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**Leading Firefighter – Oakleigh Fire Station**  
**Experience – 7 years**

### **Introduction**

I have been a firefighter at the Metropolitan Fire Brigade for 7 years. On a professional and personal level, I fully support reform to our fire services as it will provide our highly urbanised city of Melbourne and it's firefighters with a standardised fire service.

I fully appreciate the work that volunteer brigades provide to communities throughout Victoria. Take nothing away from their efforts and commitment, I'm only highlighting the issues of our current system.

### **Community Expectation**

What does the community expect from a fire service? I have spoken to many community members and friends in the local area and they're disappointed that their community has a substandard fire service, considering that neighbouring suburbs have a professional fire service with all the additional benefits that it provides.

My area is full of schools, nursing homes, childcare centres, sporting facilities, waterways and train lines. It is extremely important that the community receives the best fire coverage given the timely response that these locations require.

### **Volunteer Limitations**

#### ***Emergency Response***

There is no guarantee that a volunteer based station will respond to all emergency calls within its designated area. When volunteer based stations do respond, in what capacity are they responding? Is it a fire truck with 4 crew members or is it one person in their own car with a severely limited firefighting capacity?

Are they Breathing Apparatus trained? Having this capability allows a firefighter to perform a rescue inside a smoke filled building. It is unfair for volunteers to be put in a position where they arrive first on scene to a house fire with an individual trapped inside and they are unable to perform a rescue without putting themselves in danger.

As a professional firefighter living in an increasingly urbanised CFA zoned area it worries me that these issues could affect my community and family in the event of an emergency situation.

#### ***Protracted Incidents***

Should we really expect volunteers to spend days or weeks away from their families and livelihoods to attend a protracted incident? E.g. Hazelwood mine fire.

#### ***EMR Capability***

Volunteer brigades provide Emergency Medical Response in a limited capacity. Firefighters are now responding to many incidents that require medical assistance E.g. Bourke Street attack. My suburb of Bonbeach is only covered by 1 CFA integrated station. If my suburb were in the MFB district all stations would provide this service.

<sup>1</sup>In order for the patient to have the best chance of surviving an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, CPR and early defibrillation must be provided within the first 4 minutes of the cardiac arrest (the European Resuscitation Council/American Heart Association recommends 3 minutes), followed by Advanced Life Support within the first 8 minutes of the arrest.

Is it acceptable for the community to have volunteers responding to medical incidents given their **increased response times**? Appliances need to be on the road in 90 seconds to give the patient the best possible chance of survival.

### ***Sustainability***

Melbourne is expensive and as it grows it's becoming more expensive. My wife and I are both employed to be able to provide for our family and we are not alone in this situation. As younger generations come through our area, how are we expecting them to volunteer their time, when both are working to support their families? The median house price alone in Bonbeach is <sup>ii</sup>\$827,000.

<sup>iii</sup>As Melbourne has grown and will continue to grow individuals are not working where they live. During working hours, who will be accountable for responding to incidents if their workplace is located 45 minutes away?

### ***Training***

A professional firefighter is constantly receiving standardised training throughout their career and is constantly putting these skills into practice. Volunteer's brigades have limited training and there is no accountability to maintain these skills.

Does the community really want firefighters driving appliances Code 1 through highly urbanised areas, who may have possibly not seen or trained on an appliance for an extended period of time?

### **Fire Services Reform**

#### ***Benefits***

- Single standardised fire service
  - Training
  - Equipment
  - Vehicles
  - Procedures
  - Crewing
- Decreased response times
  - 8 minute response times
  - Reduction in property damage
  - Increased chances of survival
- EMR capability for greater Melbourne
- Increased firefighter safety
  - Minimum crewing
- Reduced overheads
  - Administration
  - Consolidated staffing

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.zoll.com/au/resources/chain-of-survival/>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.yourinvestmentpropertymag.com.au/top-suburbs/vic-3196-bonbeach.aspx>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/factcheck/2015-07-09/commuting-times-travel-shorten/6592510>