



James Clarke [REDACTED]

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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Please find attached my submission to
the Fire Service Reform.

1 attachment



FireServiceReform.pages.zip

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Regards,

James Clarke



My name is James Clarke and I'm a married 39 year old Father of three children and live in Sunshine of Victoria.

I'm also a Station Officer within the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and stationed at St Albans fire station on A platoon. I have been a firefighter for 19 years with 6 of which as an Officer.

In addition to being an Emergency Medical Responder within the MFB (as all operational MFB firefighters are) these are some of the specialist qualifications that I currently hold.

- Heavy rescue operator specialising in road, rail and industrial rescue as well as various other forms of rescue.
- Teleboom operator which is an aerial appliance used for overhead firefighting as well as rescue from multi story buildings.
- Chemical, Biological & Radioactive qualifications due to the heightened danger today from terrorist activities.

I'm writing to you today to voice my support for the proposed fire service reform. I currently live and work in densely populated suburbs and St Albans in particular is on the fringe where full time professional firefighters share the boundary with volunteer firefighters. In our turnout area alone we protect Sunshine Hospital which has approximately 600 beds as well as Mental health beds, ICU and maternity services. This hospital is one of the busiest in the state of Victoria. We protect approximately 20 different schools, 13 of which we deliver Fire Education programs to. We also protect numerous nursing homes as well as the largely populated surrounding suburbs. This already creates a huge volume of work. Although these areas are protected by MFB professional firefighters, we often respond into Volunteer areas such as Caroline Springs, Hillside, Taylors Hill and Plumpton on a regular basis which is among the fastest growth corridors in Australia.

These areas currently being serviced by a volunteer fire service are already densely populated and is continuing to rapidly grow. It is also not uncommon for us to respond well into these volunteer areas and not receive the support from the CFA volunteer brigades. This is unfair and dangerous that we continue to rely on the volunteers. It's unfair for the volunteers to be expected to respond to every emergency and it's downright dangerous to other emergency personnel as well as the public to gamble with whether they will turn up or not.

I personally can provide an example of when the volunteers failed to respond and I can also provide an example of when our safety has been compromised due to skill set deficiencies. I must mention that have difficulty in writing this as we get along very well with our volunteer counterparts and they do an exceptional job with a high level of professionalism considering the high demand.

Example 1. Prior to being promoted to Station Officer, I was dispatched to a house fire in the early hours of the morning from Sunshine fire station to an address in Hillside. Upon arrival my OIC liaised with the CFA volunteer Incident Controller and was advised that the job had been going for an hour and that a search had not been completed due not having BA operators! I must mention that there were cars outside of the house and the house was now well involved by fire. Once this information was received, MFB professional firefighters completed a search and ultimately extinguished the fire from an internal attack. Fortunately no one was home at the time. If there had been then I can confidently say that those lives would have been lost.

This example was several years ago so I'm unable to locate dates, times and call numbers unfortunately.