

Dear Members of the Committee,

Why I believe the restructuring of the current fire service boundaries in Victoria to be a good idea.

My name is Audun Aas and I am a fire fighter with the MFB and have been for 5 years, prior to that I was a fire fighter in Edinburgh, Scotland for 16 years.

Although I have only been a fire fighter with the MFB for a short time I feel that my previous experience in Scotland qualifies me to make a submission to you in regard to the restructuring of the fire service in Victoria.

During the past 20 years as a fire fighter, it has been my privilege to work with many dedicated and professional men and women, many of whom have become very close friends.

I have worked in many different fire stations, both urban and rural and I have attended innumerable incident over the years.

Where ever I work and whomever I am working with, there is one thing that I have always been 100% confident of and that is, that the people I am working with have always had one common goal, the safety and wellbeing of the community that we serve.

This is why I am writing to you today.

I believe that the current boundaries and structure of the fire service in Victoria is not in the best interest of the community that we are serving.

Currently I am stationed at Greensborough fire station which is very close to the boundary of the current MFB area and as such we regularly work in conjunction with the CFA, be they the career fire fighters at Eltham or the Volunteers at Plenty and I believe that the community does not receive the same service from all parties, NOT that this is the fault of the CFA volunteers.

It is my understanding that some CFA fire fighters are not qualified in the use of breathing apparatus and I know that they do not have an EMR (Emergency Medical Response.) capability.

Firstly, the wearing of Breathing Apparatus is absolutely essential to fighting any fire, NOT only from the point of view of entering a smoke filled environment to affect a rescue but also for the health and wellbeing of the fire fighter themselves. Could you imagine the utter despair of a person who was waiting for their local brigade to arrive to save a loved one, only to be told that the rescuer is not able to help due to a lack of training?

The second issue I would like to raise with you is the CFA's lack of EMR capability.

Since 1998 all MFB fire appliances have been equipped with a defibrillator, medial kit and medical oxygen and within the metropolitan fire district we respond simultaneously with Ambulance Victoria to all life threatening medical emergencies. The types of calls we attended include cardiac arrest, severe breathing difficulties where the patient is not alert, drowning, suicide and drug overdoses. EMS First Responders provide a basic life support response which includes airway management, CPR and defibrillation.

The CFA volunteers do not have this capability and as such I feel that it is by no means fair that just because someone chooses to live on one side of the street and not the other they are not entitled to the same service.

Since the boundaries between the MFB and CFA were drawn up over 60 years ago there has been a huge population grown in outer Melbourne and the boundaries have not changed to reflect this.

Change is never easy but I feel that the reason for this change is not to separate the career CFA fire fighters from the volunteers as has been written about in the press but to improve the service that our growing community deserves.

I thank you for taking the time to read my submission and I hope that in making your decision you can consider the needs of our whole community , not just the people luck enough to live in the right area.

Kind regards

Audun Aas

