

**Kirra Vanzetti**

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**From:** Roger Chitty [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, 2 July 2017 12:01 PM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Fire Services Reform

To the Fire Services Select Committee 2017

My name is Roger Chitty and I hold the rank of Commander with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. I have been a career firefighter for 36 years. I am passionate about my job and the responsibility that comes with it in assisting in helping keep the community safe.

I write to express my support for the proposed Fire Services Reform.

Unfortunately opinions on the reform of the State's Fire Services have become a political points scoring exercise with statements made by some politicians without any basis in fact. These statements have been adopted and supported by sections of the media stirring up fear and uncertainty within the community, including amongst our valuable volunteer firefighters. I refer to statements made which imply that any restructuring of the fire service would lead to the devaluing and lessening of CFA volunteer numbers which in turn will lead to a threat to community safety putting life and property at risk. This has been a common theme amongst politicians and sensationalist media outlets but to date there has been no one who has been able to articulate why or how this will be the case or provide evidence to support it.

The facts of the matter are that the State of Victoria has changed. Victorian fire service boundaries have not changed in 60 years. Urban sprawl has outgrown metropolitan areas. What was once country is now heavily urbanised with large populations and industrial areas. Outer Melbourne suburbs and regional towns and centres have swelled in population and industrial infrastructure. These areas include high risk premises such as Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Prisons and industry that house large quantities of dangerous goods. The Fire Services in these areas require modernisation and the community should rightly expect a 24/7 career fire service with an 8 minute response and 7 professional career firefighters on 2 fire trucks as the minimum standard. This will ensure community and firefighter safety.

I live in the country area of Sunbury so I know only too well the valuable services our volunteers provide. The volunteer brigades in my area will continue to do great work in keeping their communities safe without any reductions in their numbers or responsibilities. Volunteer CFA brigades in the area that I reside such Gisborne and Bulla and those in other rural areas within the State will continue to protect their community as normal without any change. Surge capacity, importantly, will not diminish.

As a resident of a country area, I am expecting that over time the community will develop further in population, housing density and industry. If emergency call out volumes increase as a result, my expectations of the State would be that we have a progressive Fire Service which could identify the need to transition to a full time career service providing the maximum protection for the community.

Self serving interests and egos should be put aside in favour of whats best for the communities safety.

All Victorians, including professional and volunteer firefighters deserve a modern fire service that meets the needs of growing urban areas. The State's volunteer firefighters are an integral part of our emergency response arrangements. It is however unrealistic, unfair and unsafe to expect volunteers to meet the demand of increased emergency calls within growing highly urbanised areas.

I would like to refer you to a short video presentation made by the Emergency Commissioner of Victoria, Mr Craig Lapsley (attached to this email) and note the comments and intention of the video that provides an explanation of the benefits that the reform will provide to the community of Victoria.

In the presentation Mr Lapsley states that this reform is about giving the best Fire Service to the Victorian community today and into the future. The State's CFA will continue to have its 1200 Volunteer Brigades without any reduction in numbers or their roles. He further states it is an opportunity for the CFA to refresh itself. Finally he says we should welcome the Fire services Reform as it is in best interests of the Victorian community. I urge the members of the Select Committee to view the short video.

It has been well documented about the long running EBA industrial saga for career firefighters. I have seen first hand the demoralising effect it has had on firefighters and their families, made all the more difficult due to the increasing politicising and public nature of it. In my role of Commander I have endeavoured to keep the morale of fire-fighters upbeat and focused on performing our important role. For our own mental health and wellbeing we just want it to be resolved. However if the legacy of this long running dispute means that we end up with a reformed and restructured Fire Service, which is in the best interests of the community, then it will all have been worth it.

<https://youtu.be/lIMyyYYdvDE>

Kind Regards  
Roger Chitty

