



David Maxwell [REDACTED]

07/07/2017 10:49 AM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Victorian Parliamentary Select
committee submission - Operations
Officer David Maxwell

Please find attached my submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Select Committee for Fire Services Reform.

Regards,



David Maxwell Operations Officer OIC Craigieburn Fire Station
Country Fire Authority Victoria, [District 14](#) | 251 High Street Melton VIC 3337 | PO Box 50 Melton

[REDACTED]

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Submission - D Maxwell.pdf

To the Honourable members of the Victorian Parliamentary Select Committee; Fire Services Reform,

I have been a CFA member in both Volunteer and Career staff positions since the age of 16 when I joined CFA in 1997. My time in CFA has seen me included in the following Brigades; Plenty, Diamond Creek, Bendigo, Craigieburn and Sunbury. Although I have worked at most of CFA's 35 integrated locations in some capacity.

I currently hold the position of Operations Officer District 14 which encompasses a large part of Outer Metropolitan Melbourne from Warrandyte to Werribee. My role includes; Officer in Charge of Craigieburn Brigade and the Catchment Officer of Whittlesea, Doreen and Mernda Brigades. All areas significantly affected by Melbourne's growth.

As an experienced and senior member of CFA I have observed many differences in culture, operational performance and capability across Victoria. One thing is clear; the dedication of Staff and Volunteers is remarkable. I have witnessed our organisation continue to operate, as it always has within a changing Victoria. Unfortunately for CFA, the vast urban growth has been continuing at an ever expanding rate which is proving difficult to service. I have observed and assisted Volunteer Brigades who are struggling to keep up with training, call rates and community education initiatives. The weight of community expectation is simply becoming too much in certain areas.

My time in CFA has been tumultuous; I have met many passionate community minded people and shared the great satisfaction of assisting those in need on countless occasions. I have worked at the now closed Fiskville Training College for a period of 2 years. I am a trainer and assessor of Staff and Volunteers and interact with both daily. The vast majority of those I interact with require this reform.

Presumptive Cancer Legislation – The benefits of the proposed bill for cancer rights for Victorian Fire fighters are the best within Australia. For those who are unfortunate to suffer from cancer, the benefits of assistance to fight this disease, allow them to concentrate on treatment without the fight for compensation as it has been in the past. The presumption of the causation of the illness being their exposure whilst defending Victorians is a long overdue requirement of all Victorian Fire fighters. The discussion from representative bodies separating the requirements for Volunteer and Staff are misleading. Simply, the legislation ensures that only 'operational' Fire fighters are covered under certain criteria. This criteria is fair by ensuring the process is reserved for those who really need it under those circumstances. All the volunteers and Staff I have spoken to on this issue share my view and support its implementation.

Investment in CFA – The State Government's announced investment of \$100 million in CFA, as a Volunteer only organisation returns CFA's focus to Volunteers. This decision allows CFA to forego the uncertainty of Enterprise Bargaining Disputes every 3 years and focus its energy on training and supporting our Volunteers through investment. I have witnessed throughout numerous disputes the damage caused to relationships, Brigades and our organisation by those with external political agendas. Supporting this reform will allow both Volunteers and Staff to return to protecting their communities without this unnecessary damaging interruption every 3 years.

Fire Rescue Victoria – The formation of Fire Rescue Victoria is not surprising to me personally. I believe it should have occurred many years ago, as currently Victorian Fire services share a border that is unclear and without reason. Throughout my career I have worked closely with MFB crews at numerous fires and incidents. The ability to utilise MFB and CFA career staff as one service will be of significant benefit to all Victorians. The sharing of knowledge and resources is long overdue and will enable the outer metropolitan areas of CFA to utilise specialist capabilities that have been otherwise performed by MFB. As part of my current role, I often struggle to fill rostering vacancies with CFA staff. This often causes staff to travel great distances to ensure adequate protection and crewing levels within our locations. The inability to utilise MFB staff to perform an identical role less than 10km up the road has been inexcusable. Instead I have sourced CFA staff from as far as Mildura to fill the same vacancies. This is common place and costs Victorians significantly. It also causes great disruption and inconvenience to our people.

Fire District Review Panel – The establishment of a review panel to assess the requirement for a career service to provide coverage into an area is an excellent initiative. The current method for integrating a Brigade seems disjointed and without a common assessment procedure from my perspective. This results in an inconsistent standard of fire coverage in many pockets of outer metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. The formation of the board will remove the emotion out of such decisions and focus solely on the interests of the community to be protected.

Within my position I am responsible for the management of Brigades within 2 of Melbourne’s significant growth corridors. The continuing growth is having a diverse impact on those I represent whether Volunteer or Career Staff. I witness the increasing responsibility on Volunteers through organisational expectation that is often unfair and not recognised by the very Volunteers it affects. Some of our members are so focused on performing at a high level that their commitment inadvertently affects their home and work life negatively. The current expectation of time critical response from their home/work location is providing good service in rural Victoria. Unfortunately in more urbanised areas community expectation is outgrowing this level of service as Melbourne continues to expand.

I urge you to support this legislation in the interests of Victorians, Volunteers and Career staff regardless of political alliances. This problem will continue to exist without this required reform.

I am available to elaborate further on my submission should the committee require to speak to me on the above points or any other impact of this proposed reform.

Regards,



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