



Michael Castellano

06/07/2017 07:52 PM

To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Fire Service Reform

To whom it may concern,

I would like to put forward my educated opinion on the hotly debated , and often completely misunderstood topic of Fire Service Reform in Victoria . I am a career Firefighter with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade in Melbourne , and currently based at Eastern Hill Fire Station , just down the road from Spring St. Thanks to the recruit and continuation training that I receive as a professional Firefighter , I hold a Cert II & III in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations), on top of my real world experience through responding to Firecalls .

Honestly, I love my job - I love the community engagement, I love the camaraderie and acceptance on station, and I love going to work every day to live out my dream . Even in the last year or so, with the misinformation, and constant attacks from the Herald Sun, as well as various other media and political figures, weighing down on us, I can still maintain a healthy love for my work - although, I have had dozens of conversations with family, friends, and random people on the street asking "what is going on with the MFB/CFA?", or "Why do you hate volunteers?".

Looking back, the "Why do you hate volunteers?" question upsets me the most . I don't hate anyone, and if I was going to start, it wouldn't be with the people that give up time with their family time to help people in need , for little more than a sandwich and a thank you - and they aren't even guaranteed that. The problem isn't with volunteers, or their efforts in the community, the problem is with a Fire Service Model that was enshrined into Acts in 1958 still functioning in 2017. Melbourne and Victoria have changed beyond belief in nearly 60 years, and the systems to protect Victorians should change with it .

Being a Professional Firefighter , and a homeowner that pays the Fire Services Levy , I have 2 heavily vested interests in Melbourne and Victoria having a world class Fire Service - my own safety at work, and the guaranteed response if the worst happens at my own home . On the job, I want to know that when responding to a House Fire at any time of the day or night , I will have another appliance out their door in under 90 seconds, fully crewed, with Firefighters trained to the same level as me, qualified to wear breathing apparatus, with the skills required to enter and attack a structure fire . On top of that, as a resident, I want to know that if my house is the one being responded to , there will be those 2 appliances, with the minimum of 7 Firefighters, at my door in under 8 minutes. I live in Highett, so I am lucky enough to be guaranteed the response outlined above . My friend, Pat, in Chelsea Heights, however, is not. It takes me about 20 minutes to drive to his place, and the whole way is built up, urban area that continues all the way past Frankston - and yet, Pat's house is in an area serviced by a Volunteer only Brigade; Edithvale CFA. That urban environment wasn't there in 1958, it is now though.

The proposed Fire Service Reform not only allows all Professional Firefighters to be brought under the same banner, and gives the Volunteers the autonomy that they have asked for , it brings in the provision for changing boundaries, and allows for the evolution of a modern Fire Service into the future. The current system is archaic, and it was designed in and for a much

simpler time. We need to evolve to keep up with population growth , and urban sprawl.

We will always need our CFA Volunteers. Their experience, work ethic, and commitment to Victoria could never be replaced. For fighting Bushfires, and protecting rural communities that don't have the population to warrant a full-time Fire Service, there is no better system. That is the core of what the CFA and volunteering was built on ; rural firefighting, not urban. If the reform gets through, Volunteers will still be able to turn out to Firecalls , they will still come to the aid of the state in its darkest times , the sky will not fall in. Victoria will take the first step to having the Fire Service that they so desperately need .

There are so many different aspects to this reform , and I hope that the one I chose to speak on will resonate with you. I am more than happy to discuss further in return email , over the phone, or even in person if that's an option. Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Kind regards,

FF Michael Castellano.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]