

"O'CONNOR, Grant"

06/07/2017 04:58 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF  
cc  
bcc  
Subject FW: Fire Service Reform.

Grant O'Connor



My name is Grant O'Connor,  
I have been a Firefighter with the MFB, for 29 years.  
I am currently the Acting Senior Station at Richmond Fire Station.

I am a qualified EMR Technician,  
Hazmat Technician,  
Long Duration Breathing Apparatus Specialist,  
I hold a Certificate iv in Training and Assessing and I am a Qualified Coxswain, Marine  
Fire-fighter and Officer in Charge of the MFB's Fireboat fleet on "A" Platoon.

I am writing to you, the Select Committee, to express my absolute support for Fire  
Service Reform in Victoria.

Victoria's fire boundaries, have not changed significantly in over 60 years.  
While our population has grown and continues to grow at an exponential rate. Outer  
suburbs of Melbourne, which for decades were considered to be in the country, now  
have population density which exceeds some inner city suburbs.  
Regional cities, such as Bendigo, Ballarat and Mildura have huge residential  
populations and critical infrastructure worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Increased population density, brings with it a corresponding increase in emergency  
responses from all emergency services, particularly fire services.  
In years gone by, an exclusively volunteer based fire service, has been sufficient to deal  
with the relatively small number of call outs received in outer Melbourne and regional  
Victorian suburbs.  
As these populations have grown however, the capacity of the dedicated volunteers of  
the CFA, to deal with the increased volume of calls, has not.  
This is not an indictment on the volunteers themselves, rather it is an indictment on an  
out-dated fire service delivery model.

As Melbourne continues its rapid growth, fewer and fewer people continue to work in the suburb in which they live. As people generally volunteer in the suburb they live in, it is extremely difficult for volunteers to be available during business hours.

This is a big part of the reason that many volunteer brigades, struggle to attract volunteers and many more struggle to provide an adequate emergency response, especially Monday to Friday during business hours.

Statistics reveal that incidences of volunteer stations experiencing delayed response times or often failing to respond at all, are quite common and increasing.

Volunteers are indeed the backbone of fire services in rural Victoria, where the volume of calls per year, could not possibly justify the expense of a permanent, professional fire service. It is during the summer months, when these selfless brigades are most valuable, providing surge capacity during bushfire incidents.

Densely populated areas however, require a vastly different response. Accepted world's best practice is to have an appliance on scene in 7.8 minutes and to have a second appliance arriving soon after, with all crews, fully qualified in firefighting and breathing apparatus operation. This is essential, when fighting a structure fire and conducting an internal search. Not only to provide an effective response for the community, but also to ensure the safety of all firefighters.

It is not achievable in a volunteer system.

Residents living in regional areas, pay the same fire services levy, as people living Metropolitan Melbourne, but currently they do not receive the same level of service. Both in fire suppression and Emergency Medical Response, which all MFB firefighters are currently trained in, as are most CFA professionals. It is important to remember, that currently, approximately 90% of all firecalls in Victoria, are responded to by career firefighters.

I appreciate that some volunteers are territorial and want to "protect their patch" however the overriding consideration is and must always be providing a quick, reliable and effective emergency response. There is simply no room for parochialism.


Volunteers in rural locations, will not be disadvantaged in any way, by the creation of Fire Rescue Victoria, in fact they will receive a huge increase to their budget and they will have the autonomy that many of them have long desired.

Volunteers at integrated stations will play the same role that they always have.

Ladies and gentlemen, you have a unique opportunity to make a genuine contribution to the people of Victoria, by finally giving them the modern, 21<sup>st</sup> century fire service, they desperately need and deserve.

I implore you to recommend this critical reform, you may never have another chance.

**Acting Senior Station Officer Grant O'Connor | A Platoon**  
**Richmond Fire Station | Central District | North West Metro Region**  
**Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board**  
 55 Church St Richmond VIC 3121



*The MFB is committed to minimising its impact on the environment.  
Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.*

\*\*\*\*\*

**WARNING**

*This email and any attachment may contain confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient you are not authorised to copy or disclose all or any part of it without the prior written consent of the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board.*

\*\*\*\*\*