

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
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Subject To The Assistant Clerk

Committees.docx

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To The Assistant Clerk Committees,

Dear Sir / madam

I am a full time employed firefighter with the MFB and I have been so for 28 years where I have worked in both the centre of Melbourne and on the fringes of Melbourne in the Western suburbs. I currently hold the rank of Leading Firefighter within this organisation. While I work in Melbourne I live in country Victoria in the township of Woodend.

In making this submission to you I must first make one issue clear, I am not an advocate for change for changes sake. However, if I see a need for change I will always weigh up a situation and if I agree I will strive to make all necessary improvements and changes to bring about an improvement.it is for this very reason I now submit this submission.

The fire district boundaries of the greater Melbourne area have had only minor changes over the past sixty years whereas the urban spread and population growth has been significant (Melbourne having one of the largest urban footprints per population of any city in the world). With the growth of Melbourne and modernisation of industry we are now confronted with an entirely different set of conditions and factors regarding firefighting and property protection than could ever have been imagined in the middle of last century. Vast urban centres have grown on what were once the outer parts of Melbourne with current populations in the hundreds of thousands.

In the year 2017 to expect a volunteer firefighting force to protect, train and respond in a timely manner to all calls for fire and emergency is outdated and I believe selfish of any government .We must ask why residents on one side of a street get a full time career firefighting response arriving in under 7.5 minutes and their neighbours across the street having to rely on a volunteer response of people giving of their spare time and their employers time who, no matter how dedicated can't possibly arrive in times to match those of full time staff (despite anecdotes to the contrary) As ridicules as that scenario sounds where I work that has and sometimes still does happen.

As above mentioned I live in country Victoria where we have a dedicated committed 100% volunteer fire brigade who are able to give of their time for training and responding to emergencies and don't seem to mind doing this and the times during the day when so many are at work, many in Melbourne like myself, if the residents of Woodend have to wait a little longer for a brigade response then that's what it is. In Metropolitan Melbourne in 2017 to expect some residents to wait excessive times in times of emergency is plainly wrong, all for the sake of a full time firefighting force which is already funded through the Fire Levy (one of the fairest funding strategies ever, User Pays).

The whole issue of dividing Victoria into two different fire services seems to have been hijacked by certain elements of the daily press for reasons I can't possibly fathom. Using fear to badger country Victorians and our states dedicated Volunteers, many who I have as friends to try to vilify the process of this fire service reform seems to smack of political self-interest, but what do I know. Just once I would like to see politicians see a reform that was good and made sense and will make a difference to people's lives just go ahead and agree and get on with it for the common good .I have witnessed untruths, falsehoods and plain lies published about issues concerning this reform and witnessed letters of contradiction pointing out the truth being blatantly ignored only to see the same lies republished again and again. I have witnessed the self-esteem of colleagues decline to the point of concern for their wellbeing and health due to the relentless attack by certain daily newspapers. It's got to the point where I can't believe what's on the front page of a certain daily newspaper now I'm doubting what's on the back page.

Apart of the reform put forward looks to deal with firefighter cancers in all of the state firefighters; full time and volunteer. Bravo. It's a proven fact the dangers of firefighting do increase the chance of getting certain cancers. The risks in country Victoria are no different to those in the centre of Melbourne. I believe that this reform will be seen in years to come as some of the most significant legislation to come out of State Parliament ever but again, what do I know.

I urge you to put aside political differences and go ahead and bring Victorian fire legislation into the 21st century. If I may borrow an old political slogan from way back IT'S TIME

Yours most sincerely
Ewen Redman
Email