



[REDACTED]
06/07/2017 05:04 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Submission Into Fire Services Review

Please find attached my submission into the fire services review.

Please note I wish my name and identity to remain confidential .

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]
Traralgon Fire Station –
[REDACTED]

Protecting lives and property

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Submission into Fire Services Review.docx

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

**INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017**

My name is [REDACTED] and I am a professional Firefighter with the CFA. My background is:

- Joined CFA as a junior volunteer in 2000 with Mt Martha Fire Brigade.
- Moved to senior ranks and became an active volunteer firefighter in 2005.
- Served as 4th, 3rd, and second Lieutenant.
- Recipient of the "Tim Moseley" award.
- Recipient of 10 year CFA service medal and due for 15 year medal.
- Awarded National Emergency Medal – 2009 bushfires.
- Hold the rank of Qualified Firefighter.
- Resigned as a volunteer in 2016.
- Responded to over 1600 fires and emergencies.

I live in Mornington and currently work in Traralgon.

I write this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services.

Volunteering & Response.

I became an active volunteer firefighter with an outer metro fully volunteer brigade in 2005. The brigade had a strong operational membership and almost always responded with full crewing across all vehicles, all the while maintaining a high service delivery standard.

Across the next 11 years operational membership dropped significantly and crewing for fire calls reduced with it. The brigade began to fail their service delivery standard on a regular basis and reliance was really on the professional firefighters stationed at the neighbouring brigade of Mornington.

There is and always has been a mentality within the brigade that we don't want the staff (professional firefighters) coming into our area and running jobs in "our patch". This was mainly the view of long serving members who had been around long before Mornington became an integrated brigade.

After becoming a professional Firefighter with the CFA in 2014, I highlighted the brigades response statistics numerous times. I had written to the Brigade and supplied figures that showed the station had been failing to respond 34% of the time. Regularly there would only be a 1 or 2 member response and quite often no one would respond at all. Leaving the workload for the neighbouring brigades of Mornington and Dromana. With a population of 17,000, a fire brigade that doesn't respond is unacceptable in this day and age. After I resigned in 2016 statistical data was released that showed Mt Martha Brigade failed to reach their benchmark service delivery standard 69% of the time.

It should be noted that Mt Martha is not alone and many volunteer brigades struggle with response times, particularly during the day. This is through no fault of their own. Financial strain and work stresses make it harder for people to find the time to volunteer. I can attest to this myself as this was the reason I ceased volunteering.

When I joined the CFA I was told CFA comes last. Family, then work, then the fire brigade if you have time. The volunteer demographic is changing and people just don't have the time.

The public are paying for a service that they just aren't getting in outer metropolitan Melbourne.

Training & Competence

Having undergone both a volunteer and a professional recruit course I can confidently say that there is a huge difference in the base level firefighter produced from either course.

My volunteer recruit course consisted of 4 days across 2 weekends with an assessment that followed. The outcome from this course is "Wildfire Minimum Skills". This left me with a basic understanding of bushfire behaviour, an understanding of pumping operations on a tanker and some basic skills like hose bowling and knot tying. This does not give you the ability to enter a structure to perform a rescue in the event of a fire.

My Career recruit course consisted of 80 days over a 16 week period. Upon completion of this course I had a sound knowledge of structural and wildfire behaviour, structure and wildfire suppression and tactics as well as practical competence in both fields. I had also spent weeks in breathing apparatus conducting practical drills involving both firefighting and search and rescue operations.

After graduating Fiskville station life begins where the skills I'd learnt over the past 4 months are really put to the test. The training doesn't stop, if anything it's ramped up. Regular drills on shift as well as furthering my own competencies through modules and courses, all the while also responding to fires and incidents.

As a volunteer, after recruits, training consisted of approximately 6 hours a month, across Tuesday nights. This would be provided by the other volunteers from their experience, both theory and practical.

This is just a basic scope of the differences in training and competence that the people living in outer metropolitan Melbourne and major regional centres are receiving for their fire services levy.

The Dispute

The enterprise bargaining dispute has further driven a wedge between volunteers and career firefighters. I believe irreparable damage has been done and the days of volunteers and career firefighters working out of the same station for the same organisation in harmony are behind us. The CFA should be given back to the volunteers and they can maintain a fully volunteer organisation while the professional firefighters from the CFA and MFB form a new fire service.

The entire time I have been employed by the CFA we have been in dispute. I used to look forward to going to work, I love my job, but the last couple of years have definitely changed how I feel about

getting to work each day and seeing articles about my profession smeared on the front pages of newspapers.

When the “Hands off the CFA” campaign was in full swing I would regularly receive negative comments from members of the public condoning me for being a professional firefighter and member of the UFU.

At one point during the campaign, my shift (D Shift, Traralgon), were working dayshift. The volunteers were out raising money for the brigade and local group. As a shift we offered our support to the volunteers to assist in the tin rattle at the traffic lights. During the time we spent at the lights assisting the volunteers we received numerous negative comments from the public, including one gentleman who dropped a bullet into a collection tin and stated, “This is for the Premier and Career Firefighters”.

All this coming from the community we serve.

These actions have definitely taken an emotional toll on my colleagues and I. My family and friends have noticed a change in my emotional state at home as well and it saddens me to think that this is having a negative impact on the people I care about away from work.

Conclusion

For me, joining the fire brigade was all I ever wanted to do. My father was and still is a volunteer as is my brother, that’s how I became involved in the first place. Some of the best friends I have I made through the times I spent as a volunteer. I was lucky enough to turn my passion into a career and have not looked back since. It will be sad to leave an organisation I have put so much time into and one that has also given me so much but I am excited to be a part of something new, change is inevitable and it is definitely needed now.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I truly believe these reforms will provide the best outcomes not only for the volunteers and professional firefighters but also to the people and the communities of Victoria.

Yours sincerely,

Anonymous.