

My name is Mathew Boore; I'm a level 3 Professional Fire fighter with the CFA stationed at Ballarat City Fire Station. I'd like to take this opportunity to submit my opinion about the current fire services and the proposed Fire Services Reform, and in particular, why I support the proposed reforms.

In my opinion, the proposed reforms can only be seen as a good thing; the large regional centres of Victoria (such as Ballarat) need a modern urban fire service. The current system is broken, out-dated and is not working, these reforms are long overdue. The Ballarat area is only going to increase in size, the fire service is currently set up to deal with Ballarat population and size of 50 years ago. This needs to change, for the safety of the community and us as Fire fighters, these reforms will provide that.

I've been to numerous motor vehicle accidents since joining the CFA, they are often horrific. I recall one particular incident in which a 75 year old male had a head on collision with a large truck. Ballarat City pumper 1 arrived on scene at the same time as the first ambulance. The male driver was injured, but thankfully not time critical. We carry forcible entry gear on the appliance, we could have utilized this to remove the patient from the vehicle but were unable to because in Ballarat this responsibility is that of Ballarat Volunteer Brigade who have a rescue vehicle. The volunteers have private lives, they work, holiday and have family events so are unable to always get out the door and when they do it is often a delayed response, possibly due to traffic getting to the station, or waiting for qualified crew to arrive. In this particular incident the Ballarat Rescue arrived on scene some 15 minutes after we had arrived. Under the proposed reforms and EBA we as staff would have been trained and able to conduct the patient removal from the vehicle and the paramedics could have had the patient in the ambulance and halfway back to the hospital, instead we had to ensure the scene was safe and await the arrival of the Volunteer appliance.

I can't see how these reforms will be destructive for Volunteers, for over 1200 brigades nothing changes. For the remaining 35 integrated brigades they have options, continue to Volunteer out of the station they are currently at or if they would like they can transfer over to a neighbouring brigade. That is not destroying the CFA.

Prior to joining the CFA as a Professional Fire Fighter I served as a volunteer for 6 years at Ocean Grove, I met some great people in that time, some of whom I'm still regularly in contact with and who still continue to serve as volunteers. I recently asked their opinion on the proposed reforms, every piece of feedback I received was overwhelmingly in support of the reforms, and they all believed it could only be seen as a good thing for the community. Bear in mind these are people who volunteer at an integrated station so the reforms will have some effect on them, but the fact they were so in support of it is an overwhelming reinforcement that the reforms need to happen.

In my time working for the CFA, I have known nothing but to be under a cloud of uncertainty, an expired EBA, constant attacks from the Liberal Party, both state and national, the VFBV, and persistent lies and bullying in the media. This has begun to take an effect on not only myself but my colleagues, family and friends. This industrial dispute needs to end, moral on station is low, Staff with over 30 years' experience are saying it's the lowest they can ever remember. It's not often you hear of a fire fighter leaving the job after a couple of years' service, majority serve the community for 20 or 30 years. But in my opinion if this dispute doesn't end soon or the long overdue reforms do not move ahead people will really start to consider if this is the job for them moving forward.