

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

My name is Egon Charman and I have been a full time firefighter with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) for just over 12 years. I currently hold the rank of Leading Firefighter. As well as being an on shift firefighter I also undertake the roles of fitness leader, Juvenile Fire Awareness and Intervention Program Practitioner and I am a member of the Peer Support Program.

I currently live in South Morang with my wife and three children aged 11 and 9. I am currently stationed at Thomastown Fire Station (FS07) and have been stationed at Brunswick (FS04), Eastern Hill (FS01), Somerton (FS09), Epping (FS11), Heidelberg (FS15), Templestowe (FS30) and Bundoora (FS14).

I am writing this submission in full support of the current proposed fire services reform. It is my firm belief that if these reforms are adopted it will provide an improved fire service especially for the people of greater metropolitan Melbourne. I wish to outline below the reasons to support this belief.

- Over five years ago I was promoted to the rank of leading firefighter. As part of this role I have at numerous times been in command of a station and firefighting vehicles. Under our current system in the MFB we have a guaranteed response for various incidents. This is known as the Greater Alarm Response System (GARS). For example, if we get called out to a structure fire a minimum two trucks with at least 7 firefighters will be dispatched to the call. Once on scene and I have assessed the situation I can choose to increase the response under GARS which will guarantee extra resources are dispatched to the incident. This system provides me with confidence because I know I will get the resources needed to deal with incidents in a timely manner.
- Following on from my previous point it is my belief that the CFA do not have a guaranteed response model like GARS. I currently live in South Morang where the local CFA fire station is integrated. Once the full time firefighters are dispatched to a call there is no guarantee that further resources will be available to those firefighters once on scene.
- The guaranteed response model that exists in the MFB was also designed to protect firefighter safety. One prime example of this is breathing apparatus procedures. To enter a structure that is on fire there must be at least two trained firefighters in breathing apparatus. The firefighters who enter a structure in breathing apparatus are then supported by a further two firefighters who stand ready to assist this initial crew if their safety is compromised. To me this system typifies our safety focused response. It takes any guess work out of our work. When we are committed at an

incident there is confidence in knowing that our safety is paramount. This allows us to focus on our main job of protecting the community.

- Over the last 4 years I have watched as my profession and the United Firefighters Union come under sustained attack from various media outlets and politicians. In this time I have had to consistently explain and justify my job and my commitment to the community. To make matters worse questions have been asked of my immediate family as to how committed I am to serving the community. The stress that this has caused has had an impact on not only myself but my family as well. Creating one career fire service and a volunteer only CFA will ease the belief that volunteers are under threat. Therefore, I believe these reforms will go a long way to resolving some of the misguided criticisms levelled at the dedicated professional career firefighters.

Yours Sincerely,

Egon Charman

Leading Firefighter, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Melbourne

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