

5 July 2017



Thank you for the opportunity to place a submission for your consideration.

I write as a professional (MFB) fire fighter of 27 years and a resident of Victoria all my life.

I wish to voice my disapproval of the fact that public safety has been placed a distant second to vote accumulation and garnering a support base for election/re-election by some politicians. **I implore you to make Public Safety the 'bottom line' in your deliberations.**

Throughout my career in the Fire Service I have been encouraged to **accept and embrace change** in relation to equipment, procedures, training, work practices etc. These changes did not just appear from the ether! They were, and continue to be direct actions relating to stimulus from investigation (eg: into 'best practice' or equipment) or a reaction to recommendations from reviews of incidents.

Embracing change has enabled to me being able to lead my fire-fighters with confidence knowing that they are exceptionally well trained and have at their disposal up to date equipment, PPC and vehicles. Embracing change has led to the introduction and success of EMR (Emergency Medical Response), HAZMAT, Marine Response, USAR etc. Embracing change has simply been an integral part of my service to the community through the Brigade.

Residing in a CFA area I am lucky enough to be serviced by career and volunteer fire-fighters who, as fire-fighters, strive to do their best by the community they serve. **It cannot be understated and no amount of juggling statistics alters the fact that professional fire-fighters have the ability to respond with greater alacrity and with a consistent skill level of members than volunteers.**

I cannot stress enough the **time critical nature of the majority of our emergency calls** or the need for OIC's to be cognisant of the capabilities of the people under their control on the fire ground. (note: a Level1 fire-fighter straight out of recruits is qualified in BA and I am knowledgeable of their capabilities). Of great concern is responding to an emergency over the CFA 'border' where the responding appliance may have one or a number of volunteers (some may be responding in their own vehicles) and these responders of varying capabilities.

I grew up in the wilds of an outer suburb during the 60's and enjoyed my youth of yabbing in dams, raiding orchards up the road and riding my friend's mini-bike through the bush swathe that is now the Monash freeway...but that has all changed. While I may be nostalgic for those days I realise that, that suburb is long gone ... it has changed markedly, as have innumerable suburbs on the evermore rapidly expanding urban fringe. The **population** in that area has changed, the infrastructure in that area **has changed**, the **amount of industry** in that area **has changed**, the **number of vehicles** on the roads **have changed**, the services provided by council **have expanded and changed**, the **number of police and police facilities has changed**...everything has changed to properly service and protect the community...well not quite everything.

I am fully aware of the passions that have been agitated within volunteer ranks by people pushing various agendas having little or nothing to do with protection of life, property and the environment, and, **that this much needed reform has become a painful birth rather than a smooth transition**. In social discussions I find that once people are made conscious of the benefits to the state that this change will deliver they are supportive. Unfortunately various media outlets have run a 'chicken little' campaign where the 'sky falling' on many volunteers has made constructive dialogue nigh on impossible.

I have deliberately not stated facts or statistics as you will have them at hand...I only implore you to consider your recommendations in the light of public safety and not be influenced by the emotive scaremongering being generated from some quarters as directed by their political masters.

Again thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

