

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

Fire Services Bill Committee,

## RE: FIRE SERVICES BILL SUBMISSION

I write to you wishing to express my full support for the proposed Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Bill currently before your committee.

I have been a CFA Volunteer for 10 years in both a rural and urban brigade, firstly at the Maryknoll and District Fire Brigade and more recently at the Edithvale Fire Brigade filling numerous roles in the past including a Volunteer Officer. I have also been Professional CFA Firefighter for 18 months, currently stationed at Rowville Fire Station in Melbourne's eastern suburbs. I have seen all sides to the Victorian Fire Services and strongly believe the proposed changes are for the best, not only for the Victorian community but also for the Volunteer and Professional Firefighters that work to protect those communities.

The current operating structures are out-dated, unable to adapt to change and based largely on emotions rather than facts and evidence. They do not provide the most effective Fire and Emergency Service for the Victorian Community. The standard of fire coverage for residents across Outer Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria is inconsistent and is not of the same standard of those that live within the current "Metropolitan Fire District".

### CURRENT RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS

Currently within the MFD (Metropolitan Fire District) when someone calls Triple Zero (000) and requests a fire truck, the two closest fire trucks are responded, with a minimum of 7 Firefighters on board, unfortunately within CFA areas (which includes over 60% of Outer Metro Melbourne) the system is not the same. Within CFA areas, due to an out-dated system, Brigades themselves choose who they want responded to an emergency within their "Primary Area", unfortunately it is not always the fastest, closest or most appropriately skilled response (*see attached Appendix 1*). Depending on the area, sometimes only one professional fire truck will be responded and in a lot of

areas, no professional fire truck will be responded, why should the residents of Outer Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria not receive the same standard of fire coverage as those living within the prehistoric MFD (Metropolitan Fire District) Boundary? For example: If Rowville Pumper was responded west to a fire in Rowville's Primary turnout area there would be a guarantee of another Professional fire truck responding, either Dandenong or MFB, which would provide the minimum number of Firefighters on the fire ground for safe and efficient fire fighting operations. On the other hand, if Rowville Pumper was responded only 4kms east towards Upper Ferntree Gully or Lysterfield which is home to numerous multi-million dollar housing estates, Rowville Pumper would be the only professional fire truck responded, as per the current turnout tables (*see attached Appendix 1*). With an unknown number of Volunteers possibly attending, this makes decision making, resourcing and safe fire fighting operations extremely difficult, how can you plan to combat an incident when you don't know what resources or crews are coming? I strongly suggest that the committee gather evidence from the CFA as to the current assignment tables, which will clearly highlight how broken, inconsistent and in-effective the current system is. Under the proposed Fire Service changes this issue will no longer exist, as the two closest Professional fire trucks will be responded, ensuring safe and effective community service.

## **PROFESSIONAL VS VOLUNTEER RESPONSE**

CFA Volunteers do a fantastic job; they provide a wealth of value to the community through education, training, fundraising, responding to emergencies and much, much more. My family has been a part of the CFA since I was born, and I am still currently a CFA Volunteer with the Edithvale Fire Brigade. Volunteers will always be valued and needed within the state of Victoria, so too will Professional Firefighters. Unfortunately when it comes to providing Victorians with the best Fire and Emergency Service, the current system doesn't always provide the best possible response. Below are several key points of difference between a Professional and Volunteer fire response, which will highlight the need for a guaranteed Professional fire response across the built up areas of Victoria.

### **1. Response Times**

MFB& CFA Professional Firefighters have a Service Delivery Standard (SDS) turnout time of 90 seconds, which means; 90 seconds after a call is received the truck is on the road. This rapid response is critical, as seconds literally matter when it comes to emergency response and effective intervention. On the other hand, when a call is received, a volunteer brigade, including the various brigades in the rapidly growing Outer Metro Melbourne has a 4 minute turnout Service Delivery Standard (SDS) to meet. Unfortunately for the Victorian community, this is not always achieved, as it is not always possible for a sufficient number of appropriately trained Volunteer Firefighters to drop what they are doing, drive to the station, get changed into their fire fighting gear and turn-out the appliance. Further to that, even if the truck does turnout within the required time, there is no way to guarantee that there is sufficiently trained fire fighters on board, volunteer firefighting appliances do not have minimum crewing requirements, through my experiences as a CFA Volunteer and CFA Career Firefighter I have witnessed on multiple occasions fire trucks turn-out to an emergencies with

insufficient crews, sometimes “one up” which means only one firefighter is on the truck, or they may turn out with 5 crew on board, none of which are sufficiently trained or qualified to perform critical firefighting activities such as wear BA (Breathing Apparatus). CFA does not report on the skills mix or crewing of Volunteer Trucks, it only reports on the turn-out time, the travel time and on-scene (Customer SDS) time, what good is it to have a fire truck arrive on-scene in the appropriate time, if it has insufficiently trained and qualified Firefighters on board? If a Volunteer Brigade fails to respond within 6 minutes, a further Brigade will be paged to attend, and the clock starts again, this delay is unacceptable and does not provide a suitable standard of fire coverage for Victorians. I urge the Committee to research and analyse the current Service Delivery Standard (SDS) statistics from CFA that highlight the inadequate fire response that some Outer Metro and Regional communities are receiving.

Why do rapid response times matter? A large majority of the incidents that Firefighters attend to are time critical, the chances of successful intervention decrease the longer time goes on, this is especially true for the role of Emergency Medical Response (EMR) that all Professional MFB Firefighters provide and is also currently being rolled out across all CFA Integrated Stations to Professional Firefighters. As per **(Appendix 2)** it is clear that the longer a patient goes without treatment after suffering a cardiac arrest their chances of survival dramatically decreases.

I have witnessed first-hand the effectiveness of a rapid 90 second turnout time; on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2016 Rowville Pumper was responded to an EMR Event where a 16 year old male had suffered a cardiac arrest. Rowville Pumper arrived on scene prior to Ambulance Victoria and commenced CPR, we then worked side by side with Paramedics to provide lifesaving treatment to the patient who later regained consciousness and was successfully transported to hospital. This standard of coverage should be provided to all of Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria, not just the lucky few who live within the out-dated MFD (Metropolitan Fire District) or within some of the Integrated CFA Brigades primary area who currently provide EMR.

## 2. Training/Skills

Do CFA Professional Firefighters and Volunteers receive the same standard of training? Below I will highlight the difference between the recruitment process, training framework and skills maintenance of Professional and Volunteer Firefighters to demonstrate why a guaranteed Professional Fire Response will ensure community and Firefighter safety.

The recruitment process to be selected to commence a CFA Career Firefighter Recruit Course is highly competitive; it is also physically and emotionally demanding, it requires a huge amount of hard work, dedication and commitment. This process is designed to select the best candidate who is most suited to the role of a Professional Firefighter, a role which comes with many physical and emotional stresses. See attached **(Appendix 3.)** which highlights the various stages an applicant must go through to be selected to commence a CFA Career Firefighter Recruit course. Conversely if a member of the public wishes to join their local CFA Volunteer Brigade they only need to show a keen

interest; pass a police check and be voted into the Brigade, there is no minimum physical standard or psychological evaluation to assess the applicants' suitability for the role.

Before a Professional Firefighter can respond to emergencies they first must successfully complete the current 19 week Firefighter Recruit Course which is an intense learning phase that teaches a wide range of fire, rescue, medical and emergency response skills. This ensures consistency across the board and when the public dials Triple Zero (000) they get a set standard of fire response capability. Unfortunately within the Volunteer component of CFA the only minimum requirement that a Volunteer Firefighter has to achieve before being qualified to respond to incidents is a course called "minimum skills", this course is focused on bushfire skills and does not prepare a Volunteer Firefighter sufficiently to respond to emergencies within the urban environment, putting both themselves and others at risk.

Professional fire trucks have minimum crewing requirements, which ensure that 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days of the year, the truck has the appropriately skilled and qualified Firefighters on board, ready to respond to emergencies. On the other hand a Volunteer fire truck may have the appropriately skilled and qualified Firefighters on board, or it may not, there is no guarantee, this is not a suitable standard of fire coverage for the densely populated and high risk Victorian communities.

People living within the wrongly zoned areas of "Country" Victoria including Outer Metro Melbourne and the built up areas of Regional Victoria deserve better, these areas have a booming population, industrial risks, major road networks, schools, hospitals and much more that requires a guaranteed fire response to protect life and property. The proposed reform will bring this improved service to the community whilst also supporting the Volunteers to perform the important role they currently play and will continue to play into the future.

## **ONE PROFESSIONAL SERVICE/INTEROPRABILITY**

Working at Rowville Fire Station I have seen firsthand the issues surrounding current interoperability between Professional CFA and MFB Firefighters. Rowville sits on the boarder of the current Metropolitan Fire District (MFD) so we regularly respond with our MFB colleagues to emergencies, unfortunately due to differences between the agencies this is not always as smooth or efficient as it can be. To start with, CFA and MFB have different response arrangements, as stated earlier, the CFA uses out-dated "assignment tables" to decide which fire trucks attend events; on the other hand the MFB send the two closest trucks. Unfortunately the response systems around the borders of the Metropolitan Fire District (MFD) including Rowville don't always work effectively, and can often overlook Professional CFA trucks and send another truck which is further away, shouldn't the community receive the best service, with the closest appropriately skilled Firefighters responded? Response arrangements are only one of the major issues currently effecting interoperability, CFA and MFB use different fire ground command structures, different radios, different BA (Breathing Apparatus) sets, different sized hoses, different terminology, different work practises, and the list

goes on! With one Professional Fire Service these logistical matters will not be an issue as Fire Rescue Victoria arrangements will be streamlined to provide the best possible service to the community.

### **COUNTRY AREAS OF VICTORIA**

Are towns like Dandenong, Rowville, Springvale, Craigieburn and Hoppers Crossing classed as the country? No. Then why are they classed as country when it comes to the standard of fire response they receive? Victoria's population is booming, The Age recently posted an article titled "*Bursting at the seams: what you don't know about Melbourne's runaway growth*" April 8 2017, which clearly highlights the fact that Victoria's population is quickly growing. The growth is not only in the outer-metro areas but also in the regional centres, with that growth comes increased call rates which places pressure on the current fire service delivery model. Victoria deserves a fire service that can cater for that increased risk now and into the future.

### **VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT**

CFA has been a big part of my life; I have been involved with the CFA for as long as I can remember and to this day I continue to be involved as a CFA Volunteer, as well as work full-time as a Professional Career Firefighter with the CFA. I strongly believe that the Volunteers role will be strengthened through this reform. The volunteers at the 35 Integrated CFA stations will be given support and options that best serve their needs and wishes. Volunteers will still continue to work side by side, respond with, train with and integrate with Professional Fire Rescue Victoria Firefighters just as they do currently.

### **CONCLUSION**

There is overwhelming evidence to support the fact that urgent Fire Service reform is needed to keep Victorians safe. Undoubtedly major structural reform will be a complex process; it may cause varying levels of stress amongst stakeholders from the emergency management sector and the community as a whole. We need to ask the question, what is best for the community now and into the future? The answer to that question needs to be the direction we head. I strongly believe that the proposed Fire Service Reform is a big part of that answer; it will help to provide the very best fire and Emergency Service to the Victorian community.

Please feel free to contact me either via phone or email to discuss any of the above.

Kind regards,

**Matt Tripp**

**CFA Volunteer & CFA Career Firefighter**

# Appendix 1.

1. RESPONSE VIEW | 2. PRINT TABLES |

Assignment area: **UPPE5**

Job type: **STRUC1**

Notes:

DAY	NIGHT	WEEKEND	HOT	PUMPER	TANKER
C	C	C	C		
UPPE	UPPE	UPPE	UPPE	UPPEPT	UPPET1
ROWVS	ROWVS	ROWVS	ROWVS	ROWVP1	ROWVT1
ROWV	ROWV	ROWV	ROWV	SCORP1	SCORT1
SCOR	SCOR	SCOR	SCOR	FERNP1	FERNT1
FERN	FERN	FERN	FERN	P31	WT31
MFB31	MFB31	MFB31	MFB31	DANDP1	UPPEPT
DANDS	DANDS	DANDS	DANDS	BOROP1	ROWVT2
BOROS	BOROS	BOROS	BOROS	UPWEP1	DANDT1
UPWE	UPWE	UPWE	UPWE	BELSPT	BOROPT
BELS	BELS	BELS	BELS	HALLP1	UPWET1
HALLS	HALLS	HALLS	HALLS	DANDP2	BELST1
DAND	DAND	DAND	DAND	BOROP2	HALLT1
NNTH	NNTH	NNTH	NNTH	NNTHP1	NNTHT1
MFB28	MFB28	MFB28	MFB28	PT28	PT28
BORO	BORO	BORO	BORO	NOBLP1	UPWET2
HALL	HALL	HALL	HALL	PT22	BELSPT
NOBL	NOBL	NOBL	NOBL	THEBP1	PT22
MFB22	MFB22	MFB22	MFB22	SVALP1	THEBT1
THEB	THEB	THEB	THEB	BELGP1	SVALT1
SVAL	SVAL	SVAL	SVAL	BAYSP1	BELGT1

As per the current response tables for Upper Ferntree Gully Assignment area 5 (UPPE5) which includes the Carrington Estate, home to various multi-million dollar homes and properties, the first three responding Brigades will be 1st Upper Ferntree Gully 2<sup>nd</sup> Rowville Staff and 3<sup>rd</sup> Rowville Volunteers.

Due to prehistoric response arrangements, Upper Ferntree Gully is the first responded brigade, when in reality it is the 5<sup>th</sup> closest fire truck (14 minutes and 23 seconds) away. This is just one example in one area; unfortunately this is a common occurrence daily across Victoria.

**Options:**

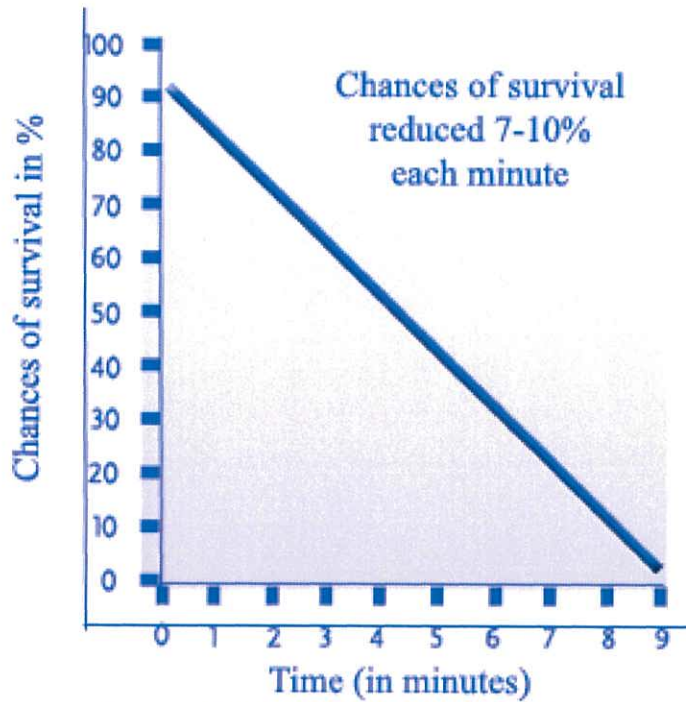
- Don't change zoom level
- Sort results based on response time (inc 90s/4m turnout times)
- Show fire stations on map
- Show assignment areas

**Destination:** -37.92124804615737, 145.28350353240967 Calculate

**Results:**

DISTANCE	DRIVE-TIME	RESPONSE-TIME	BRIGADE
4.9KM	05:57 (357)	07:27 (447)	Rowville Staff
4.9KM	05:57 (357)	09:57 (597)	Rowville Vols
6.5KM	08:17 (497)	12:17 (737)	Scoresby
6.3KM	09:32 (572)	13:32 (812)	Ferntree Gully
7.8KM	10:23 (623)	14:23 (863)	Upper Ferntree Gully
9.3KM	10:41 (641)	14:41 (881)	Upwey
13KM	14:47 (887)	16:17 (977)	Dandenong Staff
10.8KM	14:57 (897)	16:27 (987)	Boronia Staff

## Appendix 2.



Source : Guidelines 2000 for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Emergency Cardiovascular Care. Circulation Aug. 22, 2000

Appendix 3.



**Recruitment Process Chart**

Submit an online application via [cfa.vic.gov.au/career](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/career)

