

Dear Fire Service Bill Select Committee members,

My name is Peter Schilling and I am a Leading Firefighter in the MFB with 29 years of service. I have been stationed at Ringwood (FS22) for the last 20 years. My Father was also an MFB officer with 32 years of service, with over 20 years at outer eastern stations.

My Father and I have spoken in favour of this type of model for Victoria for over 40 years, knowing there were growing deficiencies. Recently politics and media focus on the fire services has created an opportunity to provide Melbourne's sprawling outer suburbs, built environments and populated regional centres with the same service the current MFD enjoys.

This proposed reform is much needed and so overdue.

Some immediate improvements to these communities would be:

- EMR: This lifesaving service is time critical and will save more lives
- FIRE COVER: On Scene times will dramatically reduce. Vital for people trapped, in need of EMR, Fire, explosion, spills etc.
- LESS CONFUSION: Career = FRV Volunteer = CFA
- VALUE: more value/service for your Fire Service Levy dollar
- FLEXIBILITY: Boundaries will be adjusted with population growth to avoid a repeat of the current situation

Some immediate improvements to the Fire Services would be:

- SYNERGY: Board, Executive, administration, training, procurement and procedural synergies across FRV and CFA
- FUNDING: greater funding and training for volunteers.
- IDENTITY: CFA/ FRV to have their own unique identities
- INDUSTRIAL: easier negotiation of EBAs with new structure
- SAFETY: correct numbers on the fireground aids firefighter safety and efficiency
- PROTECTION: all firefighters covered by presumptive legislation re: cancer

In country Victoria the volunteer stations are a community hub, and that would not change. Firefighters in the country generally live or work closer to the station and are able to respond better because of it.

I believe that all volunteers should be celebrated. Volunteer firefighters in particular do the role for all the right reasons and I have no problems working with them. Yet the metropolis that is Melbourne has spread, and will continue to do so. The volunteer system by design cannot respond consistently enough for reliable, rapid Fire/ EMR cover that you would expect to see in a metropolitan area. In addition, the qualifications of responders cannot be guaranteed, i.e. Breathing apparatus, structural firefighting, and driving quals. I know this because I have been living it for 20 years turning out with our neighbouring volunteer stations at South Warrandyte (now permanent CFA), Park Orchards, Chirnside Park, Lilydale, Mooroolbark, Montrose, and Bayswater.

I will spare you the details of calls where there have been complete failures to respond, slow response or undermanned/underqualified appliances arriving on scene because I realise that it is not anyone's fault. It is just the volunteer system getting caught out from time to time. But I have to ask what is best for the community?

The introduction of this reform would have downsides for me personally. The MFB history along with my family association with it would stop. I also love my job and the MFB brand just the way it is, (excluding the recent industrial climate), so part of me is fearful or doubtful of the change.

However, weighed against that uncertainty is a feeling of responsibility to do the best for the people that we serve, so I encourage you to look at the logic and take the opportunity to make history and positive change to many Victorians and endorse the Fire Service Reform.

Yours Sincerely,

LFF Peter Schilling

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