

Kirra Vanzetti

From: KELLO, Peter [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 6 July 2017 6:25 PM
To: LCSC
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Victorian Fire Service Reform Submission

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

My name is Peter Kello and I have been a professional career MFB fire-fighter and officer for 28 years. During that time I have been stationed largely in and around the city (Windsor, Richmond, Eastern Hill, South Melbourne and Hawthorn Fire Stations). I am a qualified Fire Investigator, Hazardous Materials Technician (Hazmat), High Angle Rescue Techniques Technician (HART), Fitness Leader and Instructor (Certificate IV Trainer and Assessor).

I hold undergraduate degrees in Arts (Recreation Management) and Applied Science (Human Movement), an Associate Diploma of Applied Science (Fire Technology), Graduate Diploma in Behavioural Studies (Psychology), Masters Degree (Sport Psychology) and am a Graduate Member of the Institute of Fire Engineers.

I have completed a leadership development program through the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council and Australian Institute of Police Management at Manly.

I am currently based at the Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre Craigieburn where I have been the MFB / CFA Training Liaison Officer for the past 2 years and prior to working at VETMC Craigieburn, I was a MFB recruit instructor at our Burnley complex.

I have recently taken on a new role as the Assistant Coordinator of the new Victorian Recruit Firefighter Course, commencing in the next fortnight.

I write to express my support for the proposed fire services reform and ask that you support facilitating these proposed reforms through the Legislative Council. It is imperative these changes are implemented in order for Victoria to maintain its reputation and standing as a world leader in Emergency Fire Service Delivery Response.

With the rapid and continuing change to the Victorian urban/rural demographic profile, we risk falling behind the rest of Australia in this area. It is imperative we move forward with the times and embrace change to respond to the challenges our current social environment presents for us in the area of fire and emergency services provision.

Having worked intimately with the CFA career staff developing and facilitating their fire-fighter recruit program at VETMC Craigieburn I have become acutely aware of how problematic the delivery of effective and efficient fire service response has become in new urban growth areas. The long and justifiably proud history of the Victorian Fire Services (MFB & CFA) combined with their "protective" culture has made change difficult to accept, even in the face of changing demand.

Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this out-dated system, 35 areas are wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and Geelong are just some of the 35 'country areas'.

These areas need to be modernised as part of the reform of the fire service as they are now highly urbanised areas. A rapid 8 minute response, with 7 professional career fire-fighters on two fire trucks is the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas. This should occur not only to provide a professional and efficient service for the high density growth areas, but also for my, and my colleagues safety as now legislated under current OH&S legislation. It is incumbent on our employers (MFB and CFA) to provide as far as practicably, a safe work environment.

Over my 27 years of service as a professional career firefighter I have witnessed significant change that has occurred in the training and role of the firefighter. I completed a 10 week recruit course, submitted 4 written assignments whilst on shift in my first year and returned for a two week retention and examination course after 12 months of service. I was then qualified as a "firefighter". During my 10 weeks of training, the focus in training was on building and maintain fitness, using Breathing Apparatus, operating the pumps, marching and use of the equipment on the fire truck.

The current recruit course spans 20 weeks, there is minimal fitness training or marching and a greatly expanded practical program encompassing use of breathing apparatus, operating the trucks and use of fire service equipment. A plethora of new subjects and skills have had to be added to the course to prepare the recruits for the changes that have occurred in the modern urban environment. Skill sets in areas such as hazardous materials, emergency medical response, bushfire, electrical awareness, safe working from height, cultural education and awareness, rope rescue, community education and resilience, Thermal Imaging Cameras, atmospheric monitoring equipment, asbestos, and enhance forced entry to name but a few have all been added to the program. Recruits are not only expected to be knowledgeable in these skills and areas, but to be highly competent. Furthermore, they and indeed all firefighters, are then expected to maintain these skill sets throughout their careers.

The breadth and depth of knowledge, skill and practical application the modern firefighter is expected to be proficient in is staggering. This knowledge and skill base is not static but grows with every passing year. For instance a new "State" breathing apparatus is about to be commissioned and will include many new technologically advanced features. It is no longer sufficient to provide a "brief" training session to get people up to competency, let alone maintain such competency. The complexity of much of the equipment we now carry and use is such that extensive training and skills maintenance programs are required to maintain competency.

In other words, the challenges, skills and knowledge requirements confronting the modern "urban" firefighter have moved beyond the capability of many volunteer firefighters. It is no longer possible to keep up with these changes and advances with a "couple of hours" of training each weeknight. It is now a full-time job just trying to stay abreast of all these advances.

All Victorian residents and professional and volunteer fire-fighters, deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities.

To ensure the safety of **all Victorians** - including me as a fire-fighter and my family, I ask you to please seriously consider your support for the proposed fire services reform.

Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of your constituents, and all communities in our growing state. Additionally, it will ensure the safety of our fire-fighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer fire-fighters because of the enormous urban growth resulting in increased emergency calls.

It is time to strip away the "emotional" and often parochial element of a well-intentioned, but what is becoming increasingly apparent, self-centred vocal minority who feel it their gifted "right" to perform what is an increasingly difficult public service. They are somehow misguidedly convinced that a full time career fire service is still no match for what has become in certain areas, a part time and often

ad hoc civic hobbyists club. Whilst this was an efficient and cost effective model in the past, times have passed them by and we need to be “mature” enough to acknowledge that Victorians demand and deserve “better”.

We now need to take an “all of State” approach to what has become a very complex and sophisticated emergency response issue.

To quote Star Treks Spock:

“Logic clearly dictates that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few (or the one)”

I respectfully submit that you give consideration to my request to modernise the fire service along with the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect fire service employees. Both are needed to be endorsed and implemented by Parliament before the commencement of the fire season. This is important to me and my colleagues.

Should you decide to vote against the legislations, might I ask one question of you?

What is **YOUR** solution to resolve this mess? This legislation provides an answer that will benefit all within the State. What is glaringly obvious is the Opposition don't seem to have an answer. They attack the solution, however can't or don't seem to want to provide a viable alternative to fix this impasse.

If you vote NO, then I would dearly like to hear how you think this issue can be resolved, whilst delivering “a world's best practice” model of fire and emergency service for the State of Victoria.

Kind regards

Peter Kello

Peter Kello | Station Officer – VRFC 4 Assistant Coordinator
Metropolitan Fire Brigade | Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre

284-290 Hume Hwy | Craigieburn Vic 3064

*The MFB is committed to minimising its impact on the environment.
Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.*

WARNING
This email and any attachment may contain confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient you are not authorised to copy or disclose all or any part of it without the prior written consent of the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board.
