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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Fire Service Reform Seelect
Committee submission

Please find attached my submission to the committee. As stated in the submission, my name, contact details and identity are to remain confidential.

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I would like to forward this submission for consideration by the Fire Services Reform Select Committee.

While I would like to **keep my name, identity and contact details confidential**, the remaining contents of my submission are available for your consideration.

I have been a professional firefighter for more than six years. I am currently a Leading Firefighter at Melton Fire Station, where I have been stationed for the past four-and-a-half years. In that time, I have seen considerable growth in the area, with residential expansion into Melton West, Melton South, Waterford Estate (south of Melton), and Woodlea (Rockbank).

Since I have been at Melton, there has also been the major development of Woodgrove Shopping Centre into a substantial retail centre.

While the urban risk has increased in my time at Melton, the station has not changed its staffing levels while I have been here. We have three firefighters on our pumper (below the staffing levels at other stations and below the preferred minimum for safe firefighting operations in accordance with the Chief Officer's Standing Orders) and two staff members on our rescue truck.

In my time at Melton, I have personally been involved in incidents that required additional resources that were simply not available due to insufficient numbers on the fireground (as a result of delayed response, failure to respond or members not endorsed for task to be carried out). I will share just a couple of those incidents for your consideration.

At a recent house fire in Melton West, I was a member of the BA crew to make a first attack on the building. While the roof had already begun to collapse, we could not confirm if everybody was out of the house, so we made entry to the burning building. I was accompanied on the internal attack by a new recruit, who had been out of training college for less than two months and required my supervision. The house was fully involved, and it was possibly one of the hottest fires I have attended in my career (it melted part of my helmet and destroyed the soles of my boots). After exiting the building, I was feeling unwell and was checked by paramedics, who registered my heart rate still above 150 beats a minute. On leaving the ambulance, the Incident Controller needed another crew in BA, and my crew was the only one available, so I had to once again enter the building while my heart rate was still soaring.

On another occasion, I attended a house fire in Melton West where I made the initial attack on a house fire while wearing BA. I was by myself for the initial attack, but could not enter the building due the size of the flames. It was not until I had knocked down most of the flames and could enter the building did I receive support from another BA operator to conduct a search for a child that was reported missing. When inside, I left the other BA operator in a safe location to continue knocking down the flames while I conducted a quick search for the child by myself. This is not recommended as a safe work practice, but insufficient

crew numbers dictated that I had to make this decision. At this fire, I wore a total of three BA cylinders for the duration of the incident due to insufficient crew numbers with BA endorsement.

Finally, when responding with the pumper crew to an undefined fire at Melton South, the rescue truck received a call to a motor vehicle accident, with a possible person trapped. As such, the rescue truck diverted to this call and was on scene possibly within a couple of minutes. As mentioned earlier, the rescue truck only carries two firefighters. On arrival, we found a car that had smashed into a tree. The battery of the car was 20-30 metres away, such was the severity of the impact, and the driver was motionless behind the wheel. I deployed our rescue tools and then entered the vehicle from an unlocked door on the passenger side. We were still by ourselves at this stage. I checked the driver for a pulse, but could not find one. I ordered the driver door to be cut open so we could commence immediate CPR and prepare to rapidly extract the patient. Once the door was opened, paramedics arrived, but we remained the only two firefighters on scene for some time. It ended with a fatality and remains one of the most stressful jobs I have ever attended.

There have been numerous other examples to draw on, including the failure to respond of supporting brigades to a fire alarm at a nursing home in Melton South, but I believe the above three examples provide a good example of the challenges faced in my area.

Thank you for considering my submission.

