

Steven Morgan

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Monday 3rd July 2017

Assistant Clerk Committees
Department of the Legislative Council
Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
Melbourne VIC 3002
LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Fire Service Bill Select Committee Members,

Let me first introduce myself.

My name is Leading Firefighter Steve Morgan currently based at Traralgon fire station. I have now been a career firefighter for seven years and before that I was a volunteer firefighter for two years. In that seven years as a career firefighter I have been in an industrial dispute for 4 of them.

I have been attacked on the street called scum, attacked on social media by the misinformed, called a thug, terrorist and a parasite on the Victorian community. I just want you to put yourself in my shoes for a second. Imagine putting on a uniform for your dream job, being as proud as punch getting into work only to find out that another article has come out into the paper saying that you mean nothing, you're lazy and you're only in it for the money.

I have been attacked on the fire ground twice by volunteers who wanted to get physically violent with me (matter was dealt with and pleased to say these people are no longer in the service). Staff members are constantly reminded to stay professional and remain above it. The mental abuse and toll on the staff members is downright disgraceful in this day and age and to be honest most of it could be classified as bullying and harassment. Unfortunately for us we are a very small group and most of the time are told to suck it up. Imagine getting attacked flat out without a right of reply.

This could have all been solved. This didn't need to happen. The attacks didn't need to go ahead. Yet they have and the line has been drawn in the sand. How do I stand side by side with some volunteers who want nothing to do with me and don't respect my work place and want to do everything to destroy it? Don't get me wrong some of my closest friends are volunteers and I'm not here to try and discredit them or devalue their job I'm just stating facts and giving you my opinion.

I spoke to a very good friend of mine the other day (who is a volunteer captain) about it all and he had a very good way of looking at this. He stated the following "I'm not getting involved with this because my prime goal is to serve the community". What a fantastic way of looking at it. He went on to say "I couldn't imagine an apprentice walking in to my workplace doing two weeks work experience and then having a say on my conditions and workplace. I would be very angry and upset." Now call me silly but again a common sense approach to what is going on. Two weeks for minimum skills and then away you go.

Enough about the mental abuse and the attacks on my workplace let's move on to what's best for the community.

Let's look at the facts. In a staffed area of country Victoria or Melbourne you have a guaranteed fire truck with a response time of 90 seconds. That means that most of the time the truck will arrive in it's primary response area within about 8 mins. This gives the best chance for people to survive and the damage to be kept to the room of origin. That could be just the bedroom damaged. Yes there will still be damage, however you may still be able to use the house or at least salvage your family photos off the wall in the lounge room.

Take a full volunteer area. Response time could be up to 10 mins plus travel time of 8 mins. Now I'm no rocket scientist but you could almost guarantee more damage to the house. Most of the time when I have seen these effects the house is in a black, charred heap on the ground.

Now can I ask you this? Why is it that a \$500,000 house in Melbourne CBD is protected any different to a home in some parts of Pakenham? Yes that's right, we have a staffed station there but because someone's ego gets in the way the staff are not allowed to service that area.

Now this will be one of the toughest questions you will ever have to answer. If it was your family trapped, screaming and suffering horrific burns in the back room of a house, would you not want the quickest, most reliable brigade to respond? Would you not want them to have the right amount of people there to save every one of your family members? I know I would!!!

These fire service reforms are not just a want but an essential expansion to the service to aid in giving the best possible service to the community. At the end of the day my job, my only job is to protect life and property to the best of my ability.

I urge you to recommend this reform and give me the best opportunity to save you or your family's life (I hope I never have too).

Thank you for your time.

Steve Morgan

Leading firefighter

Traralgon Fire Station

