

CONFIDENTIAL SUBMISSION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE FOR FIRE SERVICE REFORM**SUBMITTED BY: LEADING FIRE FIGHTER BEN KILDAY (DANDENONG FIRE STATION).**

By email: LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au

Hello my name is [REDACTED] and I am currently working as a Leading fire fighter at Dandenong Fire Station. I have been working as a career fire fighter since 2010 with the CFA Country Fire Authority.

Working at Dandenong I have developed a diverse skill set and have increments in the following: Heavy Pumper, Road Rescue, Ladder Platform 42m, Rope Rescue (Steep and High Angle), Confined Space Rescue and also Aerial Pumper. It has taken a considerable amount of training and motivation to develop this diverse skill set in order to work in a large urban brigade like Dandenong.

Also to achieve the rank of leading fire fighter a considerable amount of study and modules have been completed, also a 3 week course with a subsequent week long assessment in order to achieve this rank.

I currently live in Cape Woolamai on Phillip Island and work as a career fire fighter at Dandenong.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

I currently work in an area that has a significant risk including residential, commercial and industrial with a significant and growing industrial area in Dandenong South. We respond to on average 2500 call outs per year and this figure is rising, more and more residents are moving to SE Melbourne as this is a major growth corridor and will continue to grow into the future.

I am a strong advocate for fire service reform, we are still categorising significant growth corridors in the greater Melbourne area as country and this is simply out dated and the time for change and reform is now.

The 35 integrated CFA brigades now operate in highly urbanised areas, and as career fire fighters in these areas we need a guaranteed that two trucks with at least 7 fire fighters will be dispatched within 8 minutes. This is for crew safety and to ensure we can complete the job in a safe, efficient and timely manner.

Call rates are increasing in these areas due to increased population growth and subsequent risk, I have been to many jobs where we are relying on volunteer support for back up and extra support on the fire ground. The issue is this response is never guaranteed, also with varying skill sets and often without Breathing Apparatus qualifications. Relying on volunteers in these areas is an increasing challenge due to availability, time available to put into training and response, and longer and varying hours of work.

The reform will strengthen response capabilities in these urbanised CFA integrated areas, this will streamline co-ordination between the current MFB/CFA career fire fighters, improve safety, standardise training and skills and will reduce the current reliance on volunteers in these areas.

The implementation of all career fire fighters into one service will not have any effect on volunteer bushfire or surge capacity. The CFA will continue to operate in its current capacity and bushfire response and rural brigade response will be impacted in no way. The reform will benefit volunteers as it has included a package to assist with volunteer recruitment and retention across the CFA, and includes funding for volunteer station upgrades.

I have personally witnessed the strain and toll the constant media attention and attacks, and uncertainty this has had on fellow work colleagues. The formation of one service for career fire fighters will certainly strengthen moral and will ensure we can move forward as a modern and progressive service.

Personal example of the issues with the current system:

Dandenong was responded along with other career fire stations Rowville, Frankston, Patterson River, Hallum and MFB 31 to a factory fire on Cambria Rd, Keysborough involving two factories. These factories were well ablaze and threatening other structures. These brigades that attending had a guaranteed response with crews being qualified in breathing apparatus and pump operations.

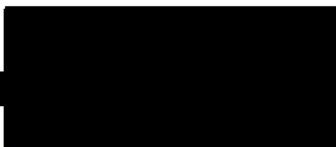
This fire required significant resources due to the size and complexity. Due to the resources needed additional volunteer brigades were required to attend, as the fire was initially paged at 0343 hours limited volunteer support was available.

Another firefighter and I were required with little support due to insufficient numbers on the fire ground to work on the north sector to stop fire spread to other factories to the north. Due to insufficient numbers being available we were confronted with a significant challenge to achieve this, we also had issues of structural collapse and power lines on fire.

If this job was to occur under the new reform we would have guaranteed sufficient numbers on the fire ground, the availability of a greater area response and the availability of resources would mean sufficient crews and gear would be on the fire ground. This will also alleviate the reliance on volunteers also ensuring we can combat the incident in a more efficient and safe way.

(NOTE: SUBMISSION IS TO BE CONFIDENTIAL)

Yours sincerely,



Leading Fire Fighter, Country Fire Authority, Dandenong Fire Station



