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Sent from my iPad

My name is Peter Marotta. I have been serving the community as a firefighter since 1995, starting off as a volunteer at the Cockatoo CFA and then going on to join the Metropolitan Fire Brigade in 2005. Due to the fact that I have served as both a volunteer and a career firefighter, I think I have a reasonably balanced view on the effect of the fire service reforms. I am also battling one of the cancers that is covered by the presumptive legislation so I am, obviously, extremely hopeful that the legislation is successful, to ensure that my family's future is protected, as well as all the other firefighters in the future that contract this terrible disease.

As a CFA volunteer I too was very proud to serve the local community in which I lived and worked. We raised money to buy new equipment as well as funding new fire trucks and support vehicles. We maintained our station and surrounding garden, participated in local community events and had a real sense of ownership of our brigade. It was also well known by all the town that we were volunteers and that when the siren would sound we would do our best to get to the emergency as soon as we could. Our brigade responded to around 80-100 calls a year with the majority of these calls occurring over the summer months. We also had a large, hilly response area to cover. I can remember taking up to 30 minutes to arrive at some calls but we did our best and regardless of whether it was a house fire or a car accident the people involved were always glad to see us. Unfortunately, in these rural and country areas it is not economically or logistically possible to provide the sort of response times that the residents of the Metropolitan Fire District enjoy. When you take into account the additional challenges Volunteers face, such as having to drop what that are doing at home or work to respond to a call, large geographical response areas, training and equipment available, etc., they do a fantastic job for the vast majority of incidents they attend and as a community we should do everything we can to support them. The fire service reforms will ensure that Volunteers in these areas will not only continue to be that front line of attack in the country areas, they will also ensure that:

- They remain a 100% volunteer organisation that is not hamstrung by industrial matters involving career firefighters
- They keep their identity as CFA volunteers
- They will have their own board and chief dedicated to volunteers
- They will receive additional funding for training and equipment
- They will have access to presumptive legislation to protect them should they contract cancer

As a volunteer, protecting my local community was very important to me as I have always been someone who likes to help out someone in need. I also enjoyed being a volunteer firefighter as it is an exciting job that exposes you to a variety of situations and events that the average member of the public will never get to experience. In saying that, as a firefighter, career or volunteer, your overwhelming priority must always be the community which you have been entrusted to protect. As much as I know volunteers love to serve and love to do the job, personal motivations to block these reforms from being introduced because it will effect the amount of calls that they will get to attend, or because they might not get to do as much on scene as they do now, must not be considered as a legitimate argument.

It is very disappointing that there are volunteer captains in some of the outer suburban areas that are refusing to extend the distance that career firefighters can respond to within their community. It amazes me that this can still be happening in 2017, especially when you look at all the statistics on response times and fail to respond of some of these brigades. The fact that Boronia pumper, which is equipped with Road Accident Rescue equipment as well as 4 EMR trained career firefighters, has to wait for the SES volunteers to get on scene before they can commence extrication of the casualty, is completely unacceptable and yet that is the current situation, unless AV is on scene and direct them to start. There are many unacceptable practices occurring every day, however these stories don't make the headlines, and thank god they don't. Imagine the damage to the level of confidence the community holds in the fire service if they became aware of these selfish, self-serving practices.

As a firefighter career or volunteer your primary motivation must be delivering the best service possible to the community that you protect. If your argument to prevent change is based on the effect it will have on your own personal needs then your argument is seriously flawed. Personally I am extremely disappointed that we will lose our identity as MFB firefighters and 125 years of tradition, however I except the fact that these reforms are vital to improve the fire services for the better. The reality is that the outer suburban areas and growth corridors of Melbourne have outgrown volunteer response. CFA volunteers claim to be trained to the same standard as career firefighters however in my experience in working with volunteers, is that there is a vast difference in the level of training depending on the individual. Some volunteers are trained to enter structure fires and some are not. Some volunteers chose to grow a beard making it impossible for them to were breathing apparatus yet they still claim to be highly trained and still turn out to structure fires which not only puts their own H&S at risk but also prevents them from assisting us should we become trapped within the structure. This is just one of many examples of the discrepancies between the training levels between career and volunteer staff.

As for the presumptive legislation the fact that so much evidence to support the this legislation has been produced not only from Australian research but also from around the world yet it has still not been introduced is very disappointing. I think as a community the least we can do is to offer every bit of support possible to the people who put themselves in harms way in order to protect us. In addition to having to deal with the cancer I now have to face the fact that my sick leave is eventually going to runout and I will be left struggling to look after the most important people in my life, my own family. This is extremely concerning to me as I have spent the majority of my working life looking after the community however I will not be able to look after my love ones. I sincerely hope that this committee recommends that these reforms go ahead so that we can start moving forward in a positive way to improve the fire response for all Victorians and start repairing the damage that this dispute has caused between career and volunteer firefighters.

LFF Peter Marotta

