

Fire Service Bill Select Committee.

## CONFIDENTIAL SUBMISSION

Dear Committee members,

My name is Graeme McGuinness and I am currently a Leading Fire Fighter employed by the Metropolitan Fire & Emergency Services Board and I am stationed in Melbourne's West.

I am writing to urge you to support the Bill for the modernisation of the Fire Services which in my opinion is well overdue.

While Melbourne and its suburbs have grown over the past 60 years the area protected by full time Fire Fighters has not. The allowance of such growth without the necessary supporting growth of full time Fire Services cannot be allowed to continue.

To give you an idea, I work in Newport and when we are dispatched to a firecall we know that we will have seven fully qualified Fire Fighters arriving on scene within 7.7 minutes. What this means to the unfortunate persons involved in the emergency is that we can, in the case of a fire, contain said fire to the room or place of origin in over 90% of calls. What it means to me as a Fire Fighter is that I can be assured that I will be backed up at all times if things get out of hand, which can happen with the unpredictable nature of fire. What it means to my family is that I arrive home safe and sound because we have the necessary resources to manage the emergency.

As I stated I work in Newport, however I live in Werribee. The Wyndham area has consistently been one of the highest population growth areas in Melbourne for some time. Last financial year Wyndham grew by a whopping 34.4% so that now some 217,000 people live there. Once upon a time Werribee was a little town that had hectares of market gardens and a main street that you drove through on the way to Geelong. In those times a Fire Service made up of local volunteers that lived and worked in the area was all that was needed as everyone knew each other and helped each other to protect their assets. Nowadays is very different.

Werribee is still serviced by volunteer Fire Fighters even though most residents work outside the municipality. The logistics of this is something I'm still trying to understand. If someone works 10 minutes away from the Fire Station and responds to a page the elapsed time of them arriving on scene could be anywhere up to 15-20 minutes, by which time my home could well and truly be burnt to the ground.

I'm not against volunteers, however I believe it is fair and reasonable that as a resident of an urban suburb of Melbourne I should be entitled to the same level of protection that someone who lives in Newport, Footscray, Kew or Carnegie receives. This inequity can only be addressed by your support of this Bill.

Amazingly I have been personally told by a volunteer at Werribee that they have a residence near the Station so someone can be close to the trucks at all times. Surely if this is the case the Committee can see the need to restructure the existing out-dated boundary lines of full time and volunteer Fire Brigades. We must keep pace with our population growth, it is imperative.

Consider if you will what might happen if you oppose the Bill. Someone in Truganina has the misfortune of their house catching fire. It's 3pm on Christmas day. A page goes out to the local volunteer Brigades but because it's Christmas many have had a big lunch and a couple of drinks so being responsible they don't accept the call. By the time enough suitably qualified volunteers arrive a child has perished in the fire. Could you have changed this outcome? By voting this Bill in you would have. EVERY day of the year full time Fire Stations are staffed by full time Fire Fighters who would have responded to that call at 3pm, been on their way in 90 seconds and arrived on scene in less than 8 minutes. Fully qualified, trained and with enough resources (7 Fire Fighters on the fireground) to prevent that family losing a child.

As Members of Parliament you are all held accountable to your communities. This reform can only be good for those communities. This reform is well overdue and it is now up to you.

I thank you for your time, for your willingness to take on this role, and I hope that you can see that this reform is necessary. You have the chance to start a process that will make Victoria the best protected and most envied State in our Nation. Let's set the standard, not fall behind it. I urge you to pass this Bill and convince your colleagues in Parliament to introduce Fire Services Reform in Victoria.

Sincerely,

Graeme McGuinness

Leading Fire Fighter MFB



