

**Neil Kingston** [REDACTED]

07/07/2017 01:10 AM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
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Subject Fire Services Reform

Dear Fire Services Reform Select Committee,
My name is Neil Kingston, I am a Leading Firefighter with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade with almost 14 years experience and 13.5 of those years have been in the western suburbs of Melbourne. I am currently stationed at Spotswood Fire Station and over the years have spent time at all fire stations in the Western District. As you would be aware, the growth in the west has been incredibly rapid. In particular, areas that are covered by CFA volunteer brigades. One of the beauties of my role as a full time professional firefighter is that when we turn out to an emergency, we know that turning out with us is another MFB appliance also crewed with full time professionally trained firefighters, qualified to wear breathing apparatus and well drilled in all facets of firefighting. We also know that we will have 7 on the fireground. To put it simply, we have backup and support. There are occasions when we have ventured into CFA area staffed with volunteers for emergency calls where that cannot be said. We are unsure what our backup and support will be. This is very concerning to firefighters and particularly concerning for the members of the public who live in areas that were once country but are now well and truly urban. They don't deserve this type of service in the 21st century. There have been occasions where I have been at house fires in volunteer areas and there were a number of CFA volunteers standing by their appliance unable to assist with the firefighting as they were not trained to wear breathing apparatus. What concerned me the most was that with their best intentions to help the community, there was little they could do. This is putting the community at risk. I don't mean this as a slight on the CFA volunteers. We all know that they do an amazing job but the city and the larger urban areas have out grown a volunteer type of coverage.

It needs to be noted also that areas of the western suburbs are heavily industrialised and have both producers and stores of incredibly dangerous goods. These facilities demand full time, professionally trained firefighters and those with specialist skills and qualifications to manage and deal with should an incident occur.

This whole issue has taken an incredible toll on full time firefighters. It has been politicised beyond belief. It is time for this to stop. It is time for bold and brave decisions free of political influence. For those decision makers to see with clear eyes that this fire service reform is a must. The current fire service needs to be dragged into this century, not left untouched for half a century and leaving thousands upon thousands of citizens of Victoria exposed and not getting the fire cover they deserve. Two fire services is a must. The volunteers will continue to do the incredible work they do and full time professional firefighters will continue to protect the urban areas, urban areas that reflect the current and future growth of these urban areas. The passing of this legislation will be incredibly positive for all people of the state of Victoria.

Yours sincerely,

Leading Firefighter Neil Kingston.

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Spotswood Fire Station (45) D Platoon

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