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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
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bcc
Subject Submission for Select committee into
fire service reform.

Please find attached my submission

Kind Regards

Adam Prictor

Leading Fire Fighter
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Caroline Springs VIC 3023



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Fire Service Reform in the state of Victoria.docx

Fire Service Reform in the state of Victoria.

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

Dear Committee Members,

Allow me to introduce myself

Name: Adam Prictor

Rank: Leading Fire Fighter

Employer: Country Fire Authority Victoria

Length of Service: Career 9 Years

Volunteer CFA 4 years

NSWRFS 2 years

WA Fire and Rescue (9 months)

Specialist Qualifications: Fire Investigator (Bushfire)

I currently live in **GISBORNE** and work at **CAROLINE SPRINGS FIRE STATION**.

Firstly I would like to thank you for taking the time in reading my submission in what I believe is the most important, needed and appropriate reform in the history of the fire services in the state of the Victoria. This reform will deliver a streamlined service which will incorporate a better response capability for the community. Currently the Victorian community receives varying levels of emergency response depending on which side of the road you live on. Some places will get a guaranteed two truck response with 7 fire fighters, yet on the other side of the road you may not get a response at all. If you are in one of the 35 integrated areas you will get one truck staffed with Career Fire fighters and the second truck..... well It may arrive..... at some stage..... if at all.

Unfortunately I have seen this happen on too many occasions. On several of those occasions it was pure luck that there weren't dire consequences. This has not been contained to fire responses only, but to road accident rescue as well. I will delve into this in more detail later into this document.

I am writing this submission in support of the reform of the fire services for the following reasons.

1. Guaranteed two fire trucks and a minimum of 7 fire fighters on the fire ground.

This is vitally important. Until recently our Career trucks had a crew of three on them, some now have four. It is a very concerning situation when you are at a house fire with only three fire fighters. As an example at one fire in particular I was the pump driver/operator. After establishing the water supply, I was tasked to help with the internal fire attack. This was due to the fact that the two surrounding brigades had failed to respond. Whilst inside with the LFF conducting search and rescue operations, one constant was in back of my mind during the fire fight. I had one person who could possibly affect a rescue if we were trapped. This same person was also running the pump, establishing an Emergency Management team, liaising with other agencies, conducting the role of incident controller and our rescue team.

This was the Senior Station Officer on Sunbury pumper. Beside the enormous pressure placed on the officer as the incident controller if a rescue was to be undertaken which fire fighter do you pull out first? How do you determine this? How do you try and rescue two fire fighters at the same time, by yourself, knowing at the time, no further trucks were coming. I wish I could say this was not a common thought process, or a major concern, **however this is what occurs every day.** It is a very eerie feeling you get when you ask on the radio how long before help arrives? Then you are informed brigades have failed to respond.

One thing I need the committee to understand is this. We are seeking to get 7 on the fire ground for safety, ours and the community's. In certain countries the minimum on the fire ground is 11 personnel and in some European Countries it is 13. Currently in CFA certain trucks run with 3 and others run with 4..... With no guaranteed help coming.... Allegedly we are world leaders in emergency response.....

With the above in mind, let's look at the safety of the community!

With seven fire fighters responded to a fire or emergency incident with two trucks within 90 seconds, the survivability of trapped people increases. Two teams qualified in the use of breathing apparatus, search and rescue techniques and are fit, can enter a burning structure, conduct a search faster, assist with patient removal if there is more than one, still have a rescue team outside if something goes. We can keep the fire to the room of origin, reduce the chance of flashover and reduce the dollar loss value. This in turn reduces the need for long term emergency accommodation for fire victims, reduces insurance pay outs and increased insurance premiums. This all reduces the overall monetary outlay due to a fire incident, which in turn benefits Victoria's economy.

Another factor in this two truck response to calls in the 35 integrated fire station areas, is that there is another truck en route. This gives the officer flexibility in their decision making as they have a known skill set and capability. This is not just for the re assurance for the career fire fighters but also to Volunteer brigade areas that Career fire fighters respond into. The volunteer incident controller now has a known resource coming and if the second

Career truck is not needed then they are returned to station. The volunteer incident controller then has greater flexibility to implement a plan that will assist them in achieving their objective. This may be tasking breathing apparatus crews en route to the call for search and rescue purposes, this in turn benefits the community knowing that trained BA operators are on route to increase victim survivability.

At the moment there is **no guarantee** that the volunteer truck coming **has breathing apparatus operators on it**, if the truck gets there in these highly urbanised areas.

2. The 35 areas that could possibly be moving to the FRV model are now highly urbanised – high residential areas and areas containing heavy industry.

I currently work at Caroline Springs Fire Station. During my time in CFA I have been appointed to the following stations

- *Hoppers Crossing
- *Craigieburn
- *Sunbury
- *Point Cook
- *Caroline Springs

I have also worked at over half of the CFA Integrated stations in the state of Victoria on relieving duties.

My current stations response area has a massive urban residential area to the north, numerous nursing homes and schools in the middle of our response area, and to the south, a massive industrial area and warehouse facilities. I have also neglected to mention that we respond to 3 prisons which is a different risk in itself.

During the last 14 months whilst working at Caroline Springs I have seen a multitude of change. We have had numerous additions of risk to our fire district and support district that include but are not limited to the Following

- new 1000 bed prison at Ravenhall (this is in addition to the other 3 we respond too)
- new schools
- additions to shopping centres
- new housing developments in Rockbank and Melton. Rock bank development alone is already over 20 stages and growing.
- Two 42 metre high oxygen deficient cold storage Facilities (major Hazmat risk due to the refrigerants used and stored on site)
- New rail link

- Numerous large scale warehouse Facilities, incidentally two of these warehouses are 1km in length.
- Numerous retail outlets.
- Multi level apartment buildings

Our response tables have the MFB coming to support us at a large majority of calls. This is due to the current risk, and what growth is planned in the future for our fire district and its surrounds. There is another very significant reason.

You may have noticed I haven't mentioned volunteer response in relation to the above mentioned risks. The three volunteer brigades that support into our area are

- **Rockbank** (to our west)
 - o This brigade supports into two career stations response areas, those being Caroline Springs and Melton. This Station has **massive failures in responding to fire calls**. This is both day and night. Caroline Springs now goes to every call into Rockbanks response area. It is also in one of Melbourne's fastest growth corridors.
- **Diggers Rest** (to our north)
 - o This brigade supports into two career stations response areas, they are Caroline Springs and Sunbury. They too **have failures in responding**. Whilst stationed at Sunbury it was very common (almost weekly) to receive a call from the brigade informing us on that day they would be unable to respond to any calls due to the lack of volunteers. I understand that they are recruiting heavily to increase its response capacity.
- **Truganina** (to our South West).
 - o This Station not only Supports into Hoppers Crossing, it also supports into Caroline Springs and at times into Laverton Nth. This station gets out of the door to calls at various times, however like the above brigades **fails to meet their Service delivery standards (SDS') regularly**.

These brigades are all in Massive urban growth corridors. These Brigades **are community minded brigades with good people in them. They are aware of the massive short falls in their ability to respond to fire calls and have acted accordingly**. They have requested that Career Fire fighters respond into their fire district, for nearly all of their calls. Truganina has actually handed some of their major risk areas to Integrated stations.

- An example of this is Truganina fire brigade handed responsibility of fire response, to a major warehouse facility, the Coles distribution centre, to Caroline Springs. The MFB also support us into this call as they are closer than any other CFA fire station. They were aware that they could not meet the community safety expectations for that facility. **Full credit should be given to that brigade** in firstly recognising this and then implementing a strategy to deliver the best service to the community.

This information indicates to one thing. The system needs to change! It is unrealistic to think that a one truck response with three or four fire fighters in these 35 areas is enough to deal with the risk to our community.

The volunteers who do an amazing job at trying to help the community cannot meet the

*increased call rates

* have the correct skill set every time they respond

* meet the service delivery standards that are expected by the community and the government they serve.

Road networks have huge demands placed on them, preventing the volunteers from getting to stations. Volunteers now work outside the areas they reside in, can't be released from employers due to work loads, and have more demanding family lives.

Some of these stations in the 35 integrated areas are responding to over 1000 calls a year. As the population grows our call rates are increasing exponentially. It is unrealistic to expect volunteers to respond to this amount of calls year in year out. This also places additional stress on the Volunteers who know that the community is in danger as they are unable to respond.

Our station will respond to EMR events starting in September where we have been informed that our station alone will be receiving around 400 additional calls a year. This will place greater strain on our hard pressed volunteers who will be expected to attend additional calls if we are committed at an EMR event.

This is unfair to both the public and emergency responders. THE SYSTEM NEEDS TO CHANGE.

3. Streamlined service and better response capacity.

A streamlined service will benefit Victorians in numerous ways. It will

-provide guaranteed response in 90 seconds

-Two trucks and a minimum of 7 fire fighters

-Trucks to be moved up from other stations to provide coverage in areas where trucks are committed for lengthy periods of time. This currently occurs in the Metropolitan fire district.

- No longer a requirement for recall of LFF or SO liaison, if a MFB truck is moved up to a CFA fire station as we will all be the same. This in turns saves taxpayer money.

- Standardised training.

- Central rostering system. Currently CFA station staff addresses any rostering issues and then rectify.

- Better procedures and systems (procedures from both MFB and CFA). This benefits the community.

- **Radial search for the closest available trucks.** Not bound by response tables set by individual brigades that are approved at District level. There are currently MFB and CFA integrated fire stations that are not going to calls even though they may be the second closest station to the event. This is due to antiquated response tables and some people's attitudes. **It is vitally important that the independent review committee re response tables and boundaries is implemented.** This will negate many issues currently faced by responding fire crews and increase community safety.

- The capability to conduct multiple rescues in multi storey buildings that are now being built in a large majority of the 35 integrated response areas. Guaranteed BA teams will be responded to these events every time.

- One pay section, not two

- One Rostering section, not two

- One HR division, not two

- One training department, not two

- One EBA, not two lots of negotiations (saving lots of taxpayer's money)

- Greater response of specialist appliances and additional courses.

- Ease work load of already tired volunteers in these 35 areas.

- Not affect the surge capacity of CFA

-Meet what the majority of Staff and volunteers want. (many **volunteers are wanting this change but will not speak out due to fear of bullying and segregation by the VFBV.** I have asked if I could include them in this document however they are scared this information may be handed out).

-It is what the community want. Many polls by media outlets have come back with overwhelming support for the FRV/CFA model.

There are so many more positives to mention however I wish you to read this document and I think that if this is too much longer it won't be read in the allotted time for the committee to make its recommendation.

At the end of this document I will high light several calls where the volunteers have failed to respond/ not met their Standards of Delivery Service. I have also have included the call numbers. This will give you the opportunity to check the CAD data and IMS notes to prove to you that these events actually occurred.

Conclusion.

In 1958 the Metropolitan Fire District boundary ended in Deer Park. It remains today as it was in 1958. I am stationed at the next fire station across from Deer Park in the booming suburb of Caroline Springs. This massive residential and industrial area is known by many as Metropolitan Melbourne. According to the Bureau of Statistics It is in the Melbourne Metropolitan Boundary. When you inform those people that they live in the country area of Victoria in relation to fire response they look at you perplexed.

We need to progress with the times. We need to get ahead of the game and reform the system. Every Fire Service in the country over the last 30 years has responded to population growth, hazardous risk and infrastructural changes. It is in my opinion, a Fire fighter who has volunteered in 3 different states and has been doing this as a career for 9 years, we have not.

Five years ago In 2012 I went to Sunbury fire station as I moved residences. It was the closest integrated Station to my new home. Until the 5 fire fighter ranks arrived at that station in 2012 the crewing on the pumper was 2, a Station Officer and a Leading Fire Fighter. It is now 4. Even though the crewing number has changed one thing has not. It is the same for all 35 areas that this new reform will include. There is no guaranteed second truck response with the correct skills mix.

The areas this reform is dealing with are expanding rapidly and we are not keeping up. All politics needs to be put aside and reform needs to occur. It is expected if this reform goes ahead my work load will increase around 300%. We are excepting of this because it is about the community we serve. The people we are here to protect.

We can't lose sight about what this reform is about. The person who is trapped in a burning house, dealing with major Hazmat incidents effecting hundreds of families, rescuing the person trapped in a car accident with multiple injuries. It's about protecting lives and property. It is about the time critical things, the trench and confined space rescue. It's about getting fire trucks to emergencies as fast as possible. You and your families, as do mine, and the Victorian public deserve the fastest and most effective response with the correct skill set. This reform will deliver that.

Please look at the facts and don't oppose for the sake of opposing.

Support the reform. Get the best response possible when you need us. You just never know, the next life we save maybe yours.

Thank you for taking the time to read my Submission

Yours sincerely

LFF Adam Prictor

Caroline Springs Fire Station

8-10 Caroline Springs Boulevard

Caroline Springs VIC 3023

Snap shot of SDS Failures and Calls Responded to

Date	INC No	Description	Classification
01/07/2017 10:45:56	639574	HOPKINS ROAD, ROCKBANK 3335	Petrol or other flammable liquid spill
01/07/2017 08:26:10	639552	ROCKBANK MIDDLE ROAD, CAROLINE SPRINGS 3023	Petrol or other flammable liquid spill
29/06/2017 14:03:25	639369	135 DONNYBROOK ROAD, MICKLEHAM 3064	
18/06/2017 18:50:56	638340	975 LEAKES ROAD, ROCKBANK 3335	Small vegetation fire (one hectare or less)
18/06/2017 17:58:08	638336	975 LEAKES ROAD, ROCKBANK 3335	Good intent call; insuff info to classify
18/06/2017 00:02:45	638259	MELTON HIGHWAY, HILLSIDE (GREATER MELBOURNE) 3037	Vehicle accident-with injuries
10/04/2017 10:20:31	630581	LEAKES ROAD, ROCKBANK 3335	Vehicle accident-with injuries
26/02/2017 22:10:17	624535	BEATTYS ROAD, ROCKBANK 3335	Passenger vehicle fire
03/12/2016 07:06:35	612374	FRONTIER WAY, ROCKBANK 3335	Vehicle accident-with injuries
15/08/2015 21:16:00	556575	12 BENNETT STREET, SHEPPARTON 3630	Fire damaging structure and contents
12/07/2015 00:28:27	553517	HOLDEN ROAD, DIGGERS REST 3427	Passenger vehicle fire
26/03/2015 08:39:34	541867	ARNOLD STREET, BENDIGO 3550	Overpressure rupture of pipe or pipeline; steam

The above calls show a common theme. This is a very small snapshot of calls that volunteer brigades either failed to respond to, showed up in a brigade car with no fire fighting equipment, arrived with one person only, or arrived on scene with the inappropriate skills mix. I could put in all the calls I have been to or cut and paste them but with attending nearly 1500 calls I think you get the picture. It covers a variety of incidents. Please note Career fire fighters attended all incidents.