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Station Officer

Metropolitan Fire Brigade
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To the Assistant Clerk Committees,

It is with respect but much frustration that I write my submission to the Parliamentary Committee in support of the proposed fire services reform. Frustration, that something which should have been done years ago is still being debated and has been politicised so disgracefully.

We must have fire service reform for the following reasons;

- Melbourne is unrecognisable from the city that the current system was designed to service back in 1958.
- People in CFA areas do not have guaranteed response times or capability.
- MFB firefighters know exactly how many and what type of truck is responding as well as how many and the basic qualifications of all the firefighters on those trucks at every call they attend.
- Professional firefighters in the CFA have no assurance of the support they will receive at an event (hence the 7 on the fire ground)
- The difference in Selection, training, skills maintenance and therefore capability of professional Firefighters compared to that of Volunteers is vast by any measure. This is not about denigrating volunteers but it needs to be acknowledged in order to understand why professional Firefighters need to know that other professional Firefighters are coming in support.
- For around 15 years MFB Firefighters have been providing Emergency Medical Response (EMR). Saving lives! This now accounts for some 30% of the MFB total calls. If the proposed changes occur then that's a potential 30% increase in productivity and an additional lifesaving service for people who live in areas with professional Firefighters.
- An ability to utilise resources state wide. The specialist skills and capability of the MFB particularly in Technical Rescue and HAZMAT are underutilised because of organisational borders and bureaucracy. With the proposed fire service reforms these resources could be deployed rapidly state wide.
- Fire Service levy, people in CFA areas pay as much and often more in fire service levy but do not get the same level of service. This in turn means they also pay higher insurance premiums. This is totally unfair!

This reform is long overdue; I've not heard any argument to the contrary that can genuinely address how the proposed changes would not improve the service provided to the people of Victoria.

Not forgetting that this reform also provides the presumptive legislation which is so desperately needed by Victorian firefighters and which has been in place for years in other states and other countries around the world.

This submission is confidential and is only to be used by the committee in order to form their decision. It is not to be distributed or altered.

Regards

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