

Assistant Clerk Committees  
Department of the Legislative Council  
Fire Services Bill Select Committee  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
East Melbourne, Vic 3002

Christopher Peter leGrys

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Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

My name is Chris leGrys and I have been a career Firefighter with the MFB for over 10 years. I have been stationed at Eastern Hill, Carlton, West Melbourne, South Melbourne, Bundoora, Balwyn, Greensborough, Broadmeadows and Epping. I am now a Leading Firefighter stationed at Thomastown Fire Station. During my time with the MFB, I have obtained further qualifications, including: Heavy Rescue, Urban Search and Rescue, Trench Rescue, Long Duration Breathing Apparatus and more.

I currently live in Greensborough, with my partner and 2 young children, in an area covered by CFA volunteers with support from CFA career staff and MFB.

In my 10 years working with the MFB, I have not spent much time, if any, where we have not been in dispute with management or the government. The stress that this places on me and my colleagues is taking its toll. But, as we are told from day one of recruits, the fire brigade is a family and we look out for and support each other.

These disputes have seen attacks from the media and political parties alike. Being used for other people gains and aspirations repeatedly, begins to tell us that we are not respected for what we do.

As a resident of an area covered by a volunteer brigade, I see them often out 'shaking cans' to raise much needed funds for their unit. I also see them at school fetes, conducting training and supporting the community they also reside in.

However, I am concerned at the response my family, friends and my local community may receive in an emergency.

At a recent house fire (29/4/2017 1320hrs) in St. Helena, the Pumper Tanker(PT16) from Greensborough Fire Station was not dispatched to the call, despite being in

station at the time. The fire was reported by the first truck on scene (Plenty Volunteer CFA) as 'Not Yet Under Control', a '2<sup>nd</sup> Alarm' in MFB terms.

I am led to believe that the at a volunteer brigade, the crews are the people who set the response areas and which appliances are responded to calls. At this particular fire, where the house was total destroyed, PT16 was not included in their response plan, despite being the closest full time appliance.

An aerial firefighting appliance was not requested for more than 40 minutes after the first appliance on scene. I responded on this appliance. Under and MFB response, this would be automatically responded upon a '2<sup>nd</sup> Alarm' situation.

Where I live – even closer to Greensborough Fire Station - is covered by the same response. As good as the volunteers are, they cannot guarantee a 24/7 365 response. This is because the fire services boundaries have not been reviewed in decades, falling well behind the rapid urban expansion.

The fire services reform will allow for review of the boundaries, review of volunteer vs. career brigades and review of interoperability of the fire services. There is no 'threat' to the volunteers from the UFU. The fully volunteer CFA will receive \$100 million to fund future training and development, a far cry from being 'Torn Apart' as some have suggested. The CFA will become completely volunteer, as they were requesting in the 'Hands Off The CFA' campaign. The volunteers will remain at the current brigades, unless an independent panel decides that population and infrastructure growth has overtaken the ability of a volunteer brigade to provide the adequate cover that the people require, expect and deserve. This is in NO way a slight on the volunteers, but, more a reality of what is best for the community, not what is best for a group of individuals.

I have participated in skills acquisition courses and equipment trials quite recently which involved both MFB and CFA career firefighters (and Ambulance Victoria). On these courses, the badge didn't matter - the people mattered. There could not have been a better example of working together as one to achieve a goal.

The Fire Services Reform would pass these benefits onto the wider fire services and, most importantly, to the community who we proudly serve every day of the year.

Yours Sincerely,

Leading Firefighter Chris leGrys.