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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc "io3@ufuvic.asu.au"
<io3@ufuvic.asu.au>
bcc
Subject Submission - Fire Service Reform - In Support

Sir/Madam

Please find attached my submission to the select committee looking into the fire service reforms . I am in support of the fire service reforms.

Regards

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Ballarat City Fire Station – 1120 Sturt St Ballarat Vic 3350
[REDACTED]

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Submission.docx

My name is Mark Verdoorn. I am a professional career firefighter with the Country Fire Authority. I am 36 years old married with 3 children aged 10, 7 and 5. I have been employed with the CFA for 8 years and was a volunteer for 15 years before that which included being a member at Sebastopol and Haddon Fire Brigades.

I would like to express my experience with you in regards to the new bill introduced to parliament to create Fire Rescue Victoria and give ALL firefighters access to new cancer laws presumptive legislation.

When I was growing up my dad was the captain a Linton Fire Brigade from 1980 - 1997. I was very lucky to be able to see what dad did as captain for the brigade and for the community. Back then it was more of a social gathering to catch up with friends, have a beer and a laugh. When the siren went off they all left their work and family and headed to the fire. Since 1980 til now (37 years) little has changed, the population has grown slightly, the risks have stayed the same, but now more people have to now work in Ballarat. They Brigade still respond in a rural environment. This is what the CFA is the Country Area of Victoria

In the June this year I transferred from Hoppers Crossing Fire Station to Ballarat City. I would now like to explain to you about Hoppers Crossing as this is where I have worked for the past 3 years.

37 years ago Hoppers Crossing was full of open paddocks. The Country area of Victoria.

WHATS CHANGED AT HOPPERS CROSSING SINCE THEN??

It's no longer the Country Area of Victoria

Hoppers Crossing in now a built up suburb of Melbourne. It is now surrounded by heavily populated areas such as Werribee (Volunteer only), Tarneit, Truganina (Volunteer only), Wyndham Vale (Volunteer only) and Point Cook (integrated). Hoppers Crossing fire brigade respond to all of these areas.

There are multiple large shopping centres, heavy populated areas, high rise buildings and apartments, small and large industry, multiple nursing homes which are heavily populated, a major hospital in Werribee, a mix of demographic and diversity of people that now live in these areas and there are congested road networks.

Hoppers Crossing became an integrated brigade in 2004 due to the changing environment. Up until May 2017 there were only 3 firefighters on duty. This has now changed to 4.

4 professional firefighters on duty 24 hours a day 7 days a week in an area as big as what Hoppers Crossing respond to is inadequate.

Volunteers do a great job in protecting the community. But unfortunately on way too many occasions from my own experience they are failing the standards set by CFA to respond to an incident. Either taking too long to respond or not responding at all.

On many occasions when we arrive at an incident and meet a volunteer crew they are there with no means at all to assist in the fire fight. eg: not enough crew to assist, facial hair so they are unable to wear breathing apparatus, not having the qualifications to assist. All they have achieved is to get a fire truck out the door to meet the CFA standard.

This is not what you should expect if you call 000 and want a fire truck. What you should expect is 7 professional career firefighters to meet the standards for safety at an incident and a guaranteed response to the incident within 90 seconds of the call. Currently Hoppers crossing and surrounding areas do not receive this all of the time if Hoppers Crossing brigade are committed at another incident.

I really can't understand why the MFB boundary hasn't changed to reflect the growing environment. The MFB boundary is approximately 5km from the Hoppers Crossing Fire Station. The MFB get 7 professional firefighters to all fire calls to protect their safety.

Why when I work 5km away from the MFB boundary I don't get 7 professional firefighters to all fire calls for my safety?

Why when I work 5km away from the MFB boundary should my safety be different than an MFB firefighter?

Why do I have to wait for a volunteer crew that may or may not respond to a call and if they do have the correct people with the correct qualifications to complete the task that is required.

Why when I work 5km away from a MFB boundary I have to work with different equipment and under different conditions?

As you can see the fire service needs to change. There needs to be a fully professional service in the MFB and the 35 CFA integrated brigades that support and protect the community, working together with the same equipment the same conditions and the same boundaries. Not only I deserve this, it is what should be expected by the community.

In this submission are FACTS on my experience.

I AM IN SUPPORT OF REFORM. THERE NEEDS TO BE CHANGE TO THE FIRE SERVICES URGENTLY AND I ASK YOU PLEASE REALLY CONSIDER WHAT IS BEST FOR THE COMMUNITY OF VICTORIA NOT FOR THE POLITICAL AGENDA OF VICTORIA.

The new Fire Rescue Victoria model will bring stability and to my working life and assurance to my personal life.

I will be able to tell my wife and kids before I leave for each shift I have all the safest work practices possible to work under which will make me return home to them after each shift. What more could I ask for.

Kindest Regards

Mark Verdoorn