

Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
Emergency Medical Services,
[REDACTED]

5 July 2017

Dear sir/madam,

My name is Graeme Betts and I have been a professional MFB fire services employee for over 6 years. I am a well-qualified senior IT resource with over thirty years private and public sector experience. I needed to relocate this year from the MFB IT team to Technical Operations and have acquired during this time a good understanding of the data supporting the Emergency Medical Response First Responder programmes as well as many other parts of the MFB.

I write to express my support for the proposed fire services reform. In my area of Emergency Medical Services information and communications, I am aware of the potential benefits to be realised for the community of Victoria proposed under the new Fire Rescue Victoria organisation. Benefits include ensuring consistent effective common training, operating procedures, bulk purchasing and utilisation of common equipment.

It is known that CFA Emergency Medical Response First Responders make a very positive impact on the community. However, due to the very limited trial of such services at CFA career staffed stations, there are currently only a very limited number of stations offering Emergency Medical First Response First Responder services. The MFB has seventeen years' experience and is very mature in providing life-saving Emergency Medical Response First Responder services in conjunction with Ambulance Victoria from all its stations, resulting in over 250 lives having been saved using this service to the community of Victoria in the metropolitan area.

There are greater pressures these days to do more with less, certainly this is true in the corporate areas of the CFA and MFB. Resource constraints mean often expensive contract resources are employed to perform even the most mundane of IT functions. The CFA and MFB work together positively in few areas, in the IT sphere, resources in one organisation are rarely able to assist their counterparts in the other organisation. This results in expensive contract resources having to be employed by each organisation and limits the opportunity for staff to gain greater experience and become of higher value to the community.

Each organisation currently has expensive IT hardware (firewalls) deployed between each other, been one common organisation will remove the need for such measures.

The MFB ordered and had built a fibre connection between Melbourne and Traralgon and sites in-between costing over \$2M around the year 2010 on behalf of the CFA. The CFA have never been offered access to this link and are paying instead premium commercial telecommunications carrier costs, rather than utilise the sunk costs associated with this link.

Both fire services have similar requirements for IT systems such as traditional payroll, finance and HR, whilst there are some mutually beneficial joint processes and systems, there is room for cost savings by operating common systems removing software maintenance and licensing costs. Similarly in the operational area, whilst there is some commonality such as AIRS, there is certainly an opportunity to streamline and save costs by having common systems covering the Fire Rescue Victoria area.

There has been a chasm of mistrust between MFB management and the workforce in all my years at the MFB, it is my belief this chasm is widening as mistrust between workforce and management continues to grow. The seed for this mistrust has been planted many years ago when industrial agreements needed to be negotiated between management and the operational and corporate teams. It is my belief that the bitterness between these teams and management has resulted in lack of innovation, poor direction and no trust. As someone on the receiving end of corrupt, aggressive and intimidating management behaviour, I strongly believe the only method to address such matters is the creation of a new executive management team. Unfortunately having to deal with poor executive management behaviour over many years has had an adverse impact on my health.

Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in sixty years. Under this out-dated system, thirty five areas are incorrectly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Caroline Springs, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and Geelong are just some of these thirty five 'country areas'. These areas should be modernised as they are highly urbanised areas as part of the reform of the fire service. A rapid eight minute response, with seven professional career fire-fighters on two fire trucks is the minimum standard needed in urbanised areas.

All Victorian professional career and volunteer fire-fighters deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities.

To ensure the safety of all Victorians - including me and my family, I ask you to please seriously consider your support for the proposed fire services reforms. Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of your constituents, and all communities in our growing state. Additionally, it will ensure the safety of our fire-fighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer fire-fighters because of the enormous urban growth and resulting increase in calls to emergency services.

I also respectfully submit that you give consideration to my request to modernise the fire service along with the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect fire service employees. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to talk to you further about my personal experiences as an employee and why this reform is so important.

Yours faithfully,
Graeme Betts


MFB Emergency Medical Services