



Tamara Manski

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07/07/2017 02:58 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Fire services submission

1 attachment



Fire Services submission.docx

Please find attached my submission regarding the fire services reform proposals.

Yours Sincerely,

Tamara Manski

Tamara Manski
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

July 6th, 2017

Assistant Clerk Committees
Department of the Legislative Council
Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE, VIC 3002

LCSC@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

Re: Fire Service Bill

As a spouse of a CFA career firefighter who has been in service as career staff for five years and a volunteer for twelve years, I wish to advise that I support the proposed fire services reforms wholeheartedly.

Firstly, I have witnessed firsthand the growing number of calls received within the highly populated growth corridor of my partners fire station at Caroline Springs. They receive close to one thousand calls per year at varying times of the day and night. Career staff are often reliant on the volunteers to turn out to ensure they have adequate numbers to tackle emergencies safely and without risk to members. Unfortunately, they are often without the numbers on the fire ground due to a lack of response from volunteer brigades. Naturally this would occur considering volunteers have paid employment, families, commitments and lives to lead. It would be unreasonable and unrealistic to assume they are available to turn out many times per day. This does, however lead to problems for these growing communities who are left unprotected when staffing numbers are not in attendance.

As you can imagine, it is worrying and concerning from a spouse's perspective wondering if your loved one will be safe working in the current model and conditions. Without adequate staffing and uniform training of those turning out to calls, it is distressing to consider the outcome for paid career staff and people within the community if these reforms do not occur swiftly.

There are many growth corridor stations such as Caroline Springs. These include: Melton, Sunbury, Craigieburn and Greenvale to name a few. I shudder to think what will happen one day if stations such as Epping, Werribee and Langwarrin (which are solely volunteer stations) continue to operate as they are now with such a growing population and urban spread. It will be impossible to meet with such demands of emergency responses which involve much more than merely fighting fires. Emergency responses can include fires, road accidents, industrial accidents, hazardous material

spills, responding to alarms and even Emergency Medical Response. Can we guarantee a response if we are relying solely on volunteers in highly populated areas?

As a home owner of an investment property in one of these growth corridor areas, I'm also concerned for the ability of the local brigade to provide adequate numbers on the fire ground in a timely manner. As a tax payer who pays a fire service levy each year, I would be expecting a truck would turn out to my property within an appropriate time frame as a given not a luxury.

Residing now in a rural town in Victoria, I also understand and appreciate the work that volunteers do in smaller communities such as mine. In smaller towns such as Lancefield, emergency responses are fewer and less frequent throughout the day. In fact, they may only get one call a week in some instances. Naturally, these calls are often responded to in a timely and effective manner as it is probable and realistic for volunteers to attend such a manageable number of calls. There is a valuable place for volunteers, but not as a certainty in making up numbers in integrated stations with a high volume of call outs.

Over the past three years, I have watched my partners mental health and working relationships decline. The stress and worry over industrial disputes and wondering about the security of the job he worked so hard to get in to have a taken a toll. I've witnessed a bitterness and resentment towards volunteers creep in to his outlook (a role he had loved and valued himself for twelve years). Many integrated stations have gone from working in partnerships with career and volunteer staff to thinly veiled resentment and distrust. These are certainly not optimal working conditions for either parties particularly where lives, properties and the wellbeing of a community are involved. Changes must occur in order for harmonious working relations to be restored and for fire services to thrive.

I am not overly political but the media circus that has covered this campaign has managed to vilify career firefighters and in doing so overlook the key issues and concerns it raises to the detriment of Victoria's growth and sustainability. It is essentially about much more than the role of career fire fighters and the dedication of volunteers. It is about the safety, survival and future of Victorians and their state. Fire reforms must take place and include a separation of volunteers and career staff. More importantly, Victoria needs to move with the twenty first century and re-zone fire service boundaries to reflect the growing population. If we don't act quickly, lives may be lost and Victoria runs the risk of displaying number plates that read 'Victoria, the backwards State'.

Thank you for your time in reading and considering the opinions I have put forward.

Yours Sincerely,

Tamara Manski


