

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a firefighter with the M.F.B. and have been for the past 32 years. During this time I have witnessed many changes to the Brigade, all to varying degrees of impact to firefighters and the public. Some examples were the introduction of women and multiple new uniforms, vehicles and equipment as improvements to technology advanced.

All these changes were embraced by the firefighters of the day as most meant improved safety and or efficiency in the way we went about providing our service to the public.

We all know change is inevitable in all walks of life and the Fire Services are not immune, nor should they be, to levels of change that will bring them into line with expectations of the public it serves and current practices engaged around the world.

As Melbourne has experienced unprecedented growth over the last 10 years it stands to reason that the entire infrastructure also needs to expand to accommodate such growth. Parts of that infrastructure are the Fire Services.

Below I outline the points that should be considered:

- Population density and special risk factors must be the guide as to the level of response required
- Every suburban neighbourhood should be serviced by the same level of professionally trained firefighters
- All rate-paying households are paying the same fire service levy but many are getting a less than acceptable response. i.e. The response times of volunteer fire services cannot match those of the full time professionally manned stations. (Based on the C.F.A.'s own response times)
- While we work side by side with our C.F.A. colleagues, much of our equipment and procedures are different which can create difficulties in already difficult situations
- The Fire service boundaries have not changed for 50 something years yet Metropolitan Melbourne has increased in size exponentially
- I have, unfortunately, experienced personalities taking precedence over the ability to get on with the job at hand. i.e. An officer from the south side of Mordialloc Creek refusing assistance from the closest M.F.B. station thus reducing a standard two appliance turnout to a single appliance with no back up and changing the turnout assignment rule to reflect this as a permanent situation.

I also believe the Presumptive Legislation must be passed as a part of this Bill.

As a survivor of throat cancer in 2011 it was a very anxious and stressful time for my family and myself and was also a tremendous burden to my family as my wife had just opened a retail outlet and we could not afford staff to run it so she could care for me.

The nature of cancers slow growth process meant I could easily have contracted this at a fire many years prior, but which one. I started my career at Windsor Fire Station in 1984, which was then considered the busiest station in the job. Numerous fires meant numerous exposures to gaseous chemicals as a result of the combustion of synthetic materials used in all homes, businesses and vehicles.

In conclusion, as a member of the public I appreciate and value the work done by the volunteer brigades around Melbourne, we would indeed be worse off without them, but progress impacts on all of us.

We have all seen the sickening events occur in Europe and England and even here in Melbourne in recent times. These events demand a speedy and timely response to the scene by all emergency services. As the M.F.B. also has First Responder capabilities it is imperative that these skills are afforded to as many of the communities of Victoria as possible.

If the safety of the public is our greatest priority then the Fire Services must move into the twenty first century. This legislation will allow the Fire Services to provide the public and business the best possible protection.

Tim Berger