

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Paul Copeland [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 July 2017 12:16 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Services Bill 2017.

Select Committee:
Fire Services Bill 2017

To Whom it may concern,

My name is Paul Copeland. I am a Station Officer with the MFB. I have been a firefighter for 27 years. I am currently stationed at Croydon Fire Station (FS).

I have lived in the outer Eastern suburbs all my life & have been stationed at Ringwood & Croydon (outer Eastern suburbs) for approximately two thirds of my MFB operational career.

In my time I have seen massive urban sprawl in this area in particular. Where I once played as a child has been heavily developed into housing estates, industrial precincts & shopping centres. To cope with the now overwhelming traffic from this population growth, roads have been widened (& asphalted), traffic management systems installed & infrastructure created.

At least Local & State Governments are trying to keep up with the growth. The Fire service model that was created in the 50's has not kept with the times. The model in the 50's was designed around metropolitan boundaries that have now been over run by this urban sprawl. In the 50's volunteer brigades could cope with the townships they protected. Now, these townships are suburbs. Suburbs such as Mooroolbark with a population of approx. 20000 has a volunteer brigade protecting them.

Mooroolbark is also surrounded by Chirnside Park & Lilydale. Both of these townships have also become suburbs in the last 60 years. Their growth is expected to rapidly increase. There is a development of 2000 houses to be constructed between Mooroolbark, Lilydale & Chirnside Park in the next few years.

The reason that I am focussing on these areas in particular is because I know them well & I respond to emergency calls there almost every day.

Ordinarily Croydon (my station) would respond to within a few kilometres of the fire station but in the suburbs mentioned we radiate a lot further. This gives the community with a now higher population & greater risk, better coverage and a faster response. The volunteer brigades although doing their best, can't always respond due to work commitments etc or they can be slower to respond as they are coming from their homes.

Even though we are assisting the community & the CFA in these suburbs by providing extra resources it is still not good enough. In metropolitan areas the expected on scene time is approx. 7 minutes. Where we are going into the CFA areas mentioned our times are greater due to the extra distances to travel.

I recently attended a call in CFA area that was 8.6 km from Croydon FS & 2.6km from both Chirnside Park F.S & Lilydale F.S. This turnout distance is well above the norm for Croydon & consequently our arrival time was well above the expected 7 minutes. We arrived before both CFA trucks. In this instance it was a false alarm.

Due to the higher populations & predicted growth which in turn brings higher call volumes to these areas, the community deserves better.

In terms of Firefighter safety to calls in these highly populated areas an extra MFB fire truck needs to be responded. Best practice for firefighter (FF) safety is to have 7 FF on the fireground. This ensures that there are adequate personnel to assist with safe rescues, safe operations & safe Breathing apparatus (BA) procedures. The only way that we can guarantee the 7 in these CFA areas is to respond another MFB truck as the volunteer brigades may not respond or they may not have adequately trained BA operators.

I am not against the volunteers in the CFA. In fact I think the state of Victoria needs them & they provide a fantastic community service. The only places I think where the service of CFA is outdated is the outer urban fringes where population growth has been exponential. The fire coverage to support these bigger communities just isn't there like it was in the fifties.

We need a new model. A model that has one service which covers densely populated areas & the CFA which does not change in rural and less populated towns. This would focus on populations. When a population reaches a certain figure (to be determined by Govt) it should be a trigger to assess the needs of the community & determine whether a 24 hour fire coverage is needed.

I hope for a transparent Select Committee that does not take into account economics, politics or votes but focusses on the safety & welfare of our burgeoning communities.

Station Officer Paul Copeland, MFB.