have been in years ago. I personally have had two positive melanomas cut from my shoulder and back, (which wasn't very expensive) but others have had a lot worse, just yesterday, a member I have known and worked with over the last thirty years passed away due to cancer. I'm saying the new legislation would have prevented this, but it would have made his last 12 months a bit more acceptable. Other members I have worked with have passed on, or are currently battling cancers.

So I don't care how this legislation comes in, just as long as it comes in. If it is part of the deal with the reforms, then so be it.

So in capping up, I would like to see this reform come in, as I believe it can only be good for CFA and its members. The public will not get reduced fire fighting protection, probably better. And the career fire fighting force will all be under the same banner and continuity will prevail.

My opinion's only.

John Stanton

Structural Instructor

District 22

My private number: [REDACTED]