

## **SUBMISSION TO FIRE SERVICES BILL SELECT COMMITTEE 2017**

Since becoming an MFB firefighter in 1990 it has been apparent that a reform was required to standardise the fire cover throughout the urban areas of Melbourne. Colleagues have always believed that this was unlikely because “no Victorian government would have the courage to make the changes”. It seems that the opportunity now exists to make that courageous decision.

As a Senior Station Officer in Richmond I can see that providing full time career firefighters throughout the urban areas of Melbourne the community will benefit from,

- Improved response times making it more likely to contain the fire to a room of origin or perform rescue of people involved where necessary. As we know, a house with a room full of modern materials will go from a small fire to flashover in minutes. This same escalation of fire would take twenty minutes in the 1950's when the current fire boundaries and arrangements were established.
- Officers that can make better informed operational decisions because they know each firefighters capabilities and training levels.
- Emergency Medical Response to all of the community served by the career firefighters - In my current role we respond to help to preserve the lives of people more often than we attend fires.
- Consistent levels of response both day and night.

I have a brother that lives in a semi-rural area and recently became a CFA volunteer. He has discussed the challenges and issues experienced by volunteer firefighters. Whilst he is committed to supporting an essential service in his community and enjoys the social aspects of membership, he is unable to respond during business hours. He finds the training requirements to reach a level where he can perform basic functions such as wearing Breathing Apparatus onerous and is unlikely to reach that level for several years. There are many volunteer firefighters within his brigade that are in a similar position.

Based on his experience he agrees that all urban areas of Victoria should be served by career firefighters. This will ensure that the benefits listed above will be achieved and volunteer firefighters in urban areas will not be called upon as often and those with standard levels of training will remain available for bushfires and other major events.

Please take the decision to reform the current fire service arrangements in Victorian urban areas. Some volunteers that have generously provided this service in the past will miss their role as initial responders but more importantly there will be greater benefits to the community in the saving of life and property.

It is also important to look after those that are committed to looking after their community throughout their careers. Please support the Presumptive Legislation so that we can continue in our work, confident that if we get sick due to substances that we are exposed to we will be looked after.

Chris Schey

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