



**Matthew Smith**

07/07/2017 03:45 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF  
cc  
bcc  
Subject Fire Service Reform Submission

To whom it may concern,  
Please find my submission attached.

Regards,

**Matt Smith Firefighter A Plt. / UFU Shop Steward**

Wodonga Fire Station - Cnr Smythe & Stanley Streets Wodonga VIC 3690

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Submission.docx

Matt Smith



Date: 04.06.2017

Fire Services Reform  
Select Committee  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

To the Secretary:

My name is a Matthew Smith. I am currently employed as a Professional Firefighter by the Country Fire Authority based in the City of Wodonga. I have been a Professional Firefighter since 2012. Prior to this I was a Volunteer Firefighter also in Wodonga. I am a Firefighter responding to all manners of emergency within my role such as Fires both bush and urban, Hazardous Material Incidents, Road Accidents and assistance to other agencies. I also have specialised qualification in Rope Rescue, Ground Observing (Fire intelligence) and have attained qualification to operate 9 various Fire Appliances.

The CFA responds Wodonga Professional Firefighters to all emergency calls within 90 seconds of receiving notification. The responding firefighters consist of a guaranteed crew of 4 comprised of a Station Officer, Leading Firefighter and 2 Firefighters as a minimum. The crew is highly skilled, physically fit and dependable in their skills mix. Wodonga currently has a population of around 40,000 plus a few more thousand in the region, which is a little under the totals of Richmond and Hawthorn combined. The township is home to 2 hospitals, several vocational and higher education facilities, primary schools, large industrial organisations, a large Army base and thousands of dwellings. Wodonga also has the North East Rail Line and the Hume Hwy running past comprising over 10,000+ vehicle movements daily. Emergencies can and do happen at any of these locations. In my experience it has been the timely manner in response that has been most positive, however it is the lack of guaranteed response beyond the initial crew of 4 that has me championing Fire Service Reform.

As I previously mentioned Wodonga has a population the size of two high-density suburbs in Melbourne, yet is only protected by four Staff per day and night. As residents of Wodonga pay a Fire Service Levy, I ask, why is it that they do not have the same emergency response as that of a resident of Brighton? Or St Kilda? Or Footscray? Should Monash Morrabbin Hospital in Bentleigh East have a fire alarm occur, the response would be at least 2 Pumpers and possibly an aerial appliance. Yet an alarm at Wodonga Hospital will have Wodonga Staff with the Pumper and the possibility of Wodonga West and Baranduda. However as previous failings have shown, there is no guarantee as to what response will occur. This is no slight upon the dedicated volunteers that are a part of Wodonga West or Baranduda (our neighboring brigades). Many people in this day and age are not able to respond as a firefighter due to various reasons. They may not have flexible working arrangements, they may not work locally or are just time poor with all that is required in modern life in 2017. Either way, it is generally concerning that as a Firefighter I cannot have a guarantee that I will have a backup crew to not only assist me in fighting a fire but also in an evacuation of a hospital and/or first aid. I ask then, so where is my safety? As a crew of 4 Staff our own procedures suggest we should have backup crews in Breathing Apparatus. This regularly does not happen, as a Volunteer response is not guaranteed. And if there is a Volunteer response, there is no guarantee they will have the right skills or experience to undertake the tasks accordingly.



This is where the Fire Service Reform will improve the standard response and the quantity of Firefighters on the fire ground. I don't believe there will be any impact upon the roles Volunteers play in emergency response. They have and will always undertake their role to the best of their abilities. The Volunteers will always be required and it is my hope that they will continue to support the future FRV Staff in the major regional towns of Victoria and in-turn FRV can support them in their further regional based locations.

Sincerely,

FF Matthew Smith #7903870  
Wodonga Fire Station