

Kirra Vanzetti

From: MATTHEWS, Joel [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 6 July 2017 10:19 AM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Services Reform

Dear Assistant Clerk Committee,

My name is Joel Matthews. I live in Melbourne's north eastern suburb of Montmorency and I am a professional fire fighter with the MFB, and currently based at Brunswick fire station.

I have been in this role for 3 years now and completed certificate 2 and 3 in Public Safety (Fire Fighting and Emergency Operation). I am also qualified in Emergency Medical Response.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services. The public will benefit greatly from this reform, as it will bring with it a standardised, safer and more responsive service through Fire Rescue Victoria.

During my time with the MFB, I have predominately been based at the Epping fire station and not only turned out with appliances from Thomastown, Somerton and Bundoora, but with CFA appliances from Greenvale, South Morang and Epping. The CFA volunteer brigades do an outstanding job, though they cannot designate their time to fire fighting 24/7 in built up urban areas which Melbourne requires. Residing where I do, myself, family and friends are also impacted by this.

I have personally been to calls in the northern Epping area in which the volunteer station is within a street away but they have not been available to attend. The "failed to respond" line has come up numerous times in these calls. For example, there have been times in which the volunteer service was unable to enter a house fire due to not having BA qualification. In this instance not only can the fire not be contained to the room of origin, but the whole house is at a much greater risk of being lost, not to mention people and their lives.

The above examples highlight a failed and out dated system. Melbourne's urban sprawl is continually growing around the 35 integrated stations and are now highly urbanised. With operational staff being under the one banner, people residing in these outer suburban areas will be guaranteed 2 fire appliances with a minimum 7 fire fighters on scene within 8 minutes. These fire fighters will be equipped with breathing apparatus and Emergency Medical Response skill sets to provide these people with the coverage they deserve. This response will still include unaltered volunteer response.

The constant vilification and attacks on professional fire fighters including continuous mistruths sprawled over countless front pages of newspapers, members of parliament and throughout social media is taking its toll on me personally as a fire fighter, my family and my work colleges. It is extremely disheartening to see these barraging attacks on us lower morale throughout the service.

This reform will benefit volunteers as it has an included package to assist with their recruitment and retention across the CFA, including volunteer station upgrades.

Having a modern fire service to meet the needs of the growing community will provide a positive change for fire fighters and the community we all protect.

Yours sincerely,

Joel Matthews

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Brunswick Fire Station

[REDACTED]

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