



Pete Shroder [REDACTED]

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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject FW: Submission From Pete Shroder
Fire Services Committee

1 attachment



Fire Service Reform Submission.docx

Fire Services Bill Select Committee 2017 - Submission
Please see Attachment
Pete Shroder
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

To: Fire Services Select Committee 2017

Dear Committee,

My name is Peter Shroder and I am a Senior Leading Fire Fighter with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and I am stationed at Sunshine in Melbourne's Western Suburbs. I have been a fire fighter with the MFB for ten years and hold qualifications in Pumper Tanker, heavy rescue, telescopic boom aerial appliance and shipboard firefighting. I am the incumbent Health and Safety Representative for B Platoon in Western District and am a mental health first aider and a Peer support counsellor.

The Suburb of Sunshine and its surrounds contain a mixture of residential and high risk establishments including; Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Schools, Explosive Manufacturing, Petrochemical Facilities and Prisons. Because of the high risk potential it is essential to maintain a professional fire service that can offer a timely and specialised response to avoid any escalation to emergency situations.

In the Western suburbs of Melbourne MFB appliances are sometimes required to turnout with CFA volunteer brigades in areas such as Caroline Springs, Hillside, Point Cook and Werribee. In my experience the main issue with these turnouts is that you cannot always be guaranteed that a volunteer truck will turn up if the career staffed truck is busy at another call. Other issues encountered when relying on a volunteer brigade are their response times and a lack of uniformity in qualifications amongst the fire fighters. Increased response times from an oncoming appliance can leave crews already on scene under resourced and unprotected. A lack of uniformity in basic qualifications such as breathing apparatus leaves crews already fighting the fire at risk because there isn't a skilled back up crew to get them out if something goes wrong. Because of these issues whenever there is a call to a nearby CFA area two MFB appliances are deployed, this safety factor guarantees a minimum of seven skilled fire fighters at every call.

It is wonderful that there are people in our communities that will volunteer to protect others but a lot of the communities they protect have grown steadily to a point where it is irresponsible to expect these people with work, life and family commitments to be able to respond and protect these communities to the same level as a professional fulltime career staffed brigade. I live in Torquay in Victoria where there is no professional Fire Service, our community has more than doubled in size in the last few years and we are still reliant on a volunteer brigade. If the volunteers are unable to turn up to a fire call the nearest career staffed station is 20 minutes away in Belmont. In my experience as a fire fighter a 20 minute response to a house fire means that the house is destroyed and if anyone is trapped inside they are dead.

I urge you as a committee to please consider how our State has changed over the decades but our Metropolitan Fire District boundaries have not, and what were once sleepy regional centres are now thriving satellite cities with huge urban growth areas. The Fire Services need change; Volunteer and Career staff need their own organisations to clear the muddied waters and so each can concentrate on the best interests of their people. All fire fighters respect each other, press and politics aside we all do it to protect life and property.

Yours Sincerely

Pete Shroder

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