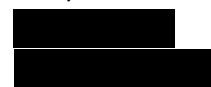


Assistant Clerk Committees
Department of the Legislative Council
Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Garry Cooke



Dear Fire Services Select Committee,

I am an MFB Career firefighter with 31 years experience and have served the last 5 years at Vermont South Fire station.

Over this period of time the number of fire calls we attend into the CFA urban fringe has increased significantly and this alone is a good thing as we deliver value to the community.

What I am writing about is some of the underlying reasons for this;

The ability to respond in a timely manner and indeed on occasion to respond at all.

Modern homes and furnishings burn significantly faster and hotter compared to that of 50 years ago and this is supported by a significant number of scientific studies. Yet most of our explosive urban growth has occurred in the last 20 years. The window of opportunity to contain a fire to the room of ignition has decreased by 50% due to these materials. Modern fire trucks with adequate firefighters trained in structural firefighting on scene in the shortest possible time is the difference between loss of life and property.

The availability of adequate firefighters trained to wear respiratory protection.

This is critical if we are to enter a burning structure to save life and at the same time not succumb ourselves from the thousands of gases generated but also exposure to asbestos.

Structural Fire fighting is one of the most hazardous occupations and requires rigorous consistent training and cohesive teamwork built up over months of training.

The days of property separation provided by large residential blocks and smaller homes has been replaced by large more volatile homes on small blocks where the potential for fire spread from home to home is significant, where streets are narrower with more cars increases response times.

These are but a snapshot of why Victoria needs a modern fire service.

I wish to make it clear that this is not an attack on our many dedicated volunteers who provide a valuable service to our community.

This is an acknowledgment that it would place an onerous burden on volunteers to train to the same level as career firefighters as they themselves have to provide for their families and volunteer what spare time they have.

I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this committee.

Regards

Garry Cooke