

Fire Services Select Reform Bill

Submission

Submission by:

Andrew Bernard Hill



To the Fire Services Reform Committee members,

My name is Andrew Hill and I am a Station Officer of 17 years' service with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Melbourne, currently stationed at Hawthorn Fire Station on D Platoon.

My role in the MFB is to attend to the day to day running of the fire station and respond to fire calls in and around the metropolitan fire district.

My current qualifications are as follows:

Cert IV in fire fighting operations / BA Procedures

Cert VI TAE workplace trainer and assessor

Qualified Emergency Medical Responder

Qualified High Angle Rescue Technician

Qualified CAT 2 Urban Search and Rescue Technician

Qualified Trench Rescue Technician

Qualified Heavy Rescue Operator (Road Accident, Industrial accident etc.)

Qualified Mk3, Mk4, Mk5 Pump operator

Qualified Teleboom Operator

Recruit Training Instructor

I have lived in this area my entire life and it has become very heavily urbanised over this time. Oakleigh South is covered by a full time fire service that is invaluable to this and surrounding communities. The area currently has 2 Major hospitals in the area being Monash Medical Centre and Children's Hospital and also Moorabbin Monash Hospital. There are numerous Aged care facilities dotted around the area and we also border an industrial estate in Moorabbin. We have Chadstone Shopping Centre and Westfield Southland in very close proximity. There is a major freeway and large arterial roads also in the area that is utilised by thousands of commuters every day and night.

Any incidents that may occur at any of the above mentioned facilities require nothing less than a timely response by personnel trained to deal with the type of incidents that can involve large numbers of the public. This is vital to the safety of the community. With a full time fire service, response will be within 90 seconds from fire call to turnout.

One example of a Fire call I had with CFA was into the Pakenham area for a Trench rescue of a plumber.

The CFA did not have enough trained personnel on scene to cope with the incident so I was responded as the initial response/ expert from the MFB.

I responded from Malvern Fire Station to Pakenham with our Heavy rescue responding from Richmond Fire Station with Trench Rescue technicians on board.

The plumber had been trapped for around 1 hour before the MFB were called.

Had there been trained personnel on scene, then our response would have been much earlier.

Luckily for the plumber, with MFB and Full Time CFA Fire fighters trained in Trench rescue, we were able to get him out a couple of hours later.

As an Officer I have responded into CFA areas on a number of occasions. There have been times when the CFA career staff has been at other fire calls and there has been no second CFA appliance attend leaving my crew as the only ones on scene.

I questioned these failures to respond on our return, only to be told that crews were unavailable.

I know that with a full time fire service the community can expect a response when in need instead of just hoping that a response might happen if there are enough available crew in the volunteer areas.

Heavily urbanised areas should not have to rely on the good will of the volunteers in their time of need; they should be demanding a response from full time service.

The current industrial dispute that has been going on now for some years has been very detrimental to the health and well-being, and morale to both career and volunteer fire fighters.

Never in my time as a fire fighter have I felt so attacked for what I do.

The amount of untruths being published in the media and pushed so blatantly by the Liberal government has left me trying to defend myself to the general public whose only source of information is through the media.

Yes I did attend the Black Saturday fires of 2009, but I don't feel the need to tell the world that. The general public don't believe that the MFB are trained in bushfire response.

They also don't really know that we are Emergency Medical First Responders either.

The MFB have launched attack after attack on its career fire fighters and corporate and technical staff for years now with little regard for the impact that it is having on the well-being of the staff.

They fail to come out in the media and dispel the untruths that the Liberal Party and media are peddling.

The MFB management have let its staff down greatly in this respect.

In closing, I see the proposed fire service reforms as a positive, and, the only way forward for the current fire services of Victoria to provide the best possible fire coverage to the community

It's time for a long needed improvement to the system that has well outlasted it's used by date.

As Melbourne and the outer areas have changed so dramatically over the last few decades, the current fire services model has failed to change with it.

It's time to embrace the change and not oppress it as it has been in the past.

Yours Sincerely

Station Officer
Andrew Hill