

Fire Services Review submission

Qualified Fire fighter Nathan Sturt

Mornington Peninsula Statistics

Population: 159,710

Population Projection by 2036: 178,146

Building approvals for 15-16: 4089

I have been in the country fire authority as a professional fire fighter for the past 4 years and only one month of my whole time I have been under a current EB agreement. I am a qualified rope/ confined space and trench rescue operator.

Before joining CFA as a career fire fighter, I volunteered at Mornington fire station which is integrated; this is where I found my passion for the fire service and to see such comradery between shifts was something that I wanted a career in.

I am lucky that I have fond memories of being a volunteer at an integrated brigade where career firefighters were willing to go above and beyond to help me achieve my dream of becoming a professional fire fighter, I endeavour to give volunteers the same support, if they choose to join the professional fire fighter ranks, I will give them assistance as I was encouraged with my application.

I live in Mt. Martha which is just covered by the career staff at Mornington. Mornington's urbanisation has been incredible over my life time and will only continue. Continuously more retirement villages, schools and unit blocks are being constructed on old farming blocks and large residential blocks around the area, which of course is going to put extra strain on all emergency services but as this is a review into fire services, of course Mornington will increase their call rate.

As the Statistics that I have provided show the Mornington Peninsula has a projected population growth by 2036 to 178,146. There are currently 2 integrated brigades on the peninsula (Mornington and Rosebud).

My concern in my area is for my family and friends that live in the surrounding areas, I know that they are covered by volunteer brigades and may just be outside of the primary turnout area of Mornington. For example, my parents happen to live on the boundary of Mornington's primary area. They pay a fire just like any rate payer does, and they will only get Mornington attend a code 3 call after Mt. Martha fail to respond after 6 minutes.

In my professional career as a firefighter at both Pakenham and Mildura (where I was stationed after recruits) I have been to calls where the response has been appallingly inadequate. Examples of appliances attending calls with only one volunteer fire fighter on board, and yes there isn't any driving rule from CFA being broken, but please tell me what a single fire fighter can do on the fire ground? Drive, use a radio, take operational command of an incident and combat the that incident?

A house fire I attended whilst at Pakenham last year (10/2/16) was my most concerning moment I have had in my time as a professional fire fighter. As we arrived in the street smoke was issuing from the house, I was in Breathing Apparatus so it was my job to go into and search the building. The last radio message I received before getting out of the truck was persons reported, which to us means the neighbours are reporting people inside.

I entered the building, after completing my search, knocking down multiple seats of fire and emptying my BA cylinder I came out to ask my SSO (Senior Station Officer) where was my back up? The reply I got floored me, as a volunteer who had arrived on scene in the second appliance had BA credentials but declined to wear BA and come into the house to help me search and to keep me safe in my workplace.

I want to be safe in my job and know that the fire fighter that is coming in to help, even possibly save me from harm can and will perform the roll because they have the same training and rigorous standards that we have to meet to be career fire fighters.

I have attended rescue calls with neighbouring brigades where trucks are turning up with one volunteer in each appliance so that both appliance appear that they are on scene at the call. Please tell me how one fire fighter in each truck helps anyone? Let alone the person trapped in the vehicle.

The current impact of the ongoing industrial dispute on myself has been tough, but I won't only say for me, but also my family. I joined the Authority because I care to the community of not only where I live but where I currently serve as a part of my role. Being used as pawns in a political game has made the public perceive career firefighters as lazy, money hungry thugs. This has been a brilliant campaign by Associations, 'Media' outlets and the state and federal liberal parties. To be abused by people in the street is something you have to get used to and that a thick skin is required but when I go to a job and help people then get asked you're not those 'union thug'?

Can you please tell me how to Approach this? I am there doing my job, which the state of Victoria pays me to do, and I am abused by people who have been misinformed by media outlets. I cannot speak for all career firefighters but as a part of my shift we are all sick of it and the lack of recognition that there are career fire fighters in the CFA.

Please don't get me wrong volunteers have a place in Victoria's fire services and don't forget I volunteered for 4 years and thought I had a great idea and the same training as a career fire fighter until I actually joined the CFA as a professional fire fighter.

I personally want this finished, the state is growing. The government is trying to release more land for development in our area and you have a choice to make in what fire service is sufficient.

Personally, I wouldn't want your job as it's a decision that can't be taken lightly, but please do the right thing and if where you live isn't affected by a restructure then please think of your family and friends that my live in Melbourne's urban fringe or regional centres.

They deserve and pay for a better service, so please give it to them.

Regards,

Nathan Sturt

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Country Fire Authority

Pakenham Fire Station

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