



**Peter McCallum** [REDACTED]

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To Consultation/DTF@DTF  
cc  
bcc  
Subject Fire Services Bill

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Submission re.docx

From Peter McCallum

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## Submission re: Fire Services Bill Select Committee 2017

Name: Peter Hamilton McCallum

To whom it may concern,

The Committee,

My name is Peter McCallum. I have been a member of the Country Fire Authority since 1983 as both volunteer and career firefighter. I am currently employed as a structural instructor based in Kerang within the CFA North West Region. I am also a volunteer with the Kerang Fire Brigade.

I have experienced life on a variety of integrated stations. Those of two per shift others with ten as well as the likes of Portland that is staffed with one firefighter Monday to Friday.

I will make my comments brief. It is also my intention that these comments are seen to be based on observation not emotion.

The best service delivery to Victorian communities (Protection of life and property) will require the making of tough, unpopular decisions. As Melbourne and larger regional cities expand so should the rationale of volunteer only and career only Fire/Rescue stations or hubs.

The larger the numbers on shift at integrated fire stations, the less the need for volunteer support. The result of this is that the volunteers skills on the fireground then diminish. They no longer get the opportunity to use the skills they have trained hard to achieve as these tasks have already been taken by the career firefighters who are on scene first. To best serve 'surge' capacity volunteers should be given the opportunity to be autonomous. They need to be strategically placed in areas where they can still be the primary source of response in their own community in a safe and timely way. Lets not confuse the 'surge' capacity of well trained experienced firefighters with large numbers of members in Annual Reports.

Much change and thought outside the traditional square is needed in rural Victoria. As more farmers move off the land and farms become larger there are less people available to volunteer. While there may still be workers on these larger properties, they may be transient and have no connection with the community or do not stay in the area long enough to invest training opportunities in. In areas around larger regional towns and cities farmers are moving their place of residence off the farm and into town. Consequently, they are only available during the day when on their farms. The sons and daughters of farmers are seeking more opportunities in larger towns or cities. Furthering their

education or taking up trades is having an impact on regional communities and their ability to maintain services through volunteering.

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Perhaps a 'retained' version of firefighters in regional/rural areas will offer a reliable, responsible and a more cost efficient delivery, with a suitable monetary reward for those who dedicate so much of their time to protecting the lives and property of others. Although a volunteer fire service, CFA, at considerable expense, outlays protective clothing, equipment and training to many that either don't stick around or are involved more for the social aspects.

I support the separation of the career firefighters from volunteers. Although seen to be performing similar roles in the community the road to the same end is very different. Currently, CFA has evolved beyond the scope of the Acts intention. Whereby the staff on fire stations have traditionally been seen to support the volunteers, now we have the situation where the volunteers, to their detriment, support the staff. Fire services in Victoria, in my opinion, have fallen behind in leadership, administration and in some areas current best practices. CFA requires change that will go against the grain of traditional thinking and career fire services need a change of culture. This is an opportunity to start the process for the betterment of Victorians.

I believe that CFA should become a separate organisation for the following reasons:

- Integrated stations should be managed individually like they used to be. An Officer-In-Charge responsible only for that station.
- Regional staff have enough to deal with involving volunteers – operationally and HR.
- Support staff don't understand the EBA.

However CFA is supported by career staff, administratively, operationally, etc., as a volunteer based organisation CFA has far too much to address to take it forward into a relevant future and doesn't need the anxiety of industrial issues as has been the case for several years. This has had a huge impact on the morale of both volunteer and paid staff. This is not an 'us' and 'them' argument, as many career staff like myself are volunteers. Not only do we support CFA as volunteers, we acknowledge the massive commitment made by those who, as volunteers alone, devote tireless hours away from family and work to keep their communities safe where it is impractical to have career firefighters.

Thankyou for the opportunity to make a submission to such an important issue.

Sincerely yours

Peter McCallum