

"HUNTER, Terry"

05/07/2017 02:42 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
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Subject Select Committee on Fire Service Reform

5 attachments



Submission.docx



Turf War Mentality.pdf



AV MFB Joint media release.pdf



Monash University EMR evaluation.pdf



Springvale Bank Media Report.pdf

My submission is the word doc.

Attachments are the PDFs.

Name: Terence James Hunter

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Thankyou

Terry

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Dear Committee members,

My name is Terry Hunter.

I am a highly experienced and qualified senior MFB officer with national and international experience.

I have long experience of working with the CFA across many subject areas and operationally in my career.

My judgment, given that experience, is that the benefits of the bill are substantial for Victorians now and especially the future.

Impact on fire service delivery

I see that existing service delivery performance will remain as a base and we would see improvements under the proposed FRV. An FRV would provide consistency and reliability of service to urban areas by career firefighters on top of current arrangements.

Current arrangements see volunteers responding in accordance with daytime, night time, weekend and hot day availability tables arranged by individual Brigades that reflect the reality that volunteers availability in the 35 career station areas is necessarily variable as a result of family and work demands.

A recent terrible example of the impact of this lack of certainty is the daytime petrol container arson attack at the Commonwealth Bank in Springvale.

The current variable system resulted in just one career truck from Springvale working by themselves for an unfortunately long period where multiple people were trapped inside a burning building.

This happened despite a very close MFB appliance being available immediately in Clayton.

It was extremely lucky that people in the bank were not more seriously injured or killed.

The volunteer brigade despatched at the time of the call was unable to respond.

After the unfortunate delay this entailed, Dandenong CFA was then responded by a confusing system rather than the closer Clayton.



Bank fire: Dozens injured, two critical, after man allegedly sets fire to Springvale CBA

Updated Sat 19 Nov 2016, 3:26pm

Witnesses rushed to the aid of dozens of people after a 21-year-old man allegedly set fire to a Commonwealth Bank in Melbourne's south-east on Friday, leaving two people in a critical condition.

MAP: Springvale 3171



Witness Ashley Atkin-Fone said he ran into help after hearing a big explosion and seeing black smoke pouring out of the bank.

"This kid comes running out all burnt, screaming his head off ... blood everywhere ... I was shocked for a couple of the minutes," he said.

"I sprint across the road, go into Optus and get the fire extinguisher, I go inside get the fire out with this other kid and yeah, we just put the fire out.

"This worker come out the front out of nowhere, it's packed with smoke, so I said get him, go around the back see if you can get the fire exit open and get staff out the back.

"I got the fire out, I took four steps inside, I was shouting and shouting but I couldn't hear anyone, the alarms were going off, no-one was hearing me, and then all of a sudden a few minutes later the police come, and the fire engines and everyone else."

What we know:

- Police responded to reports of a fire at the bank about 11:30am
- Police say a man, 21, lit an accelerant, setting fire to the bank and himself
- The CFA is unsure what type of liquid accelerant was used
- The alleged attacker is under police guard in hospital
- 27 people were injured in the fire, two are critical
- Witness says he saw burnt child running from building screaming
- Police cannot confirm reports of an explosion before the fire

If the proposed change was in place at the time it would have seen the immediate 90 second response of a minimum of 2 career appliances, Springvale and Clayton, to such an incident and depending on assessment on scene the immediate response of additional career fire trucks that can respond in 90 seconds.

Many other incidents have happened in my career where the current system has proven to be uncertain and inconsistent for the community and firefighters operating in an urban built up area.

Hence FRV will improve service to the community on top of the existing variable and complex system operated in and around CFA career stations.

CFA focus must be volunteers

CFA with a rightly core focus on their 1200 volunteer brigades and Victorias bush fire risk, have not been able to be as engaged in the provision of the comprehensive services that are best practice in urban fire services by their career firefighters

I have seen very slow and/or very shallow engagement of CFA in various urban specialist services eg. Emergency Medical Response (EMR) , High Angle Rescue, Urban Search and Rescue, Hazardous materials, Contamination management, trench rescue, marine fire fighting, unmanned Arial Vehicles, scientific officers, structural fire safety building regulation activity, risk group safety programs, firefighter health and safety, etc.

This is understandable to a degree. It is the result of the necessary focus on the extreme bushfire risk Victoria faces.

If the FRV proposal is supported, all career stations would operate to common standards, training, resources and expectations.

CFA could then be better focused on their volunteers.

Emergency Medical Response Service

One of my most significant disappointments with the current arrangements is that it has taken CFA over 15 years to only start training career firefighters in Emergency Medical co-response services with Ambulance Victoria to cardiac events.

The Monash University evaluation demonstrates that MFB firefighters have been instrumental in the saving of 100s of Melburnians lives in the MFB since 2001.

CFA have only recently begun rolling out EMR services to urban communities in Victoria at CFA career stations and a handful of volunteer stations some **15 years** later.

Today, cities such as Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat, still do not have access to this life saving service until sometime in 2018. This is despite it coming to the Melbourne community in 2001.

The communities in each of those 35 cities have gone without a service that has saved lives elsewhere. I have no doubt such communities were not given an informed choice as to not receiving this service since 2001.

Hence, an FRV would offer a scope of career firefighter service that will not treat Victorians differently as the result of a line on a map.

Effect on volunteer engagement and participation in Fire Service Delivery.

I see no effect.

Many claims otherwise are emotive and scare laden resistance to change tactics.

Those responsible for such claims are irresponsible.

The Michalea Cash interview clearly illustrated the impact of such scare tactics including the fanciful, fear inducing claim that volunteers would have to watch houses burn down.

There will be no effect on 1200 CFA Brigades and volunteers at 35 career stations will be supported.

Volunteers will not be press ganged into becoming union members. There is no takeover whatever that means.

Career fire fighters are mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and tremendous people. They are not thugs.

Jon Faines recent interviews with some scare mongers very clearly illustrated the lack of rationality and self-interest versus community interest of a small but loud group of volunteers eg; a complaint was that career staff will get to an accident before the volunteers and that is a bad thing !

I have been pleased to hear over time the more rational views of the generally silent majority who do put community safety first.

I hear and read questions relating to detail and lack of consultation in different media. I believe much of this is camouflaged resistance and self-interest that demonstrates a very unfortunate lack of faith in the CFA Chief who would be closely involved in any transition.

I have every faith that the CFA Chief Steve Warrington and the volunteers on the CFA Board will support volunteers and ensure their needs are met in a transition of CFA career fire fighters to an FRV. The CFA Chief should be supported.

Resistance to change and self-interest appears to be well entrenched in parts of the CFA and is well described in the article “The turf war mentality” – EBA truth – Medium (attached) which I encourage committee members to read.

It offers the lessons of history and highlights **the extremely rare opportunity** for the current Upper House to put in place a more common sense set of arrangements that will support Victoria’s population into the future.

Short term and long term cost impact on Fire Service Provision.

I see potential short term transition and implementation costs more than balanced by efficiency savings over time through the joining of various costs within the current MFB and CFA.

Hence the bill will provide economic savings to Victoria that will compound into the future.

Underlying policy rationale.

The mission of the CFA must be country Victoria and bushfire. That is its forte and reason for being.

That mission is better and more safely achieved with a culture and organisation focused on just that.

It will continue to be supported by other agencies as needed.

Urban fire services have a different focus aligned with its very different risk environment.

The current historical arrangements have been overtaken by population and urban growth.

They reflect a territorial rather than risk based rationale to the provision of emergency services.

This territorial approach and its difficulties are well known in the fire service. It is not a sensible or contemporary approach.

Thank you for your consideration and I request you support the bill.

Thankyou

Terry Hunter AFSM, MIFireE



EBA Truth

Follow

Oct 5, 2016 · 24 min read

The Turf War Mentality

Underlying VFBV's obstruction of the CFA EBA is a mentality of petty turf warfare. It's a mindset that began 130 years ago. Then, as now, progress in the name of public safety faced opposition in the name of misplaced territorialism. With that in mind, this article is a bit of a change of pace. The historical context of this dispute is well worth taking a bit of time to delve into.

The 1880s Fire Service Turf War

The CFA and MFB as we know them were born of the Government's 1890 intervention in bitter turf war that had erupted into violence. This was the culmination of decades of tensions between the two categories of fire brigades in Melbourne: insurance brigades and volunteer brigades.

DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE.

SEMI-WEEKLY ABSTRACT.

The man called Lanky, who was seduced into a house of ill fame and "hocussed" last week now lies in a very dangerous state, having completely lost the use of his faculties. It is to be regretted that he cannot be persuaded to describe the street or the house in which he was so infamously treated. The police, however, are on the alert, and some clue it is expected will be obtained that may lead to the discovery and suppression of a whole troop of those bad houses and their infamous resorters.

The Directors of the Insurance Company have forwarded twenty pounds to the Police Magistrate to be divided by him among those who most distinguished themselves in saving the property of Dr. Clutterbuck from the fire, which took place on the 2nd instant. No one will contend that the Directors have not acted correctly so far as rewarding those by whose exertions much property was rescued; at the same time it is the general opinion that an insurance company organized so long as the Melbourne Assurance Company has been, is guilty of unpardonable neglect in not providing the institution with engines, &c.; indeed we much question whether such a company can be considered as being legally authorized to act, until it is provided with such necessary appliances to carry out the professed objects for which it was established. At Sydney the Assurance Company have several engines, and also keep several firemen in constant pay. The Directors of the Melbourne Assurance Company will find, we suspect, that the recurrence of one or two similar casualties will make them repent their ill-judged parsimony.

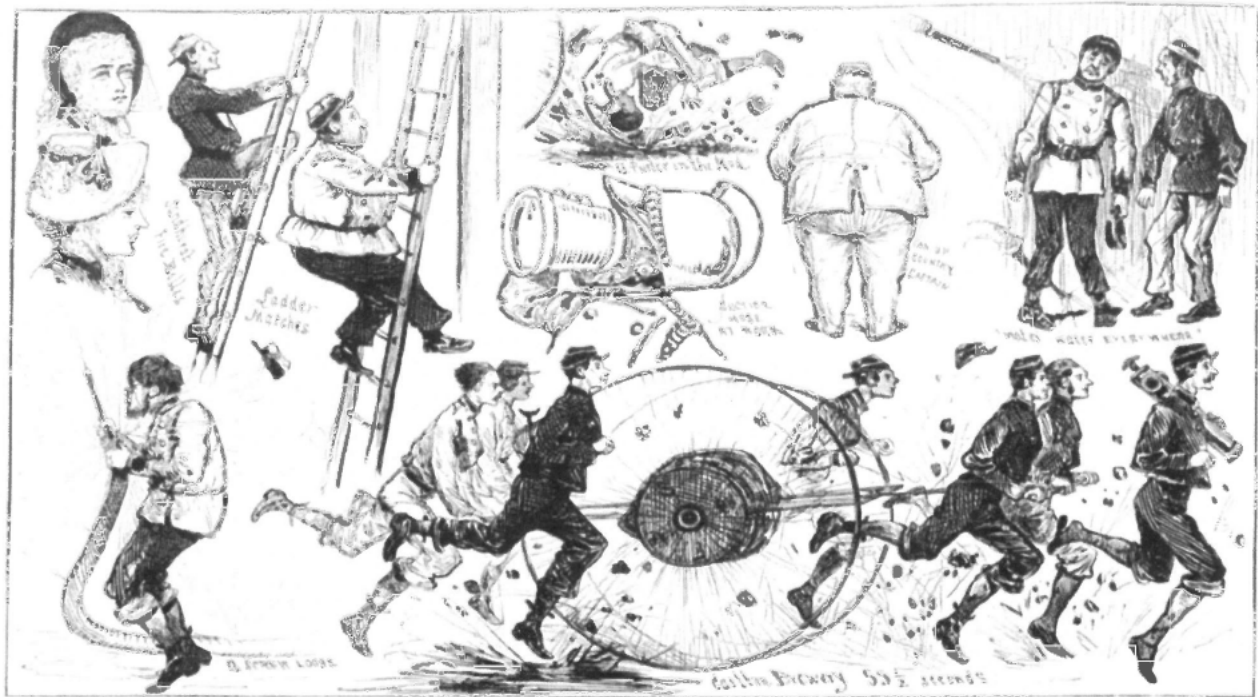
On Monday last serjeant Bennett, of the native police, with eight of his troops, brought in a man from the neighbourhood of Hinlochewe, on suspicion of being a runaway convict. He was taken before the police magistrate, when he admitted

Port Phillip Gazette 12/10/1842

The insurance brigades were crewed by paid firemen. These sprang up in the 1840s, after two catastrophic house fires in Melbourne prompted the *Port Philip Gazette* to point out that that not providing any means to put out fires represented “unpardonable neglect” on the part of the insurance company.

Volunteer brigades began to be formed in the 1850s, often at the urging of Americans who had come for the gold rush, and brought American firefighting traditions with them. At that time in the USA, volunteer firefighting was central to civic pride and social status (though, by the 1860s, fighting between rival volunteer brigades had prompted professionalisation of the fire services in most cities). Volunteer brigades were established in goldfields towns and Melbourne in the 1850s, and in farming towns over the coming decades.

By the 1870s volunteer fire brigades had started to become a political force. 1873 saw the first of what became annual torchlight parades and demonstrations, 500 country and city volunteers proudly parading through Melbourne following the template of similar displays in the USA. An enthusiastic crowd of over 5000 watched on, and numbers of participants grew year on year, although the press response was not always positive:



SKETCHES AT FIRE BRIGADES' DEMONSTRATION.

Source: Australasian Sketcher 5/6/1880

The inaugural demonstration was used as an opportunity to lobby the colonial Government to legislate for proper regulation and control of the fire services. The insurance brigade soon began to call for the same, but it would be 17 years before their combined efforts came to fruition.

During that period, tensions grew between insurance and volunteer brigades. After the 1884 demonstration cost the government £2500, the insurance brigade ceased to support it. From 1883, concerned that volunteer brigades lacked organising oversight and discipline, and caused excessive water damage, the insurance industry offered to help fund volunteer brigades if they agreed to follow the orders of the superintendent of the insurance brigade and refrain from using large diameter hoses. Those brigades accepting the deal were scorned by those who did not.

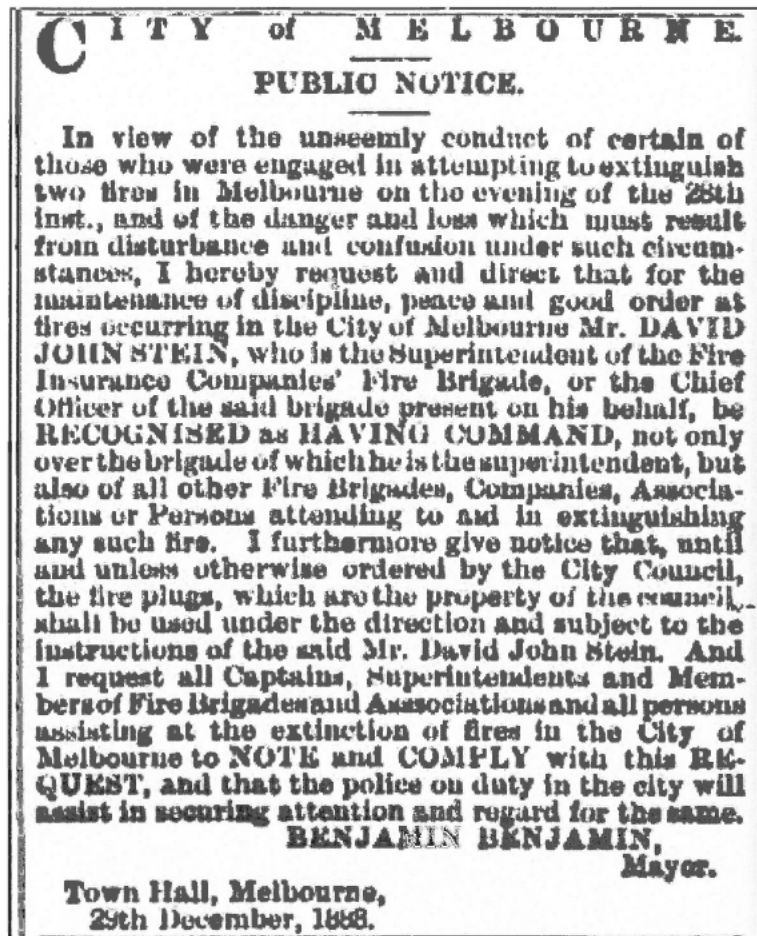
the affair. It was a matter for deep regret that there was not greater unanimity of feeling between firemen—(Hear, hear)—but it seemed impossible for genuine brigades to mix up with what he might call a lot of larrikins. (Applause). He had been some considerable time coming to this decision, but he had now been here about nine months, and given every one a fair trial. He had seen sufficient to show him that there were brigades and brigades, and unfortunately the brigades that predominated were not the best. They had caused him a very great deal of trouble. This was the first

Report of Stein's comments made at a firemen's Carnival. Mercury & Weekly Courier 6/1/1888

Animosity grew even greater in 1887, when London Metropolitan Fire Brigade veteran D. J. Stein was appointed Superintendent of Melbourne's Insurance Companies' Brigade. Evidently unimpressed with the state of the Victorian fire services, Stein complained that it would appear impossible to work with the 'larrikins' in the volunteer brigades.

Stein's provocative comments attracted the ire of the volunteer association. When Stein moved to form a new association that would work more co-operatively the insurance brigade, the existing association felt insulted by the challenge to what it saw as the rightful dominance of volunteers, and expressed this publicly with a resolution:

That the brigades of the colony, as represented in the national association, view with indignation the attempt to interfere with the fire brigade service made by the servant of a private trading association, and will resist to the utmost any attempt to create dissensions among brigades in the country and metropolitan associations.



On 28th December 1888, these tensions erupted finally erupted into violence. At two fires running, blows were exchanged after the volunteer brigades refused to heed Stein's calls to use smaller hoses to minimise water damage, and a "general melee" ensued. The next day, the Mayor intervened, issuing a public notice designating Stein as the chief officer of all brigades, insurance and volunteer, at fires in the City of Melbourne.

Reportedly, discipline and coordination improved as a result. Nevertheless, two fires and a torchlight procession took the lives of six firemen over the course of 1889.

Under the pressure of these events, the government finally proposed a bill for control of the fire services in late 1890. Initially slated to place all firefighting under the control of a single board, the country volunteers' association successfully lobbied parliament for the creation of separate country and metropolitan boards.

The Fire Brigades Act was passed in December 1890, creating as a result in 1891 a Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board responsible for areas within 10 miles of Melbourne, and a Country Fire Brigades Board with control of all other brigades in Victoria. The MFB, with Stein as superintendent, gained control of all existing metropolitan brigades, and moved them to a model of a paid workforce under the control of the central authority. (Some, but not all volunteers took paid positions with the MFB; this was literally 'permanent' employment, with continuous duty for all but 24 hours of each week.)

From what I have read, the fire services of metropolitan Melbourne functioned smoothly from that point in time. The solution was drastic but effective: geographical separation between the paid and volunteer fire services. Much needed improvements in coordination and control came about, and the turf war was ended.

Aside: The Role of the Press

During the 1880s dispute, the conservative press (notably *The Argus*) strongly supported the paid insurance fire service. Its commentary against volunteer brigades reached a level of sensational negativity that rivals that launched by the present-day right-wing media (notably *The Herald Sun* and *3Aw*) against paid firefighters. How things change!

If only for the sake of contrast, it's worth looking at an example. Here is *The Argus'* take on the events of 28th December 1888:

The inevitable has happened—the fire brigades have quarrelled in the face of a fire. This result has been predicted for a long time, and we have been brought up to it by the determination of the “National” association of volunteers to impede the operations of the paid brigade maintained by the insurance companies, and to put themselves forward as a rival institution. It was merely a matter of time and occasion for the feeling against Superintendent STEIN and his men to come to a head, and on Friday night, at two separate fires, the volunteers openly repudiated that officer’s authority, and there were clashing and conflict. Mr. STEIN, in performance of his duty, deemed it unwise to have the buildings in which fires had just been discovered deluged with water when a small stream would suffice, and accordingly ordered the volunteers to turn off their hydrants, and thus save property from serious damage. But before his directions could be enforced, blows were struck and disorganisation precipitated, though fortunately without such bad results as might have ensued had the circumstances been more critical. The incidents, however, were sufficiently alarming, and have brought the relations of the two sections of fire brigades to each other so prominently under public notice that some decisive action is called for by the authorities. It is in-

tolerable that a band of mischievous nondescripts, who call themselves firemen, but who have no qualification beyond an abnormal obstinateness to entitle them to any distinction whatever, should have it in their power at any time to jeopardise life and property by their antics, and we must hope that, after the disgraceful proceedings of Friday evening, we shall follow the example of America and other countries, and have none but paid and trained men for the work of fire extinction. Fortunately, the Mayor of Melbourne has shown himself equal to the occasion. He has issued an order to the effect that the use of the city fire plugs shall be under the entire control of Superintendent STEIN, and for the present that step will put an end to rows and disorder generally. But it must be followed by some sweeping reform, and the City Council will do well to consider, at the earliest possible moment, whether it would not be wise to prevent volunteer brigades entering the city proper on any pretext. If they were to be prohibited from interfering, of course the Insurance Brigade would need to be strengthened by the formation of other paid companies, salvage corps, and similar organisations, but no more important work than the establishment of such companies can engage the attention of the council. We want the Chicago system in this city, and if that were introduced, there

would be no fear as to security from devastation by fire.

Apart, too, from the actual quarrelling at fires, there is abundant evidence that the National Association is determined to prevent the Insurance Brigade from promptly attending when an alarm is given. Superintendent STEIN, with remarkable acuteness, proved this by his experiment early yesterday morning, when he raised the false alarm from the Theatre Royal. The special means of communication between the theatre and the National Association’s station was used, but though the summons was obeyed, it was not sent forward, as it should have been, to the Insurance Companies’ station. It is generally supposed that special precautions are taken by the managers of theatres to have an outbreak of fire promptly dealt with, but in this case there was complete proof that this is a popular delusion, for the only “expert” brigade in the city was not communicated with at all. The Central Board of Health has a direct interest in this matter, and it should at once see that the protection afforded shall be a real and trustworthy, and not a sham, protection. But there will be no satisfactory settlement of the whole question of fire brigade organisation until the system of stipendiary brigades, which has been adopted in every large city in England and America, is introduced here.

The Argus, 1st January 1889

The Argus clearly pulled no punches here, sledging volunteers—“a band of mischievous nondescripts”—at least as heavily as James Campbell and Neil Mitchell sledge career firefighters today.

Why the difference in targets? My guess is the right-wing media will always go into bat for entrenched power. At that time, it was in the interests of the insurance industry (and their clients) to have a disciplined, professional fire service. Since then, the paid fire services have become unionised, and it is in the broader interests of the corporate sector to oppose unions, because fair workplace safety, conditions and pay eats into profit.

The 1940s Urban–Rural Turf War

The 1940s was the next great era of change in the Victorian fire services. Like in the 1880s, change was needed in order to bring firefighting under more effective coordination and control. And, like in the 1880s, one party saw itself as being on the receiving end of a territorial power grab, and government intervention was needed to force the necessary progress.

The issue this time was rural firefighting. Although the 1890 Fire Brigades Act had vested authority in the CFBB to fight fires in all country areas, in reality its brigades were based in country towns, and focussed on fighting building fires. Starting in 1892 and gathering pace with time, grassroots bush fire brigades sprang up across rural Victoria. Lacking interest from CFBB, they operated independently, enjoying none of the legal protections of CFBB brigades, and formed their own association, the Rural Fire Brigades Association.

In the wake of the devastating 1939 Black Friday bushfires, a Royal Commission found that these brigades needed to be brought under effective control, for the purposes of resourcing and of coordination at large fires. After years of debate and dispute, this was implemented by Government through the Country Fire Authority Act (1944), creating a new authority—the CFA—that incorporated all that was the CFBB, plus the bush fire brigades.



The Argus, 8/6/41—one of hundreds of articles describing the change as a “takeover”

This decision faced a fierce backlash from the bush brigades. The CFA was run, in large part, by the former management of the CFBB. The involvement of a remote, Melbourne-based management structure was seen by the bush brigades as unwanted interference, offensive to the rural traditions of self-reliance and making do. As such, the creation of the CFA was widely described in territorial terms as a “takeover”. Many brigades considered refusing to come under CFA control, and the decision may have cost the Country-Liberal Party coalition government the 1945 election. The issue

stayed hot for years, the Country Party securing amendments on behalf of the rural association after the resumption of coalition government in 1948.

At the local level, too, rivalry created tensions in many areas where Urban and Rural Fire Brigades overlapped in their response and competed for control at fires. Rural brigades viewed with suspicion the apparent predilection of urban volunteer brigades to parade in dress uniform and to defer continually to a central, city-based authority. It took decades for these tensions to dissipate. The Urban and Rural Volunteer Associations remained separate entities until 2008 (forming Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria), and most CFA brigades are still named as either Urban or Rural.

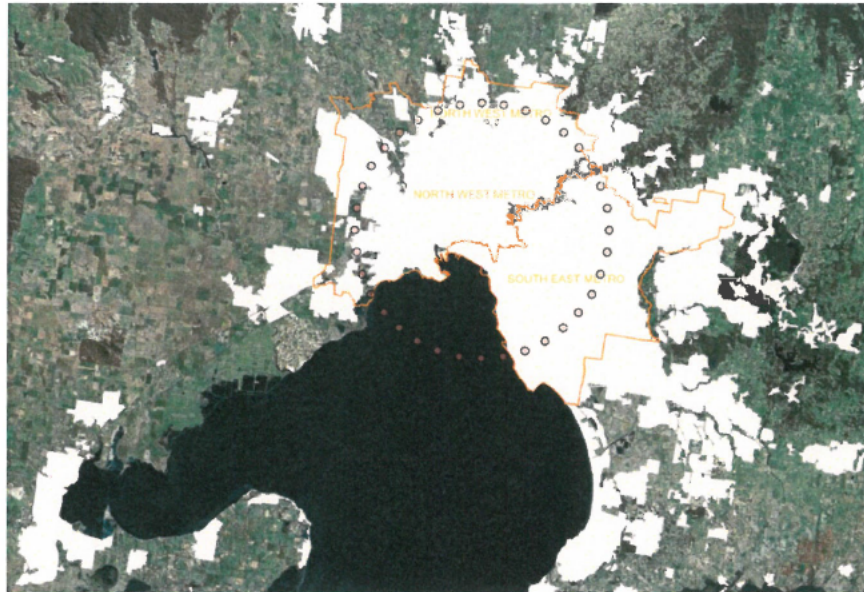
Of course, the sky didn't fall. The CFA went from strength to strength, fighting large bushfires by coordinating resources drawn for the first time from across the state, with hundreds of rural brigades emerging from the 1950s with new fire stations and trucks provided by CFA.

In public image at least, the bush brigades won this struggle for dominance. The bushfire-fighting "tin shed brigades" that dominate public consciousness of the CFA today are the direct descendants of the bush fire brigades, supplemented by CFA building and resourcing programs from the 1950s onwards. But the urban volunteer identity still persists, and in a return to the 1880s, finds itself now once more digging in to turf warfare with the paid fire service.

The Present Dispute

The next great change to the Victorian fire services is the one we are suffering through right now. Like in the 1880s and in the 1940s, change is required for the sake of safety and operational effectiveness, but the necessary change is resisted by some parties, who respond with indignation to the perception that their independence, autonomy or ascendancy will be diminished.

The crux of the problem is most easily seen in the form of a map. (Even a poorly crafted attempt like this – my apologies.)



Built up areas of Greater Melbourne (light pink), with the current MFB area and internal regions (orange lines) and the 1891 MFB area (orange dots). (Made using nationalmap.gov.au)

As the map shows, the metropolitan area of Melbourne has expanded well beyond the MFB boundary defined in 1891, and indeed, well beyond the existing boundary, which has changed little over recent decades. Beyond the bottom edge of this map, the now heavily populated Mornington Peninsula extends a considerable distance. In fact, less than 40% of the present metropolitan area falls within the MFB boundary. In addition, many regional towns and cities are now heavily populated and urbanised.

It has been recognised since the 1880s that dense urban areas demand the extra speed and reliability of response that can only be achieved using paid firefighters. The sensible response to urban expansion would have been to incrementally adjust the boundary of MFB territory, incorporating the growth of Melbourne and adding regional cities when appropriate. Despite repeated calls from disparate quarters, political pressures have prevented this from occurring. Instead, over the decades CFA has introduced its own paid firefighters, although not to a sufficient level to match the service delivery and firefighter safety standards the MFB achieves in adjacent urban areas. Few seem willing to risk offending volunteers by calling for improvement.

The loudest call for adequate staffing levels in the CFA is coming from paid firefighters themselves. After all, it is their safety that is most directly compromised when they tackle building fires with crews of just 3 or 4, often for an extended period until volunteer

backup arrives. In times gone by they faced even greater peril, many brigades having just a single career officer who started the firefight alone while waiting for volunteers. Union pressure over the past 15 years has brought about crews of 3 at most staffed stations, but still this is inadequate in areas where there is no staffed supporting brigade. The safety of the public is imperiled along with that of firefighters.

11. The result of this action was that the first supporting appliance to arrive on scene to assist was a rural tanker crewed by Hoppers Crossing volunteers. This arrived on scene 10 minutes after the paged call out and 5 minutes after the first arriving appliance.
12. With only 4 fire fighters on scene within the first 10 minutes it was not possible for anyone to administer first aid to the badly burnt man who was present at the scene. Instead members of the public had to resort to hosing down the man until paramedics arrived. He had received critical burns to approximately 90% of his body and he passed away in hospital later that night.
13. Fortunately the woman and her baby escaped the fire via the backyard. The Mother received burns to her shoulder escaping the fire but the baby was unharmed.
14. Had there been an additional staff on duty and additional staff members recalled to duty at Point Cook fire fighters could have been immediately deployed for an aggressive internal attack and search to confirm the safety of the mother and baby. And much of the stress and anxiety I experienced would have been avoided. Also a fire-fighter could have administered medical assistance to the burnt man rather than have the public deal with such a horrific scene.
15. Implementation of the proposed EBA would ensure that Hoppers Crossing has the additional career fire fighter that we need to fix the problems that have been highlighted above.

Here is a horrific illustration of the dangers of this circumstance. A crew of 4 was unable to search a burning building for a missing mother and baby, or to administer first aid to a severely burned man, because they were forced to wait 5 minutes for volunteer support to arrive. This is excerpted from the submission made by Hoppers Crossing Fire Brigade, to the Senate Inquiry into the ill-named Fair Work Amendment (Respect for Emergency Services Volunteers) Bill 2016.

Submissions from Hallam, Rowville, Ballarat City, Melton, and Bendigo Fire Brigades provide further case studies where only pure luck avoided a catastrophic outcome, because of CFA's failure to roll out a fully functioning modern fire service in busy urban areas. The frequency with which volunteer response fails to provide adequate, timely support to staff crews in the metropolitan area is illustrated in

the following log of calls attended by Rowville CFA supported by Scoresby CFA:

SCORESBY CREW COMPOSITION RESPONDING WITH ROWVILLE REVIEW					
JULY 2016 ONGOING					
		D N W	TURNOUT TIME MINS	CREW NUMBER	STRUC QUAL
5/07/2016	1112	DAY	4	3	2
5/07/2016	2154	NIGHT	FAILED TO	0	0
5/07/2016	2300	NIGHT	5	4	4
8/07/2016	2354	NIGHT	5	3	2
12/07/2016	1049	DAY	6	3	3
13/07/2016	1845	NIGHT	5	2	2
14/07/2016	0747	DAY	FAILED TO	2	2
15/07/2016	1748	DAY	6	2	1
17/07/2016	0003	W/END	6	3	2
20/07/2016	0951	DAY	5	2	2
22/07/2016	0801	DAY	6	3	1
25/07/2016	0812	DAY	6	3	2
30/07/2016	1041	W/END	5	2	2
31/07/2016	0428	W/END	6	3	2
31/07/2016	1306	W/END	6	3	2
1/08/2016	1210	DAY	5	2	1
2/08/2016	0922	DAY	FAILED TO	1	0
6/08/2016	0938	DAY	6	2	1
6/08/2016	2047	W/END	7	5	4
8/08/2016	0648	DAY	6	3	1
12/08/2016	0955	DAY	3	3	2
12/08/2016	1819	W/END	7	3	2
15/08/2016	1159	DAY	4	3	3
18/08/2016	0125	NIGHT	6	4	3
18/08/2016	1114	DAY	FAILED TO	1	0
18/08/2016	1154	DAY	FAILED TO	1	0
22/08/2016	1353	DAY	9	2	1
23/08/2016	0857	DAY	5	2	1
23/08/2016	1013	DAY	2	2	1
23/08/2016	2333	NIGHT	5	8	6
26/05/2016	0429	NIGHT	6	3	1
26/08/2016	0829	DAY	9	2	1
26/08/2016	1011	DAY	NOT REQ AT BIO WASHAWAY	3	2
29/08/2016	1130	DAY	6	3	2
29/08/2016	1159	DAY	2	3	2
29/08/2016	1223	DAY	2	3	2

Source: Tabled at Senate Inquiry Hearing, 19th September 2016

Statistical data presented by the United Firefighters Union to the recent Parliamentary Inquiry into Fire Season Preparedness also paints a picture of widespread failure of volunteer response to meet service delivery standards in dense urban areas.

Many submissions to the Senate Inquiry also point out the dangerous consequences of CFA's frequent refusal to meaningfully consult with paid firefighters. The headline issue here is Fiskville:

FINDING 47: That the CFA ignored concerns raised by the United Firefighters Union and withheld important information from trainees and others. This was in breach of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* and resulted in ongoing exposure to contaminated water.

Excerpt from the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the CFA Training College at Fiskville

But other important, if less spectacular failures have come about through CFA's refusal to consult with the domain experts: its own firefighters. Submissions to the Senate Inquiry list many examples, including an expensive new radio network that performs very poorly, trucks that cannot fit drivers taller than 5'11", a truck that could not fit inside its designated station, and a ladder with a 2.5 m gap in it. Sometimes consultation does occur, and many submissions highlight safety improvements so achieved.



Ladder Platform appliance purchased without firefighter consultation. Source: UFUA submission to Senate Inquiry

Clearly, significant change is needed in order to meet modern standards of workplace and community safety in outer Melbourne and regional centres, but as was the case in the 1880s and the 1940s, the necessary change is meeting resistance.

History Repeats: Current Opposition to Reform

At the behest of the volunteer association (Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria), hundreds of volunteers have made submissions to the Senate Inquiry, voicing their opposition to the reforms encapsulated in the presently disputed CFA Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. These submissions provide a valuable written record of the types of concerns volunteers have expressed verbally in the radio and television media for the past several months.

Echoes of the 1880s and 1940s dispute reverberate throughout these submissions. Reading them, it is clear that the mentalities of both the 1880s anti-staff turf war and the 1940s anti-city turf war live on in CFA, and are being brought to bear in opposition to the CFA EBA.

The 1880s complaint stems from the belief that volunteer firefighting is inherently of superior virtue than paid firefighting, yielding an ideological opposition to the move to a professional response, even in dense urban areas. Harking right back to the value system imported from the USA in the 1850s, subscribers to this belief system place (often covertly or unconsciously) a heavy emphasis on the pride conferred upon them as volunteer firefighters, and the central role the fire brigade plays in their life outside of paid work. The move to a staff-led response in dense urban areas— which is furthered by this EBA but also pre-dates it— offends that value system, irrespective of the clear safety benefits. It is seen as an attack, justification to dig in for turf warfare. Former CFA Chairman John Peberdy encapsulated this view with a complaint reminiscent of the volunteer association’s 1888 resolution of “indignation”:

What they’re trying to do is fundamentally change CFA and make us a career fire brigade supported by volunteers and I think that’s an insult to every volunteer in Victoria.

Peberdy’s comments refer fairly directly to legislation introduced by the coalition in 2011, backed by the CFA and VFBV, which seeks to ossify the CFA’s 19th-century service model by declaring that

The Parliament recognises that the Authority is first and foremost a volunteer-based organisation, in which volunteer officers and members are supported by employees in a fully integrated manner.

The clear intent of this clause is to subordinate employees as of inferior importance to volunteers. Career firefighters prioritise safety over pride, and would be unlikely to be bothered by such a

statement, except for the fact that the statement is used to compromise safety. But to Peberdy, any reform that increases the role of employees, or their input into matters affecting them, is not seen as a safety improvement. Instead, it is seen as contrary to the proper value hierarchy, or as an attempt to invert it: to make volunteers into the “second-class citizens” the Act currently demands that employees are.

The non-negotiable view that volunteer-led response is always best was held by the volunteer association of the 1880s and has continued unbroken to its present incarnation, VFBV. Thus, despite claiming to have no interest in interfering with the pay and conditions of staff, VFBV’s submission to the Senate Inquiry demands that CFA sticks with a “community embedded and volunteer based service model” — presumably throughout its territory, regardless of urban risk profile, or the safety risks to paid firefighters working in conditions of understaffing.

VFBV’s statements are moderated by its desire to appear to be prioritising community safety over volunteer pride. Other submissions are less careful. For example, VFBV District 8 President Eric Collier complains in his submission that the EBA would “marginalise” volunteers and “seek to destroy the volunteer ethos”. Collier’s submission to the Fire Services Review goes further, attacking paid firefighter response as “over-servicing”. The faster response provided by staff is unnecessary, says Collier.

The delays inherent to volunteer response mean that even in those areas serviced by volunteer-only brigades, the first fire truck to arrive is often a staffed appliance from a neighbouring suburb. Other times the staffed truck arrives second, as backup. The logical conclusion to draw from either circumstance is that staff response offers considerable safety advantages and should be implemented throughout dense urban areas. But Collier’s angle is different:

- 2.4.3 Recent CFA brigade integrations have resulted in paid firefighters responding into adjacent brigade areas. In many cases this level of service is unnecessary, and occurs even where the travel times mean there is no realistic hope of arriving on-scene before the local volunteer brigade achieves “under control” status. Does this indicate that the brigade has been integrated prematurely and is now over-serviced, and the paid firefighters are being given something to do to justify their presence? This creates the following risks:
- 2.4.3.1 The integrated brigade area is put at risk because the paid firefighters are out of their ‘home area’, and unavailable if a fire or incident occurs there.
 - 2.4.3.2 Reduced opportunities for paid firefighters to gain experience.
 - 2.4.3.3 Local CFA volunteers may lose interest, with a corresponding reduction in numbers, because they are made to feel that their services are no longer required.

Incredibly, if the community receives a faster response to a time-critical emergency, this is a problem for Collier because it means that volunteers don't get to do as much work. For him, feelings of volunteer pride should take priority over community safety. In fact, in Collier's view there should be volunteers in the MFB. The 1880s turf warrior mentality lives on.

Other submissions to the Senate Inquiry echo the same mentality of the moral superiority of volunteers under supposed threat by advancement of the role and safety of career firefighters:

- Leslie King says “The CFA volunteer has been the back bone of Victoria providing a service for FREE serving the community in times of need. You now have a union wanting to destroy this structure through their greed and power play.”
- Chris Jones asserts that “this EBA is undoubtedly a takeover of a proud organisation” and calls on the Senate to “protect the proud volunteers who serve their country ‘FOR FREE’ each and every day”
- Andrew Chatham complains “Why put in the hours as a volunteer in the CFA if it's not appreciated or respected.”
- Graeme Renwick kindly explains that “Any clause that sets the volunteers as something less than equal to the paid staff should be removed after all look at the number of volunteers to paid staff. YOU **&\$#* OFF THE VOLS YOU STAND TO LOOSE THE FIRE SERVICE MAIN WORFORCE.”
- Tom Morley says he is “scared that we would become the second class citizen in the organisation” which is pushing him “to just give up on volunteering with the CFA, go join the footy club or maybe the Army Reserves instead. But in my heart someone needs to be here for the community, the town, my children's future.”
- SES Volunteer Steven Hicks complains, without regard for the public safety implications, that the EBA could reduce the role of SES volunteers in road accident rescue, and suggests that “the CFA is an authority that exists primarily for” CFA volunteers.

Eddie Matt asserts that “volunteers are the frontline of fire suppression in our state ... supported by staff ... not the other way around.”

- Fiona Burns says “the Parliament is founded on the democracy of this country—I ask you exercise that democratic responsibility to enshrine the rights of volunteers from those who would seek to destroy the ethos of volunteerism”
- Robert Bethell complains that “the current union push is an attempt to disenfranchise volunteers altogether”, referring to the improvements in safe staffing levels under previous EBAs as “whittling away at the relevance of volunteers”
- David Gamble complains that volunteers should be issued with station uniforms, citing an example where he suffered burns after attending a fire without wearing his issued firefighting protective clothing.
- Anthony Wright says he is “totally opposed to replacing volunteers with paid staff” (anywhere, presumably)
- Peter Jenkin thinks “volunteers will be treated as second class just because they are not paid,” complaining that nothing should change, because “CFA was formed by volunteers and that permanent firefighters were only brought into the CFA to support the volunteer firefighters”
- Terry Hedt asserts that “paid fire-fighters regard volunteers as second class citizens and pawns in their grab for power”
- Wayne Bourke says that “volunteers are treated as second class citizens” and complains about the lack of station/street uniform for volunteers.
- Tim Buckley says “the UFU wants volunteers to be second class citizens”
- John Fleming declares “I am not prepared to put MY LIFE at risk by some untrained & unqualified UNION”
- Joan McGrath says the EBA “makes us the second class citizens”
- Peter Frank Raisin explicitly declares war on the “pure evil that is threatening us”
-

Christine Fyffe MP (Liberal Party) argues the EBA will “dismantle the CFA”, will “treat volunteers as second class”, contrary to her belief that “CFA should and always be overwhelmingly a Volunteer organisation”

- Trevor Harding objects that the UFU wants to “move the CFA from a volunteer organisation supported by staff, to a staff firefighting service supported by volunteers”
- Keith Clough complains of “external influence treating volunteers as a inferior partner in a volunteer based organisation”
- Claire Griffiths complains that volunteers “are being to made feel second rate, and under-valued”
- Frank Tobin says the “EBA has questioned the value of volunteers and the work they undertake for Victoria”
- James Kelly believes volunteers in outer Melbourne are “now at risk of becoming irrelevant by being bypassed by paid firefighters”, and asks for protection against “the rapacious demands of the militant and uncompromising secretary of, and the United Firefighters Union”
- Phillip Lind complains that the EBA will change the fact that “The CFA is a volunteer based organisation supported by paid personal”

Again and again, the 1880s-style claim pops up that the existence of paid firefighters and particularly any increase in their numbers or ability to have input into decisions that affect them is unacceptable because it offends territorial volunteer pride. Staff must be subordinate or volunteers will feel like second-class citizens. The safety improvements delivered by these reforms – for firefighters and for the public – don’t rate a mention, because safety is not a priority.

As an antidote to these complaints, everyone should read the submission of CFA and Ambulance Victoria volunteer and former Mayor of Hume Casey Nunn, who experienced first hand the transition in her growing community to staff-based response both in the CFA and in AV, and embraced both, in the interests of community safety. This is the attitude volunteers ought to have, if

safety is their priority. Humility serves the community better than pride.

1940s-style complaints also abound in the submissions to the Senate Inquiry. In the 1940s, rural volunteers resented the “takeover” of the bush fire brigades by what they viewed as a hostile and illegitimate outside force: the city-based, town-oriented CFBB leaders who were in control of the newly-created CFA. In their view, the bush brigades were autonomous, self-sufficient entities that neither wanted nor needed to be subject to outside influence, regardless of the coordination and resourcing benefits delivered.



An absurd untruth that refuses to die, told by Matthew Guy in the Herald Sun

Very much the same dynamic has played out during the present dispute, except this time the supposedly hostile invader is the United Firefighters Union, and the threat to rural brigades is pure fiction. Coalition MPs and the media have spoken consistently of a “takeover”, inciting—deliberately, it must be assumed—great, misplaced angst among rural volunteers. The provision in the EBA for meaningful consultation with career firefighters on matters that directly affect them has been misrepresented as an attempt to control the entire CFA, including rural brigades that are unlikely ever encounter career firefighters. Worse, the provision of adequate staffing levels in those urban areas that are already staffed has been grossly misrepresented as meaning that volunteers (everywhere) will have to wait for seven paid staff to arrive before tackling any fire. It has even been suggested that volunteers will be replaced by staff (statewide), that volunteers will be forced to join the UFU, and that firefighters will need to consult with the UFU in the middle of firefighting operations:



Cartoon appearing in the Herald Sun, tabled at Senate Inquiry

Of course, all of these absurd claims are untrue, but they have not been adequately refuted by the media, and have been taken seriously by many people. The cartoon above was tabled at a hearing of the Senate Inquiry by a volunteer who spoke out against the EBA.

The mass panic these lies have inspired has caused vast damage to the morale of career firefighters and volunteers alike, and a return to the level of dissension that marred the Melbourne fire brigades in the

1880s and precipitated decisive government intervention. So damaging was this irresponsible propaganda and such was the level of unrest it was causing that even the President of the coalition-aligned Victorian Farmers' Federation spoke at one point to quell the false outrage the coalition had inflamed among rural volunteers:

There are 1200 stations where the EBA doesn't make any difference to volunteers. It is only integrated stations where it have an impact.

Nevertheless, the hyperbolic fear of a statewide takeover, the specific lie around seven-firefighter dispatch, and a range of other tall tales have stuck. Just as in the 1940s, at least one rural brigade has responded with threats to disaffiliate from the CFA— notwithstanding the fact that the EBA would not affect them, and the CFA Act prohibits the operation of unregistered brigades.

In fact, whilst 1880s-style urban volunteer pride underpins VFBV's position, many Senate Inquiry submissions follow the coalition-manufactured 1940s-style panic over a supposed hostile takeover in which, somehow, the city-based union (which incidentally represents 97% of career firefighters and has their near-unanimous support regarding this EBA) would control rural volunteers. For example:

- Roma Brittney MP (Liberal Party) reports that “CFA volunteers are going to resign and buy their own firefighting equipment”
- David Jarratt suggests “there will be a mass exit of a number of Volunteers, along with this the remainder of the Volunteers will refuse to respond to all Victorians and interstate, they will stay in their own area and look after their local community”
- Grant Howell complains of rural brigades having “a decision process taken from them and put into the hands of a power hungry union who's interests may not serve the local community to the same degree as what can be decided locally”
- Bryan Pickthall complains that “volunteers should not be controlled in any way by any union”
- Craig Allen asks the Senate to “do all you can to stop the money Hungary unions from taking over the CFA”
- Kerry Clayton says “i am appalled at the thought of a union controlled CFA ... I do not want a Bully Boy union official anywhere near my fire ground regardless of his Metropolitan

Structural qualifications. Let us just fight the fires and leave the CFA alone.”

- John Wilson asks “how does Peter Marshall think we got on without the UFU telling us what we could do and what we couldn’t???”
- Robert Fraser says he is “very concerned that the EBA ... requires the attendance of paid 7 firefighters before firefighting can begin,” and, interestingly, suggests “paying all the firefighters in the metropolitan area and funding that from within the area served by those firemen”
- Yellingbo Rural Fire brigade volunteer Lindsay McKenzie says “Newer recruits have stopped coming to the weekly training as they sense that there will be no future for them in a new CFA crippled by this proposed EBA”
- Rural volunteer Judy Clarke says the UFU concerns me. If they decided who is turned out to fires and how many should be on hand. Its a hard call to make from an office desk in the city and not knowing the areas of concern.”
- Bjorn Valsinger says “I work well with the region 12 staff in Seymour but whatever comes from elsewhere seem suspicious!”
- John Ronald Rowe worries there will be “fatalities if we volunteers have to wait for paid firefighters to attend.”
- John McLaren says “The UFU is clearly moving to take over control of our operational protocols. The union’s executive despises our work but it is our own/neighbours’ homes and properties that we have busted a gut to protect. The Premier lives in the city, he doesn’t know what it’s like to see smoke rising in the North on a day of total fire ban.”
- Russell Peucker says “If we are to be dictated to by Union militants it will spell the end of the only fire service we can afford in country Victoria. The CFA was formed and developed by volunteers and if we have to take the fire tankers back to Spring Street and start all over again on a local basis as our fathers did 70 years ago we will do it.”
- Anne Dunn hopes “to God that the UFU will not be in charge as the destruction will be magnified 10 fold while able, capable,

well trained and knowledgeable volunteers stand around waiting for paid firefighters to turn up. We are at least an hour away from any paid firefighters.”

- Gary Cheeseman says “We do not need or wish to have a union telling us what we can or can’t do, or what we can or can’t have in the way of equipment.”
- David Coad thinks the EBA confers “inferior or second class status” upon volunteers and resulting in “loss of a couple of new members and a number of older members questioning whether there is any future in being a volunteer in the CFA with the thought being that we disband and just try to protect our own patch with whatever we can cobble together.”
- Ian Smith thinks the EBA posits that “city-centric career firefighters have more experience in fighting major campaign fires.”
- Mary Anne Egan, who notes that the Maindample CFA tin shed is the only building in their rural community, says the when the Government agreed to the EBA, “the rug was pulled out from under us, the stuffing was knocked out of us-literally. We were dazed, hurt and bruised. We were dumbfounded. We were angry. The ensuing anger is deeply felt, is rising and is abiding.”
- Darren Collins believes the EBA will see volunteers “ending up on the puppet strings of the union”
- Leigh Sutton thinks the EBA will place “paid firefighters in small communities alongside volunteers”
- K. L. Williams believes volunteers will be “forced to join a union”
- Heather Stuart says “we do not need to be told what to do by the UFU—or prevented from making our own decisions”
- Colin and Robyn Coates believe “union has already indicated they will control the 60,000 members”
- Melita Cordie asks whether the union would “like to veto the choice of wool colour of 87 year old Aunty Maude’s lovingly made scarves sold to raise local CFA funds”
- Don Bigham (yes, apparently of “What about Don?” fame) interestingly seems to acknowledge that the time has now

passed for a “volunteer force ‘supported’ by career staff”, but complains that “we now seem to be dictated to by a militant union that has very little, if any, understanding of the rural environment”

Undoubtedly most or all of these volunteers are dedicated servants of their community, the best interests of which they have at heart. Sadly, all are victims of hysterical politically-motivated coalition propaganda that taps into 1940s-era urban-vs-rural turf war sensitivities, by falsely suggesting that an EBA designed to protect firefighter and community safety in urban areas will impact upon their work in rural areas.

The reality is, these reforms need to happen, in the interests of firefighter safety and community safety in urban areas. They have nothing to do with the rural CFA. The 1880s turf warriors need to understand that safety is more important than pride, and the 1940s turf warriors need to realise they’ve been duped by Liberal and National Party propaganda, ably supported by a compliant media. That good people have been whipped into such a level of emotional anguish, on the basis of lies, for the sake of party political gain, is simply appalling.

At the end of the day, for the sake of firefighter and public safety, arrangements for firefighting in urban areas need to be reformed. Ideally, the reforms would be implemented by a government prepared to do the right thing in the face of political opportunism. As it happens, it’s left to career firefighters to pursue reform through an industrial instrument.

It behoves those who want to pass judgement on the matter to understand both the reasons behind those reforms, and the historical and cultural context of opposition to fire service reform. That opposition could be overcome with strong leadership, including open critique of the damaging and inflammatory tactics of the Liberal and National Parties that have manufactured a chasm of mistrust. But failing that, less preferably, the reactionary opposition to reform could be diminished with the security of distance found in the 1891 solution: separation of the paid and volunteer firefighting services.

Perhaps only then will career firefighters’ efforts to improve firefighter safety and community safety be recognised as just that, and not miscast as an attack on volunteers.

Unless otherwise noted, the historical information related in this story derives from the following two books: State of Fire: A History of Volunteer Firefighting and the Country Fire Authority in Victoria (Robert Murray and Kate White, Hartgreen Publishing Company, 1995) and Life Under the Bells: A History of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Melbourne 1891–1991 (Sally Wilde, Longman Cheshire, 1991).



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE – 25 August 2010

10 years of cooperation helps give Scott a second chance at life

chance at life

Scott Moorhen didn't expect to have a cardiac arrest nor did he expect that firefighters would be supporting ambulance paramedics at his life-threatening medical emergency.

The Ivanhoe father's amazing recovery can be attributed to the quick actions of bystanders and a 10-year partnership between the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and Ambulance Victoria.

Since 2000, MFB crews have been dispatched at the same time as ambulances to cardiac arrests and non-breathing patients.

Thanks to specialist training provided by Monash University, all firefighters are able to provide basic

basic

life support, give CPR and use defibrillators carried on board all fire trucks. The firefighters are supported in-field by Ambulance Victoria.

Mr Moorhen, 43, was clinically dead – he was not breathing and his heart had stopped beating –

when bystanders Sharon Patterson and Andre Roberts commenced CPR and 000 was called.

Firefighters continued to give Mr Moorhen chest compressions as paramedics used a defibrillator to 'shock' his heart back into rhythm and they administered life-saving drugs. This care continued in hospital and Mr Moorhen has now returned to work. In the past three years, the MFB has been dispatched to 7,920 Emergency Medical Response (EMR) calls. In some areas of Melbourne, firefighters are attending more EMR calls than calls to building fires.

Despite the growth of the EMR component of MFB work, it maintains a low profile and the arrival of a fire truck at life-threatening medical emergencies is sometimes unexpected.

MFB firefighters are dispatched at the same time as ambulance paramedics to medical emergencies where a person is in suspected cardiac arrest or has stopped breathing. If a fire truck arrives first, the

crew immediately initiates medical assistance and continues until ambulance paramedics arrive to take over. MFB firefighters also provide assistance to paramedics, working as a team in aiming for the best possible outcome for patients.

"We've helped to save many lives through this service, but it is still a surprise for a lot of people when

the fire truck arrives and firefighters offer to provide a service," said MFB EMR Commander Colin Bibby. "At first that might sound amusing, but the time we lose explaining that we're here to help could be the difference between life and death."

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE

In metropolitan Melbourne 60 per cent of cardiac ar

rest patients presenting with a shockable heart rhythm survive to hospital and almost one in three people get to go home.

Paramedic Andy Watson said Ambulance Victoria's world-renowned success in improving outcomes for cardiac arrest patients was thanks to a variety of factors including its partnership with the MFB.

"If someone is not breathing or is in cardiac arrest, a quick response is vital. The MFB EMR program contributes to that quick response," said Mr Watson, AV's EMR coordinator.

"Cardiac arrest survivability diminishes by 10 per cent for every minute that defibrillation is delayed. It

is critical that 000 is called immediately someone is suspected of being in cardiac arrest. CPR provided by people at the scene before emergency services arrive can also dramatically improve the patient's chance of survival."

The survival of Mr Moorhen, who collapsed while helping train his young son's football team in June, is testament to the 'chain of survival' and the joint response of firefighters and paramedics.

The chain of survival – a proven formula for giving the 30,000 Australians who suffer cardiac arrest each year the best chance of life – requires an early call to 000, early CPR, early defibrillation and early access to advanced cardiac life support..

When Mr Moorhen collapsed, bystanders recognised the cardiac arrest and 000 was called – the first link in the chain. Next, they began early CPR – the second link – and when the firefighters and paramedics arrived they provided the third link, which is early defibrillation.

Early advanced care is the final link and intensive care paramedics provided intravenous fluids and medication and he was taken to hospital where medic

al staff continued that care.

The partnership between AV and the MFB has played a significant role in helping people survive cardiac arrest.

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The first 7 years of the metropolitan fire brigade emergency responder program – an overview of incidents attended

This article was published in the following Dove Press journal:

Open Access Emergency Medicine

9 October 2010

Number of times this article has been viewed

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Purpose: The Melbourne Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFESB) was the first fire service in Australia to implement a service-wide emergency medical response (EMR) program in 2001. No additional scientific analysis of the first responder program has been reported since the pilot program. The objective of this study was to report the first 7 years of responses by firefighters as first responders.

Patients and methods: The MFESB have three separate datasets with cardiac arrest information: (i) callout record; (ii) patient care record; and (iii) cardiac arrest record, including data from the automatic external defibrillator. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic and specific outcome data. Ethics approval was granted.

Results: A total of 8227 incidents were attended over the first 7 years. The most incidents attended were cardiac arrest 54% (n = 4450) followed by other medical 19% (n = 1579), and drug overdose 11% (n = 908); the remainder were <10% each. Sixty-three percent of incidents involved males. Average age was 57.2 years, median age 63 years, range from <1 month to 101 years; average response time was 6.1 minutes, median response time 5.6 minutes, range from 9 seconds to 31.5 minutes. Firefighters provided “initial care” in 57% and assisted in 26% of the incidents. Firefighters spent on average 4.8 minutes with the patient before handing over to paramedics; median 3.9 minutes, range of a few seconds to 39.2 minutes.

Conclusion: This study suggests that the MFESB EMR program is providing firefighter first responders to emergency situations in a short timeframe to assist the ambulance service.

Keywords: emergency medical services, fire department, cardiac arrest, first responder

Introduction

Although the use of firefighters as first responders in the international prehospital setting is not new, the use of and reporting of the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFESB) emergency medical responder (EMR) program experience is new.

The use of firefighters as “first responders” to acute medical incidents, especially cardiac arrests, commenced in the mid-1980s in the USA¹ and in the late 1980s in Canada.² Firefighters and other emergency service workers were used as first responders to decrease the time from collapse to defibrillation,¹⁻³ which demonstrated an improvement in patient outcomes.

In 1994 the Victorian Public Bodies Review Committee recommended that the Metropolitan Fire Brigade expand its role to include an emergency “first responder” role for acute medical conditions, including cardiac arrest, to support the then Metropolitan Ambulance Service.

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In 1998 the Victorian Government approved a 6-month pilot study to investigate whether the simultaneous dispatch of fire and ambulance resources to acute medical emergencies, including cardiac arrest, could lead to decreased response times and thereby improve the patient's chance of survival. The Emergency Medical Response (EMR) First Responder program pilot, as it was called, commenced on July 14, 1998 and concluded on January 14, 1999. The pilot data demonstrated a decrease in emergency vehicle response time as well as time to defibrillation in the pilot area. However, there were an insufficient number of cardiac arrests to demonstrate that the program definitely improved patient outcome from cardiac arrest.

In early February 2000 the Victorian Government extended the pilot study for another 12 months to cover the entire MFESB area of operation. The results from the extended pilot study confirmed that firefighters as first responders to cardiac arrests did improve patient outcomes^{4,5} and that the majority of firefighters thought this was a worthwhile use of fire personnel and resources.⁶ The Victorian Government confirmed the inclusion of the EMR First Responder as core MFESB business in December 2001.

Following publication of the pilot EMR results and an analysis of the first 12 months of the EMR program,⁵ the MFESB has published limited results regarding the EMR program. No further independent scientific analysis of the success of the program over the 7 years has been undertaken. The objective of this study was to report the first 7 years of responses by firefighters as first responders.

Material and methods

Study design

This study was a retrospective case review of all EMR incidents attended by the MFESB over the first 7 years of the program.

Study population

The MFESB services an area of approximately 1100 km² with a population of approximately two million people. The MFESB has 51 fire stations servicing the area. Each firefighter undertakes an 8-day training course, with 1-day refresher training every 3 years, monthly skills maintenance, and regular incident follow up by Ambulance Victoria paramedics.

Any patient who was attended to by the MFESB as part of the EMR, between March 1, 2001 and February 28, 2008 was eligible for inclusion into the study. Patient data were excluded from further analysis where the electronic record had insufficient information to make a judgment about the patient's problem and their management.

Study processes

The MFESB has three data files that contain all relevant information about each EMR incident attended; these included the callout data file, the patient care record data file, and the cardiac arrest data file. All files were available in a Microsoft Excel[®] file format.

There is also an electrocardiogram (ECG) file obtained from the automatic external defibrillator (AED) following each cardiac arrest. This ECG file contains the cardiac rhythms, relevant times, and other data pertinent to analysis of the cardiac arrest management.

The data was "cleaned" to ensure there were no duplicate records and that any outliers were a result of natural variation and not inaccurate data entry.

Ethics

Ethics approval for the study was granted by the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans.

Table 1 Incident type attended, by year of the program

Incident type	Year of the program							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Trauma incident	119	125	110	100	58	73	77	662
Drug overdose	88	155	158	147	63	107	190	908
Drowning/near drowning	7	9	9	2	5	9	17	58
Suffocation	29	47	31	49	33	44	49	282
Electric shock	7	4	2	4	3	4	5	29
Gas/smoke inhalation	34	29	25	21	16	28	30	183
Burns	13	10	16	7	6	8	16	76
Other medical	194	229	206	180	169	265	336	1579
Cardiac arrest	638	609	705	597	526	610	765	4450
Total	1129	1217	1262	1107	879	1148	1485	8227

Table 2 Type of action, by year of the program

Action type	Year of the program							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Provide care	613	601	648	545	391	493	629	3920
Assist only	220	247	221	236	181	280	392	1777
Investigate/observe	244	224	228	189	182	197	249	1513
Downgraded/cancelled	4	1	1	1	0	0	1	8
Total	1081	1073	1098	971	754	970	1271	7218

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 17.0, SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois, USA). Descriptive statistics, including means and medians were used to summarize the demographic and specific outcome measure data.

Results

The MFESB attended a total of 8227 incidents as part of the EMR program over the 7-year period. See Table 1 for total EMR incidents attended for each year of the program. Gender distribution was available for 7917 incidents; 63.3% were male and 36.7% female. The mean age was 57.2 years, median 63 years, range of several weeks to 101 years of age.

The MFESB categorized their responses into 11 different categories, including cardiac arrest. The number of incidents attended by the program year can be seen in Table 1.

There were 7218 incidents where the action type could be identified. The firefighters provided “initial care” in 54% of the incidents they attended and “assisted” in a further 26% of the incidents attended. See Table 2 for the numbers for each action type by year of the program.

There were 6829 incidents where a response time could be determined, with 1398 incidents excluded as one or both of the required times to calculate the response time was missing. The average response time over the 7 years was 6.14 minutes (95% confidence interval [CI] 6.07–6.20 minutes) with a median response time of 5.61 minutes, 90th percentile of 8.69 minutes. The response time range was from 9 seconds to 31.5 minutes. For the average and median response time by year of the program, see Table 3.

The majority (39.1%) of patients were unconscious with no signs of life on arrival of the firefighters, with 14.4% of patients unconscious with signs of life. For the condition of all patients, see Table 4.

There were 3418 incidents where a “with patient time” could be determined, with 4859 incidents excluded as one or both of the required times to calculate the “with patient time” was missing. Firefighters spent on average 4.83 minutes (95% CI 4.69–4.98 minutes) with the patient before handing over to paramedics, median 3.9 minutes, range from 6 seconds to 39.2 minutes. For cardiac arrest incidents, there were 1987 incidents where a “with patient time” could be determined, with 2463 incidents excluded as one or both of the required times to calculate the “with patient time” was missing. The firefighters spent on average 4.62 minutes (95% CI 4.44–4.81 minutes) with the cardiac arrest patient before handing over to paramedics, median 3.7 minutes, range from 12 seconds to 36.5 minutes.

The majority of incidents occurred in the morning, between 7am and 9am, with a second peak between 4pm and 6pm in the late afternoon (see Figure 1).

Most of these incidents occurred on a Saturday, with the least occurring on a Monday and Thursday, and with most incidents attended in October and the least in February.

Discussion

The results from the review of the first 7 years of the MFESB EMR suggest that firefighters have an average and median response time that is comparable, or better, than other state and international first responders. The aim of using the MFESB as first responders was to decrease the response time

Table 3 Average, median and 90th percentile response time for incidents, by year of the program

	Year of the program							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Average response time	6.01	6.22	5.95	6.1	6.23	6.42	6.02	6.14
Median response time	5.4	5.5	5.59	5.6	5.66	5.85	5.71	5.61
90th percentile response time	8.57	9.01	8.26	8.77	9.19	9.4	8.31	8.69

Table 4 Patients condition on arrival of the firefighters, by year of the program

Action type	Year of the program							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Conscious	304	301	294	263	180	312	358	2012
Unconscious but signs of life	126	197	183	164	117	155	240	1182
Unconscious with no signs of life	450	443	498	471	368	438	546	3214
Obviously deceased	192	200	208	151	153	162	195	1261
Not stated	57	76	79	58	61	81	146	558
Total	1129	1217	1262	1107	879	1148	1485	8227

to urgent incidents, predominately cardiac arrests, and to provide basic life support and early defibrillation to those in cardiac arrest.

The response time to urgent incidents by the MFESB when compared with Ambulance Victoria – Metropolitan (AV-M) is considerably less in the 50th and 90th percentile. The MFESB 50th and 90th percentile response times have remained relatively constant over the 7 years, whereas those for AV-M have increased. The AV-M 50th percentile response time has increased from 8 minutes in 2001–2002 to 9.5 minutes in 2007–2008. Whilst the AV-M 90th percentile

response time has increased from 14 minutes in 2001–2002 to 16.5 minutes in 2007–2008.^{7,8} Other scientific literature supports the notion of longer response times by AV-M over time.^{9–12} The AV-M annual reports do not contain mean response time data.

The MFESB EMR program has demonstrated better response times than the ambulance service to actual and potential cardiac arrest patients over the first 7 years of the program, in line with the “chain of survival” concept first describe by Cummins et al in 1991.¹³ The basis behind the concept was: i) the early access to recognition of cardiac

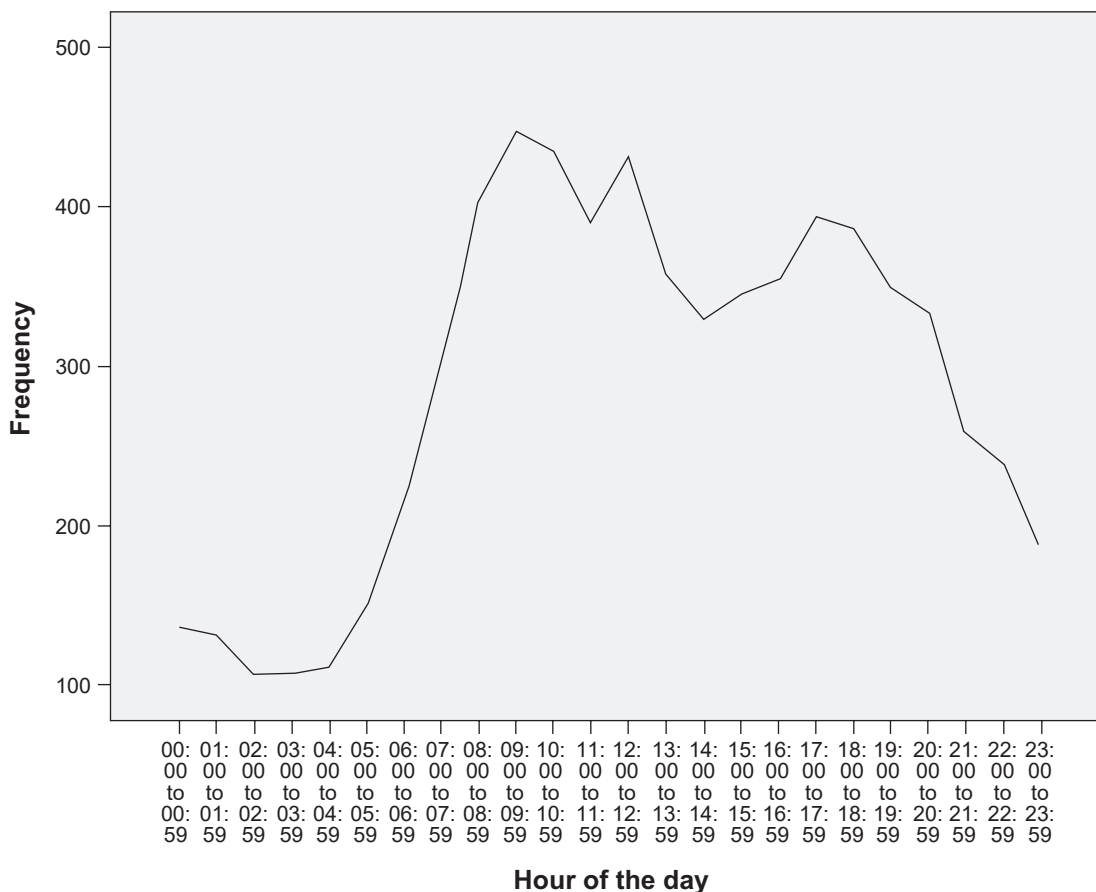


Figure 1 Incident response by hour of the day.

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arrest and calling for help; ii) early commencement of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR); iii) early access to defibrillation; and iv) early access to advanced life support.¹³ Studies have shown that early access to CPR and defibrillation improves the survivability of the cardiac arrest patient.^{14–16} With the advent of AEDs in the mid to late 1980s, the ability for lay people with minimal training to act as “first responders” to cardiac arrests was possible. Within Victoria there are several “first responder” type programs, including the one operated by the MFESB, which support the state ambulance service.^{17,18}

The predominance of cardiac arrest responses also equates to the patient’s condition on arrival of the firefighters, with most, 68% (n = 3028), patients unconscious with no signs of life. This in some ways correlates with the action provided by the firefighters, 54.3% (n = 3920) providing actual initial care or assisting the paramedics 24.6% (n = 1777) who arrived just prior, or at the same time, as the firefighters.

With early access already proven to increase patient survivability, the response time becomes a critical time element within the total time from collapse to defibrillation. In a previous Melbourne based cardiac arrest study by Bernard which looked at cardiac arrest management by the then Metropolitan Ambulance Service, the average response time was found to be 9.4 minutes.⁹ In this study we found the average response time by firefighters to be 6.14 minutes with a median response time of 5.61 minutes. In the EMR pilot study, Smith et al reported the ambulance response time as 7.61 minutes and the first on scene (fire or ambulance) as 5.85 minutes. There was no individual fire response time reported.⁴ Some first responders have very low average and median response times, less than 4 minutes, primarily due to the small geographic area they cover and the calculated distribution of resources to cover that area,^{17,19–21} whereas cardiac arrests responded to by ambulances only have predominately longer response times, around the 9 minute average or higher.^{9,19,20,22,23} The response times by MFESB firefighters in their area of operation may be decreased if there was a dual fire appliance response like that which occurs for actual/potential fires.

This study is the basis for further investigation into the effectiveness of the MFESB EMR program. Further work will be carried out on the MFESB EMR data to ascertain what cardiac rhythm cardiac victims were in on arrival of the firefighter, additional times (including time to defibrillation), and survival rates to discharge from hospital for cardiac arrest patients.

Conclusion

The findings from this study demonstrate that the MFESB EMR program is responding primarily to cardiac arrests. As a result of the EMR program, defibrillator-equipped firefighters are responding to the scene of a potential or actual cardiac arrest in a short timeframe within the MFESB area of operation.

Acknowledgment/disclosure

We gratefully acknowledge the Windermere Foundation for funding this project. No conflict of interest is declared for any of the authors.

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Bank fire: Dozens injured, two critical, after man allegedly sets fire to Springvale CBA

Updated Sat 19 Nov 2016, 3:26pm

Witnesses rushed to the aid of dozens of people after a 21-year-old man allegedly set fire to a Commonwealth Bank in Melbourne's south-east on Friday, leaving two people in a critical condition.

MAP: Springvale 3171

Witness Ashley Atkin-Fone said he ran into help after hearing a big explosion and seeing black smoke pouring out of the bank.

"This kid comes running out all burnt, screaming his head off ... blood everywhere ... I was shocked for a couple of the minutes," he said.

"I sprint across the road, go into Optus and get the fire extinguisher, I go inside get the fire out with this other kid and yeah, we just put the fire out.

"This worker come out the front out of nowhere, it's packed with smoke, so I said get him, go around the back see if you can get the fire exit open and get staff out the back.

"I got the fire out, I took four steps inside, I was shouting and shouting but I couldn't hear anyone, the alarms were going off, no-one was hearing me, and then all of a sudden a few minutes later the police come, and the fire engines and everyone else."

What we know:

- Police responded to reports of a fire at the bank about 11:30am
- Police say a man, 21, lit an accelerant, setting fire to the bank and himself
- The CFA is unsure what type of liquid accelerant was used
- The alleged attacker is under police guard in hospital
- 27 people were injured in the fire, two are critical
- Witness says he saw burnt child running from building screaming
- Police cannot confirm reports of an explosion before the fire



PHOTO: The Commonwealth Bank ATM after a fire in Springvale. (APP: Julian Smith)

Victoria Police Inspector Jacqui Poida said they responded to reports a man had set fire to the bank on Springvale Rd, Springvale, about 11:30am on Friday.

"He had with him some sort of accelerant, he walked into the bank and he lighted that accelerant which caused some sort of fire within the bank, he set himself alight with that fire and there was a number of other people within the bank at that time that received injuries as well," she said.

"He left the bank, police attended shortly after and assisted him, followed by ambulance who also attended to him at the rear of the bank."

FSBSC SUBMISSION 1765

The Springvale man has since been taken to hospital in a serious condition and is under police guard.

Ambulance Victoria said they had treated 27 people, including six who suffered serious burns and were taken to the Alfred Hospital.

"We had to escalate to the highest level of our emergency response plan, it was significant," Ambulance Victoria's Andy Roughton said.

This evening, The Alfred said one patient remained in a critical condition and another was in a critical but stable condition.

Three more are stable and the sixth is serious but stable.

Monash Medical Centre received 13 patients, including three children. All were in a satisfactory condition.

Dandenong Hospital treated 11 patients, with two requiring admission. Others were under observation in the emergency department.

'All I could see was black smoke'

Mr Atkin-Fone said he saw a man put what he believed to be a bomb at the front entrance.

"The blast went off at the front entrance, where the two ATMs are, he's put the bomb in there, it's gone off and a few people have got caught out — this one poor kid he was in a bad state," he said.

"He came running across here, he was bloody and everything else, there were two women ... they got hit as well, and there was on bloke who kept walking up and down, his face was black."

He said he did not see what caused the explosion.

"All I could see was all this black smoke, it was an absolute mess at the front of the shop, it was terrible, all the glass shattered, it wasn't good," Mr Atkin-Fone said.

The Country Fire Authority's Paul Carrigg said a flammable liquid had been used to cause the fire, but they were not sure what it was.

"We understand that there's been an explosion in the bank where numerous persons have been burnt as a result," he said.

"To be honest, firefighters haven't observed the container of fuel, but then again we haven't gone in search for it, it is a crime scene."

Victoria Police said they could not confirm whether there was an explosion before the fire.

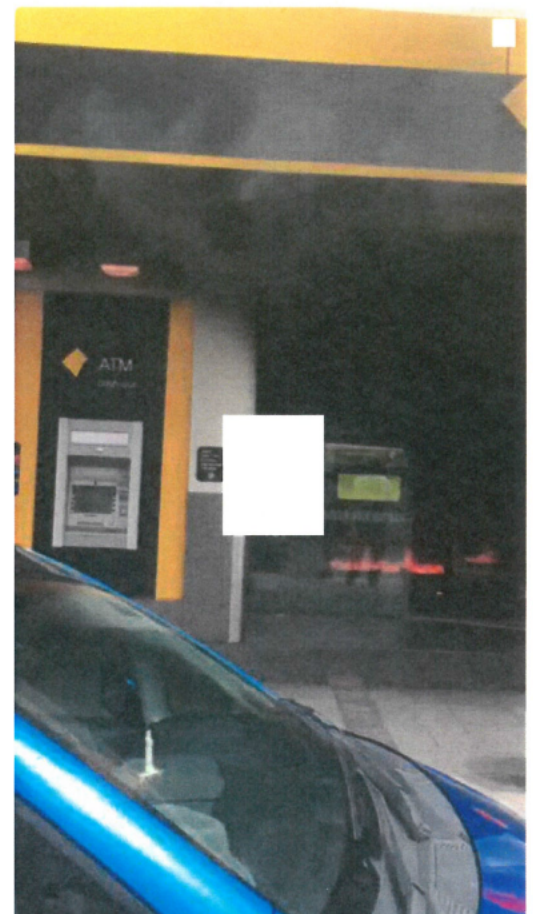
"The information I've got is there was a male person that attended the Commonwealth Bank," Inspector Poida said.

"He had some sort of accelerant with him. A container, not sure what he had. And somehow that accelerant was used inside the bank."

Inspector Poida called on witnesses to contact Crime Stoppers.

Mr Carrigg praised people on the scene who came to the aid of the victims.

He said it was amazing and lucky no-one had lost their lives.



 **Solf**
@sunprawn

Commonwealth Bank fire in Springvale. Looks like an explosion?

1:17 PM - 18 Nov 2016

35 5

"It was a combined effort I think by civilians, witnesses who were in attendance, and the emergency services response [was] fantastic," he said.

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"They were fantastic from my view, provided water for the victims."

'It happened so quick'



PHOTO: Emergency service workers and police investigators at the scene of the fire. (AAP: Julian Smith)

Hundreds of people gathered along the street as cries could be heard and smoke filtered out of the building.

Springvale Road, a busy shopping strip 23 kilometres from the CBD has been closed and is now lined with emergency service personnel.

Victoria Police's Inspector Jacqui Poida called on witnesses to contact Crime Stoppers.

Onlooker Eric Fleuiot said he was still in shock after witnessing the incident.

"As I come from the train station, I heard a fire truck, then I saw two police cars turning up, barricades went up ... it happened so quick," he said.

"One guy had both hands burnt, and was screaming and the paramedics and fire brigade were there.

"I just can't believe this has happened in Springvale."

The Commonwealth Bank closed the branch while they respond to the situation.

"Our first priority is the safety of our staff and customers and as a result the branch will remain closed for the rest of the day," the bank said in a statement.

"Our response team is on site, and we are working closely with local authorities and emergency services."

Posted by Daniel Chau
7,646 Views

BREAKING NEWS.

While I'm out getting lunch in Springvale, I witnessed the commonwealth bank in Springvale is on fire, through spreading words, it is being lit by someone on purpose.

I captured this video.

33 18 1

Topics: fires, springvale-3171, melbourne-3000, vic

First posted Fri 18 Nov 2016, 1:10pm