

7th July 2017



The Secretariat
Fire Services Bill Select Committee

By email:

Email Address:



I have been a CFA for over 35 years which until recently the vast majority has been in a CFA integrated brigade in outer Melbourne, I am currently a member of a District HQ Brigade as my interest is currently in the ICC/DCC area.

D: underlying policy rational

Notwithstanding the issue of lack of consultation and who should have spoken to whom as this is just playing politics and not addressing the issue as major reform is always difficult. I broadly support the policy position. Until recently I have had over 30 years in a CFA integrated fire station in an outer urban part of Melbourne and especially during the last 10 years I have seen significant urban growth and changes to risk profile. Managing and delivering an operational response from these brigades has become significantly more challenging and complex.

This has placed more pressure on volunteers to maintain training, and operational response given that vast number of volunteers in these areas work outside their response area. I am not suggesting volunteers to not have skill base however, to maintain them at the required level becomes increasingly difficult.

In my view, the CFA staff are primarily there for an urban capability and to combine with the MFB is probably a reasonable solution. This will offer greater operational commonality and standards and provide flexibility of staff and equipment movements. I think it was the 2009 Fire Services Review reflected on the similar risks between the MFB and CFA integrated stations. This is reasonable point that the risk profile between CFA Patterson River and MFB Mentone is much the same.

The policy position to move the CFA back to a fully volunteer organisation in the long term might be for the benefit of the CFA. This would release brigades especially integrated brigades from the impact of industrial, staff issues, inter-personal matters and complex management structures that have to satisfy two very different cultures (i.e. staff and volunteers).

There may be some short pain especially for the CFA, however getting back to a community based fire and emergency service may be best in the long run

We should not forget from what I am understand of the legislation most brigades in rural and Regional Victoria these changes will have minor or little impact.

My biggest concern and challenge is the impact and management of the former CFA integrated fire which effectively two fire services in one fire station, at this stage there appears to very little thought given to all the practical issues in this area other than broad policy position.

B: Impact on Volunteers

As stated early my concern is about impact on volunteers currently in CFA integrated stations in urban area of Melbourne not those as much in Regional Victoria. I believe there is a greater risk of volunteers leaving the CFA which will impact both the urban and rural surge capacity. Also, what will be effect upon neighbouring CFA brigades to FRV brigades: -

- May be it is time for those CFA Brigades in Districts 8,13& 14 to consider some other membership model for members who want to stay volunteers who are from integrated brigades but do not want to share a fire station with FSV, for example does the CFA group system take up a role in this area.
- What is the operational response areas, and how does that effect volunteers that share a fire station, and maintain those skills required.
- Will then be an impact on training for volunteers in urban firefighting as I believe currently within the CFA it has a 9-5 Monday -Friday mind set towards training.
- Impact of volunteers on interface CFA brigades if FRV brigades can response in their area quicker how does that interface work.
- How does at CFA District structure look in the future especially in CFA District 8 who currently have several CFA integrated brigades which will go across to FRV.

Summary

I generally support the concept as proposed by the Government to achieve a more effective fire service and reform the complex and often painful industrial issues that impact on CFA volunteers, however I do have concerns about the detailed implementation especially around volunteer CFA brigades in combined fire stations; how CFA Districts will be reconfigured that currently have integrated fire stations and potential impact from FRV fire stations on neighbouring CFA brigades.

As part of this process I think there is a need to review how surge capacity is managed within the CFA in the outer metro area, maybe a greater role for the District or Groups to ensure skills and experience is not lost to the fire service.

Some times as volunteers we often get caught in our own world, and we should never forget we are here to provide a volunteer professional fire and emergency response to our community and collectively the State of Victoria as a whole

My comments are of a personnel nature and do not reflect any formal view of my brigade or any other part of the CFA.

I only too pleased to discuss these concerns and issues further.

Yours sincerely
Phillip Jeeves

