

Assistant Clerk Committees
Department of the Legislative Council
Fire Service Bill Select Committee
Parliament House, Sprint Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write in support of the proposed reform for the Fire Services within Victoria.

I have been a volunteer and career fire-fighter with the CFA for 10 years; having worked at Hoppers Crossing, Melton, and now Warrnambool stations.

I was a volunteer at Warrnambool Fire Brigade during my tertiary studies, and enjoyed it so much I made a career move from marine science to fire fighting. After 7 years as a career firefighter, I still hold strongly, and often reflect upon, the 3 reasons I joined as a staff member. They being

1. The ability, and opportunity, to provide assistance and help to people when they're at need.
2. The satisfaction and reward of contributing to the community.
3. The opportunity to work in regional Victoria, in an extremely diverse roll that incorporates various responsibilities.

I would be lying if I said the above mentioned points have not had their moments. But overall, I feel very privileged to be a member of a highly trained, adaptable, and professional group of men and women.

I have never regarded remuneration or conditions of employment, as notable reasons I chose to serve or continue to serve the CFA as a career firefighter.

To say I love my job, and the community I serve, is an understatement.

I strongly believe it is in the best interest of the staff, volunteers, and citizens of south-west Victoria that this reform is introduced. In doing so, I would like to comment on the following terms of references.

a. Impact on fire service delivery across Victoria

- I believe that this reform will enhance the fire service delivery across Victoria.
- The dispatch and response of career firefighting appliances with specialist gear will be standardised across the state. At the moment, particularly in south west Victoria, highly trained staff and appliances sit idle in the fire station whilst a structure fire occurs in a neighbouring brigade area. At recent house fire, bushfire tankers (with no or minimal equipment to fight a structural fire) were called upon from 38km away, whilst a staff truck with highly trained firefighters and the most appropriate gear sat idle 20km from the event. This event is one of many. Having a consistent approach across the state with service delivery will increase protection to life and property.
- Guaranteed manning levels will ensure that there are personnel with the skill and proficiency to deal with complex emergencies in Warrnambool and the greater south-west area. In the past 12 months Warrnambool staff has responded to rope rescue incidents as

far away as Mt Arapiles (240km) and the Grampians. Staff has responded to gas flare off jobs in Hamilton, and have responded the specialist Aerial Pumper to structure fires/incidents in Terang, Portland, Garvoc, Port Fairy, Coleraine, and Koroit.

- Guaranteed response time of 90 seconds to incidents. This is crucial when you consider the risk to public health with complex Hazardous Materials jobs and critical infrastructure.

b. Effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery

- Volunteers will continue to operate as the Country Fire Authority. Maintaining all their history and identity as a very proud, resilient, and valued body of volunteers.
- Volunteer brigades will still respond to emergencies as they currently do. They will still have the ability to undertake roles such as Incident controller and delegate roles/tasks as appropriate.
- Volunteers will have a greater sense of ownership and responsibility of their infrastructure and equipment than at current integrated stations.
- Career fire-fighters will have the ability to settle industrial issues without stepping on volunteers toes.
- No longer will volunteers be affected by industrial issues.
- This will not affect surge capacity. Volunteers are community minded and will continue to serve just as they do now.
- I believe that volunteer numbers will increase in centres like Warrnambool. Volunteers have resigned and transferred in the past due to political/personal indifferences with career staff. Being their own organisation without career staff input will entice memberships

Having a volunteer background I can picture both sides of the story. But I truly believe that the main opposition to this reform comes from volunteer members who will not be affected by this change. The most vocal opposition tends to derive from people who have never had any interaction with career fire-fighters. I have many volunteer friends here at Warrnambool and they will always be welcomed (as they currently are) to have a cuppa, train, and work with us.

At the end of the day, the community and people of the south west will benefit from this change and be assured of a strong, capable, and dedicated response from two fire services, CFA & FRV.

Kind Regards,

Brett Gladki

Leading Firefighter
Warrnambool Fire Station

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