

**Prue Purdey**

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**From:** Tony Franklin [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 5 July 2017 4:51 PM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Fire Services Review - Victoria

Fire Services Review Committee.

Having been a Professional firefighter with the MFB for a number of years I have always thought there is nothing to be gained with the political side of the organization. I feel right now is the time to change and to speak up.

The current opportunity that has been presented in the form of, Fire Rescue Victoria, will benefit all Victorians. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity for sensible and significant changes that will benefit all Victorians and those who travel to this beautiful state. It is progress that I wouldn't have thought possible in my lifetime as 2 organizations that should be working hand in hand were at loggerheads. It is time for constructive steps to be taken to ensure improvements in the Fire Services.

It defies logic to have a volunteer organization dictating the outcomes of professional service providers. This would not be allowed in any other profession be it Police, Electrician, Teacher, Medicine, Armed forces or Politician.

Yet we have let the true fire volunteer who serves the community be confused with the the political arm of the volunteer firefighter.

Everyone understands the importance of volunteers in Australia and the benefits they provide in supporting the community but can we expect them to have the same skills as professionals. If those making the decisions think that is possible then they have little or no understanding of the skills required for firefighters.

So let's look at what differentiates professional and volunteer firefighters.

#### Professionals

- On scene within 7.7 minutes 90% of the time.  
(If that occurs fire contained to room of origin leading to better outcomes for owners/occupiers and insurance companies.)
  - Personnel trained in fire behavior, how to read specific signs of extreme fire behavior and how firefighters can impact these events through a lack of knowledge and understanding. This is completed with the study of live fire behaviour in fire cells.
  - All personnel Breathing Apparatus trained for internal firefighting and rescue.
  - Wildfire training.
  - Emergency Medical Response - trained medical personnel to serve the community and assist AV.
  - Road Accident Rescue and Heavy Rescue.
  - High Angle Rescue.
  - Marine Response.
  - Trench Rescue.
  - Urban Search and Rescue.
  - Engage with the community at many events to educate and inform.
- The list continues, the skills are maintained and recorded to ensure currency.

## Volunteer

- Serves the community.
- Has the best intentions but lacking in knowledge and skills.
- Knowledge based on experience at fires. A flawed approach as without knowledge you don't know what you don't know. And how many fires are they attending? What skills do they actually have?
- Few trained personnel, ie: Breathing Apparatus - few are trained, those that are trained are not necessarily trained for internal firefighting and to top it off even if they have 1 fully trained firefighter available they require 2 for firefighting as per the CFA standard orders. (For actual understanding of skills gap refer to recent fire in Sale where firefighters were injured.)
- May attend for skills maintenance.
- On call - Response times cannot meet requirements often booking on scene in personal vehicle without supporting crews or appliances to address events.
- Critical senior appointments not made on skills.

Knowledge and Training are key elements of understanding the skill set required by firefighters. This is highlighted when looking at fire and fire behaviour and how our actions directly impact the outcomes of these events.

Let's look at the professional firefighters knowledge of hydrocarbons and how they behave when affected by heat.

- They are fast and efficient when burning and produce large quantities of pyrolysis (unburnt fuel from the combustion process), these hydrocarbons are located in every house, in all our furniture and are having significant impacts on fire development.
- Then we look at products of combustion, and I will keep this focused on smoke and heat. When these hydrocarbons burn they have a high Heat Release Rate, meaning they produce large quantities of heat and smoke. That heat and smoke behavior directly influences firefighting strategies and tactics. These are useless without the underpinning knowledge of a professional firefighter.

The most significant changes to fire services to date has been the appointment of Mr Craig Lapsley - Emergency Management Commissioner of Victoria who has had a profound effect on both the CFA and MFB. To leave these organizations in their current form is to hold onto past so called glories without understanding the future demands. There are more people living in Victoria, the higher density living areas are expanding as we speak. These are putting pressure on all services and these services need to improve their delivery. Can we as a community expect volunteers to fill the gaps? Do we hold onto a model developed 50 years ago or do we look to improve?

There is no doubt that volunteers have been and will remain important to the community. What they have achieved and the service they provide cannot be disrespected. They need professional support to give them the skills and confidence to improve.

With all Victorians contributing to the fire services through the fire levy it is important that we improve the service that is delivered. The opportunity to have significant improvements within the sector which will directly benefit the community is one that should not be passed up. Please do not let the few naysayers prevent positive change.

Regards

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