

Mr D. O'Byrne

Fire Services Review

Level 19

121 Exhibition Street

Melbourne 3000

26/08/2015

Dear Sir

I am a retired professional firefighter with 36 years' experience across three major fire services in Australia, initially with the MFBB and aprox 17 years with Queensland Fire & Rescue Service.

I served in both services as a Senior Station Officer and finished my career as a Building Approvals Officer in Toowoomba.

During my time with the MFBB I was also involved in the initial program of teaching hazardous material handling course at Fiskville over an 18 month period until the MFBB withdrew from the course. This gave me a unique view of multiple fire services and the manner in which they operate.

For many years the MFBB personnel considered themselves as the premium fire service in Australia, the rank and file believed this to be true in spite of the fact that they had little or no exposure to any other fire service and senior management had convinced them that this was the case. However, by gaining exposure to other fire services, including but not limited to the CFA via the HAZMAT course, it soon became apparent that they had been misinformed.

One of the major frustrations confronting the MFBB was the fact that they are landlocked with no opportunity to expand their boundaries. While they do cross boundaries into CFA areas, they are bound by operational procedures which can and does have the potential to create friction. While there have been substantial improvements since the 70's, removal of these restrictive boundaries is of paramount importance.

This can only be achieved through the implementation of a single fire service in Victoria.

When I transferred to the Queensland Fire Service as it was then known, the state had amalgamated from 80 plus fire services into a single fire service. The transition was not an easy process and many of the small town fire chiefs went kicking and screaming into oblivion, the chosen ones secured primary positions within the organisation and while few of them remain today, they played a major role in turning Queensland fire & Rescue Service into the world class fire service that it is today.

I might add that this was also helped along by the number of interstate officers who transferred to Qld bringing their own level of expertise with them.

The time has come for Victoria to catch up with the rest of Australia by reorganising our firefighting services into a single entity.

This state is currently served by three separate firefighting organisations plus the State Emergency Service with overall control ostensibly going to a fire commissioner.

Each organisation has their own hierarchy, and in particular are reluctant to part with the traditional rank structure from Chief Fire officer down. This means that the state is supporting three fire services with three separate hierarchies.

While I am sure that there are many models that can be used in a restructure, the Queensland model is considered a huge success.

Simply put, Queensland is divided into seven areas, each controlled by an Assistant Commissioner and they answer to the Chief Commissioner in Brisbane. Each area is further divided and is under the control of area directors plus training roles and community safety.

Such a structure already exists within Victoria in the manner that each service has controlled their patch.

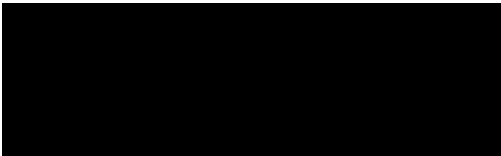
Amalgamation would reduce the current hierarchies to one management structure across the state and allow the best person for the job at the top. It would provide for standardization of equipment and of operational

procedures. It would also provide previously unavailable opportunities for staff at all ranks to transfers to permanent stations in both metropolitan and country areas thus providing a more balanced service.

The existing volunteer arrangements would, by necessity, remain.

The subject of a single fire service for Victoria is not new, but many state governments choose to put their head in the sand by declaring that it would be too expensive or that it would upset the balance between permanent and volunteer staff. That myth needs to be thrown out with the dishwater.

To quote a previous labour party election slogan, IT'S TIME.



Bruce Males

