

Friday 30th June 2017

Dear Committee Members,

RE: Fire Services Reform

My name is Mark Lyons of [REDACTED]. I have been a professional firefighter for twenty nine years and hold the rank of Commander within the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. I support Fire Service Reform and offer the following statement.

I am currently responsible for Leadership and Management Programs at the Victorian Emergency Management Training College, Craigieburn. These programs are designed to prepare Station Officers, Senior Station Officers and Commanders for their role as leaders and fireground managers (Incident Controllers).

Training of Incident Controllers includes developing a culture of safety on the fireground. To support this, the MFB has implemented a number of procedures including Breathing Apparatus Procedure which stipulates;

- Working in teams of two or more at all times.
- Allocating a BA Entry Officer to monitor and coordinate activities.
- Maintaining sufficient crews for relief purposes.
- Allocating two crew for emergency situations.

To implement this, a fireground requires;

- 1 x Incident Controller
- 1 x Pump Operator
- 1 x BA Entry Officer
- 2 x BA Operators for fireground operations
- 2 x BA Operators for relief/ emergency procedures

This procedure represents to firefighters and the community the critical nature of responding seven firefighters to every structure fire. It allows for timely commitment of crews to perform rescue of occupants. It ensures firefighters will utilise respiratory protection, minimising exposure to carcinogens. Finally, a fireground resourced this

way affords a safe system of work to significantly mitigate many of the risks faced by firefighters.

Key to implementation of safe work systems for firefighters is training. All career staff will have a minimum skillset including, but not limited to;

- PUAFIR203B Respond to urban fire
- PUAFIR207B Operate breathing apparatus open circuit
- PUASAR022A Participate in a rescue operation

These are three core units of twenty delivered from the Public Safety Training Package during a nineteen week recruit course. Along with numerous organisationally specific subjects, these are minimum skillsets developed during seven hundred and fifty contact hours of a career firefighter's recruit course. Firefighters are not considered safe on a fireground until these competencies have been attained and then embedded on a daily basis during their career.

Volunteers are committed, passionate people who provide the best service they can. They develop skills and knowledge to serve their communities and mitigate the specific risk profile of their area. The minimum skillset for a volunteer to be considered safe on a fireground does not include;

- PUAFIR203B Respond to urban fire
- PUAFIR207B Operate breathing apparatus open circuit
- PUASAR022A Participate in a rescue operation

Volunteers are granted a Statement of Attainment for Q002A Wildfire Firefighter after approximately twenty seven contact hours of training. Units for this statement are;

- PUAFIR201 Prevent Injury
- PUAOHS002 Maintain Safety at an Incident Scene
- PUAFIR204 Respond to Wildfire
- PUAFIR309 Operate Pumps
- OP TANKER (G) Operate Tanker (Generic)
- PUATEA001 Work in a Team
- PUAOPE002 Operate Communications Systems and Equipment

Volunteers can train for competencies above those listed. However Incident Controllers cannot plan strategically during an integrated response until the minimum skillsets of volunteers are determined.

I have experienced as an Operations Commander, in areas such as Caroline Springs, the complexity of identifying firefighters qualified to don Breathing Apparatus and perform internal operations at large structure fires.

Along with training, the timeliness of response determines the effectiveness of an Incident Controller's strategy. The Metropolitan Fire District was first identified in

1891, when the Metropolitan Fire Brigade was formulated. Boundaries have not altered significantly in sixty years of population growth. Some communities, once classified as rural on the urban fringe are now serviced by integrated stations. Clearly, urban areas such as Point Cook, Werribee, Caroline Springs, Sunbury, Craigieburn and many more are now large, vibrant populations with the housing and infrastructure of any inner city community. It is in this context we must recognise that the second responded appliance may comprise a volunteer crew.

It is an immensely high expectation that even the most passionate and committed volunteer can meet the timeframes set for response in The Metropolitan Fire District. Benchmarking for appliances within this district specify;

- Ninety seconds from time of call to leave station.
- Eight minutes on scene from time of call.

The logistics of three to four volunteers leaving their place of employment, travelling safely to a station and responding code one on a fire appliance to an incident are quite daunting.

There will always be a need for these trained, committed people within rural communities and I welcome their much needed support for a surge capacity in the urban environment. I believe the best use of our most precious resource, people, will be within a modernised fire service model which will protect the community and support all firefighters, career and volunteer.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mark Lyons

Commander Leadership and Management Programs
Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre
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