



Luke Griffiths [REDACTED]
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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc UFU Vic <ufuvic@ufuvic.asn.au>
bcc
Subject Fire Services Legislation Amendment
(Reform) Bill

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

I am Leading Firefighter Luke Griffiths, employed by the CFA and have been a professional fire fighter now for 6 years. I have additional qualifications amongst other things as an Air Observer and as a Juvenile Fire Awareness and Intervention Program (JFAIP) Practitioner.

I am a recipient of the National Emergency Medal, The National Medal and 20 year CFA service medal.

I am currently stationed at Warrnabool Fire Station and also live in the same town.

I have previously volunteered with the CFA for 15 years at various stations around the state.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

There is a guarantee of safety to the community we serve, myself and my crew as firefighters with the two trucks of 7 firefighters and the response time of 90 seconds. This gives a response within 8 minutes and a guaranteed backup in an environment which is extremely dangerous and unpredictable.

The community we serve will be more effectively protected with the extra resources, the level of training and professionalism of professional fire fighters compared to volunteers - and I refer to my own 15 years of volunteering compared to my current level of proficiency and that of my workmates.

The lack of affect on volunteer turn out or surge capacity with the career firefighters being employed in one agency, despite the scaremongering indicating otherwise. This is due to the reform areas being around the 35 integrated stations primary response areas

The volunteer support will still be maintained with the OM's and OO's with the agreement with the CFA.

The damage that the disputation has had in my workplace and in the wider community when people know who I work for, leads us into despair. The ongoing affect that this childish long running dispute has had on us is intense. I used to be able to walk down the street in my uniform holding my head high.

I now change my uniform before leaving the station at the end of my shift to avoid any confrontations. I hold my tongue when being abused by members of my community when they ask if "I am one of the good guys".

This is all thanks to the miss-truths being put out by a government and an employer who seem to hate me and my workmates.

This has created a terrible working environment in a place where the staff and volunteers I work with actually get along well. The volunteers at the numerous stations I have worked at have been very welcoming and eager to learn from me and my workmates during training. Obviously the respectful and professional nature works both ways.

The fact that this reform will actually benefit volunteers as it has included a package to assist

with volunteer recruitment and retention across the CFA, and extra funding for station upgrades.

I have witnessed first hand the failings of the current structure on numerous occasions. There are many examples of volunteer brigades reporting that they are responding across the radio, only to sit at their fire stations still waiting for a crew to turn up - sometimes even waiting for a qualified truck driver- before they actually respond.

I have seen first hand the volunteers finally arriving at going fires, only to stare at the whole event without actually suppressing the fire, due to their lack of experience, knowledge or qualifications.

I have seen first hand the childish games played in cancelling our trucks during a response to a fire, only to have the Volunteer Incident Controller then ask over the radio for other volunteer trucks to respond. THIS IS HAPPENING.

I have seen the SES members turn down the forcible entry equipment we currently have on our trucks, which would be adequate to free people trapped in vehicles at the time, just so they can use their equipment when it finally turns up. Meantime, victims are trapped in their vehicles while this rubbish is played out. THIS HAPPENS.

I fear for the safety of my family and friends when I am at work. This is due to the fact that the career staff maybe committed at a job outside of town in our support response areas, leaving the volunteers to potentially respond to these people. After seeing first hand the response capability and lack of experience for those that actually do respond, I know that, despite the vols best intentions, they just wont be up to the challenge.

PLEASE change this system, it is time to fix this so we can actually serve our community members to the level that they deserve and expect.

Yours sincerely,
Luke Griffiths,
Leading Firefighter,
Warrnambool CFA

Contact details below:

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