

To whom it may concern,

My name is Bruce Notman, I am a Station Officer with the MFB, currently stationed at St Albans on C platoon.

I thank you for taking the time to read my submission as I know you are busy and have an important decision to make in regards to the future of all the Victorian fire services.

I joined the MFB in 1989 and I can remember people back then talking about how we will all become one service, well 27 years later hopefully this will finally come true. I am a fan of volunteers and I have also been a volunteer myself within the local Melton community, although through sport and not the CFA but I consider any volunteer work highly valuable to the community and well appreciated.

I would like to offer some experience that I have encountered as a Station Officer at a Station that regularly turns out with CFA stations.

I was stationed at Deer Park in April 2016 and we received a call for a burn off out of control in Truganina, Pumper 43, Water Tanker 43, Caroline Springs pumper and tanker also turned out, we all turned out, arrived on scene, investigated the situation and returned to station. The volunteer tanker from Truganina never responded. Now there could be many reasons for this, they may have been attending another call, truck out of commission, area not covered within their boundary or that it was a public holiday and the men and women had other things to do- just to name a few but all of these reasons are irrelevant as the main issue is that Deer Park and Caroline were unmanned for approximately half an hour. Now you may think that it's only half an hour but if you were a resident in that area and went into cardiac arrest then half an hour could be a life time.

Another call I attended happened on Monday 3rd of July 2017, it was a call for a car accident on Taylors road Taylor's Hill. We arrived on scene to find that because there was 2 MFB and 2 CFA trucks on scene, we were causing more of an issue than car accident, due to the amount of road space we took up and the stress we put on the general public while driving with lights and sirens on through heavy traffic, potentially impacting on public safety unnecessarily as a result. I know that we always go to calls in this manner but 4 trucks are not needed at a car accident, if we were one service then only 2 trucks would be required and only half of the issues would be encountered by the public.

I feel that as an officer at a bordering station I see firsthand the benefits to the public that one service would provide. Currently under the system we have, if there is a call

within the CFA area that borders the MFB, 2 MFB stations need to respond to aid the response, this is on top of the CFA career staff (normally 1 pumper) and any CFA volunteers that respond. This causes issues with coverage within our own areas and also the amount of vehicles responding and arriving on scene. We (MFB) need to attend as support because we can never be certain how many Volunteers will attend and when they do, what their capabilities will include, ie: if BA trained as an example.

We currently have examples that show if we became 1 service that the public win through savings in government spending, for example, VEMTEC the new training facility at Craigieburn and the suppling of new uniforms to name a couple.

A stream lined fire service would save the community money, I have listed some examples below,

- Vehicle purchases can be renegotiated as more vehicles could be supplied at once
- Vehicle maintenance could be done at on location reducing the number of repair centres
- All equipment could be unified
- Purchasing of uniforms
- Purchasing of office and station supplies

I feel that creating 1 career fire service is the only way to and should have happened a long time ago.

The volunteers do a fantastic job protecting our community, but creating 1 career fire service will not change their role in the community, we will always need them and always appreciate them, but this shouldn't be about that issue, this should be about what's best for the community, can we do our job safer, can we offer a better service, can we make the roads safer when responding to calls, can we provide more EMR, can we reduce costs on the public purse. The answer is yes to all of these if we have 1 career fire service.

The CFA still use an archaic communications system that could easily be updated to the digital system provided by the MFB, another cost saving venture. Surely the cost to the public must be considered one of the main reasons the decision to have 1 fire service is needed.

The CFA and the MFB have totally different operating procedures to obtain the same outcome, weird but true, we need to take the best of both and create a more streamlined system, whether it be fire ground operations, communications, training, promotion etc. by creating 1 career fire service this can be achieved quite quickly,

which will enable combined fire ground operations to be better understood by all and making processes run smoother. We won't need to worry about who can operate what piece of equipment as we will all have the same skills, we will understand word backs and other radio communications as we will use the same radio language.

I have only highlighted a few issues but I feel that you can see the importance of moving forward. Yes we all dislike change but when the change is obvious then it can only be for the better.

I feel that on a personal note, you need to understand the impact this situation is having on the members of the CFA career staff and the MFB employees, I have spoken with a lot of people from both services over the last 12 to 18 months as my role as a Station Office. People have confided in me the stresses they have and are suffering at home and in public due to this issue going on for so long, I know myself, that it has taken its toll on me, having many arguments/discussions with family, friends and members of the public who are constantly asking what is happening. The media have also been very hurtful to career staff by attacking us through mainly printed articles. As this can be self-serving and bias, the public may only receive one side of a story. 1 fire service will bring this to an end.

Simply put, 1 fire service for career firefighters is needed, it is vital to bring harmony and unity back into our emergency service. I feel that it is imperative that it happens now, while we have this opportunity or we will still be having this conversation in another 30 years.

Thank you for your time.

Bruce Notman – MFB Station Officer

