

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

RE: SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED REFORM OF THE FIRE SERVICES

My name is Eugene Koh, I have been a professional firefighter for the MFB for the past 12 years. I am currently a Leading Firefighter, based at Croydon Fire Station where I have worked for the past 4 to 5 years. During this time at Croydon Fire Station, I have experienced first-hand why the proposed fire services reform is desperately needed. Croydon Fire Station is on the outer Eastern border of the MFB boundary and we are responding to calls with Volunteer CFA Fire Brigades (Bayswater, Mooroolbark, Montrose, Chirnside Park, Lilydale, Wonga Park, The Basin), Intergrated CFA Fire Brigades (South Warrandyte, Boronia) and MFB Fire Stations. I can advise that the current model of the Fire Service is not working and causing tremendous tension and stress on firefighters (volunteer and career staff) and their families. Ultimately, the proposed Fire Service reform will benefit the community that we all serve.

I write this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

- As a firefighter, we get responded in varying emergency situations, but in all emergencies, our safety is paramount. This means that we need to have guaranteed 2 fire trucks and at least 7 firefighters on scene. We need back up and we need to know that these firefighters have the qualifications and training.

In my recent experience at Croydon Fire Station, I can recount on occasions where this back up cannot be relied on by volunteer CFA firefighters to even turn out. This is not the fault of these volunteer CFA firefighters, as they have other careers and families that can restrict their ability to respond in a timely manner. In addition, shortcomings of volunteer CFA firefighters level of training and qualifications, can mean they cannot be counted to assist in certain emergencies. An example, some have BA qualifications, some have BA qualifications (but not structural) or some do not hold any BA qualifications at all. In emergency situations, where time is critical to the safety of firefighters and the community, we must ensure that we have resources which are proposed in the Fire Services reform.

- The establishment of Fire Rescue Victoria and recruitment of additional 450 career firefighters is a move which will make Victoria safer for all communities. With the growth of Victoria, it makes sense to have a Fire Service which evolves with it. In fact the MFB boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years indicates that a reform is desperately needed.

I live in Croydon North, which is on the boundary of the MFB. I am very lucky to live 100 metres inside the MFB boundary as it means that my property and my family **WILL BE DEFINITELY** protected by the fire service (including the vital life-saving Emergency Medical Response – EMR) in a timely manner. If I lived on the other side of the boundary, I could not be guaranteed such a crucial service.

Victoria's proposed Fire Services Model makes sense from my point of view and experience. The current model is not working; it is putting tremendous strain on all firefighters (volunteers and career staff), their families and the entire Victorian community.

Yours sincerely,

Eugene Koh
Leading Firefighter
MFB Croydon Fire Station

