



Shaun Pearsell [REDACTED]

07/07/2017 03:19 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Response to Fire service reform select
committee (Name and identity in
Confidence)

1 attachment



Submission to the fire services reform select committee.docx

To whom this concerns,
Please find attached my letter of response to the committee.

Name and Identify in confidence

Shaun Pearsell



Name and identity in confidence.

I am with the MFB and have been employed by them as a career firefighter for 13 years. Prior to joining the MFB in 2004 I was also a volunteer member of the CFA at Eltham for 9 years (an integrated station), and was first joined the CFA in the rural town of Sandy Point where I enlisted to support the brigade in the time I had available. This was mostly in the school holidays and some weekends.

I have witnessed and been a part of some brave and courageous actions by all three parts of firefighting community. I believe that I have first hand experienced the way each group of people work as a unit and as a collective when the greater needs of the community are required. On the surface we are different, but that difference makes us collectively stronger.

I have had the privilege to serve the Victorian and other communities on so many occasions (Mt Dandenong Fires 1996, Glenorchy Grass fires, NSW West Sydney 2001, Black Saturday Healesville 2009, Wangaratta Floods 2010 (and so many more). It is not the uniform I wore that I remember. It is the collective group of people I stood alongside with, depending on them, and giving them my utmost commitment to working together to beat the odds. It was not about the badge I wore.

I was part of a group of people that saved numerous lives and rescued hundreds of livestock from starvation. I learnt what it meant to be a farmer and the connections between the farmer, his land, and his animals.

Today the people of Victoria require me to stand up for and defend another need that is crippling the great people of our state. Due to the scare mongering of the Federal Liberal Party our Great State has not been able to successfully negotiate terms and conditions for the career firefighters that we (Melbournians and greater area Victorians) depend on to protect our families 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Amendments to the Fairwork Act have meant that the Premier is not able to reasonably engage with the UFU to resolve outstanding industrial agreements.

When I was a member of the CFA I saw the station response change. With every change there was a sense of understanding that something needed to change but at the same time a sense of concern as well. The following list captures the changes I saw at Eltham over my journey.

1 x BH (business hours) weekday only Career officer introduced. (Captain no longer required as much)

1 x BH weekday firefighter introduced

1 x Officer changed to 24hrs a day 7 days a week. (1 SO and 1 ff some of the time)

1 x Firefighter changed to 24/7. (2 Crew)

1 x Firefighter + 1 x Leading FF and 1 x Station Officer (3 crew)

The station moved.

Each time there was a concern that volunteers were being displaced. The changes occurred because it responded to the needs of the community. This is why I ask for your

consideration of the Fire service reforms. In some areas the public is unaware that their local firestation is not serviced by firefighters who are responding immediately from the station.

It is time again to improve the response measures to areas of our community that should have a 24/7, 90 second response. Major regional centres and areas around the Metropolitan fringe need guaranteed urgent response to fire and other emergencies. The Fire Services Reform will bring together the people who can achieve this need.

Career firefighters should have never been introduced to the CFA. The only reason this was done was the fire funding Model was **MFB (12.5% LG/12.5% State/ 75% Insurance)**. **CFA (25% State/75% Insurance)** The CFA area Local Governments could get paid firefighters for free.

This funding model has changed and so should the fire services.

Today's career firefighter is trained and responds to
Hazmat,
Emergency Medical Response
Marine Response,
Urban Search and Rescue,
Road Accident Rescue
Trench Rescue
And More

Each skill has a required maintenance program. The time available on shift affords career firefighters the opportunity to maintain and enhance their skills.

There is not the time available for volunteers to respond or be capable of maintaining skills required to confidently respond to these events.

Return the CFA to be a Volunteer organisation supported by FRV. And create the FRV to be supported by CFA (volunteers). When any of us who is afflicted by the Cancer of Fire dies for our State, we will do so knowing our families will be looked after by the decisions you can make to support this Bill and Enshrine Presumption Legislation.

When I travel to Melbourne each week to look after and support the people of Melbourne, or deploy to a fire in NSW on Christmas Day I take comfort in knowing I am leaving my family behind in Regional Victoria protected by fully trained firefighters who are rostered and available to respond to my home in 8 minutes. Every family should be protected 24 hours a day seven days a week with a truck that can arrive on scene with the guaranteed backup of the next truck in minutes. Currently the career firefighter are left without critical support to safely access and suppress a fire when volunteers fail to respond. This is not a reflection on the ability of the volunteer but a reflection on the work and family life today.

Hard working families, mum's and dad's are not super heroes, family comes first and unfortunately sometimes that means the truck can't leave the station.

Fire Doesn't Wait. Fire doesn't discriminate along a border. I can't do my job safely to look after the people of Greater Melbourne and Country Victoria if the next truck (with or without enough crew) never arrives. Fire Reform will eventually get the people where they need to be, when they need to be there. Time to act is now.