

Kirra Vanzetti

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 6 July 2017 9:26 PM
To: LCSC; consultation@dpc.vic.gov.au
Subject: Submission to Committee into Fire Services Reform Bill 2017

Categories: CONFIDENTIAL REQUEST

1. **I request confidentiality for my name, phone number, email and address however do wish my submission to be read and used by the committee.**
 2. My name is [REDACTED], I can be contacted via [REDACTED]
 3. I am a Station Officer in the MFB and have worked for the MFB for 9 years. Prior to this I worked as a career firefighter in Auckland, New Zealand in the New Zealand Fire Service.
 4. In my time in the MFB I have worked in Central, Western and Northern districts, often on the boundary with the CFA, and as a specialist Instructor at VEMTC Craigieburn. I am a specialist Ladder Platform, UltraLarge Pumper, Heavy Rescue, Urban Search and Rescue and Trench Rescue operator.
I have also represented the MFB in the provision of training to ACT Firefighters in Canberra, and have traveled to the United States for the MFB in 2016 as part of the Chief Officer's Scholarship program to conduct research in the implementation of Data Terminals in fire service vehicles.
 5. I live on my wife's family sheep (meat & wool) farm in [REDACTED]
 6. I am also a CFA Volunteer at Avenel Rural Fire Brigade and have provided training to this brigade.
 7. I am currently stationed at MFB Station 7, Thomastown as an Officer on B Platoon.
8. I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reforms for the following reasons:
- During my career I have worked extensively on the 'urban fringe', on the outskirts of the current Metropolitan Fire District(MFD) and seen numerous situations where heavily urbanised residential areas receive a different response to areas a few streets away within the MFD. I feel this is unfair to members of those communities and needs to be fixed.
 - This different response also affects my and my crews safety as the firefighters we have backing us up at incidents may not have the same minimum level of training, experience and skills as career staff. The volunteer response is generally also quite delayed which reduces their effectiveness.
 - Distribution of career and volunteer stations should be defined by clear guidelines based on population density, risk profiles, and urban growth - and not by history, emotional connections or other factors. I volunteer in a rural area, if my area grew to a size in which a full time career station was warranted I would welcome it with open arms as I know full well the difference between the two services and the benefit for the community.
 - Saving lives and property in the firefighting industry is mainly impacted by three factors - Response time, Building fire protection systems, and the training/skill/experience of firefighters. Being able to arrive on scene quickly, every time, as a career fire station allows, is key to containing the fire to the room of origin. A quick look at the statistics of number of fires contained to room of origin will show that response time is a key component. Volunteer stations by their nature have an extended response time by a huge factor - it is not a reflection of the professionalism of volunteers but is simply a fact of the situation. When I volunteer in my local community our response time just to 'turn out' or get the fire truck out the door is around 10 to 15 minutes. When I work in the MFB, we are out the door within 90 seconds, every time, often less. WE arrive on scene within 7 minutes, often less. This makes a huge difference to our ability to save lives and contain the fire to the room of origin.
 - The proposed reforms will benefit the Volunteer brigades to operate into the future without any fear of the UFU. It will really take 'the hands off the CFA' and allow Volunteer Brigades to get on with

their role and not worry about any perceived threat or risk to their Brigade from the UFU. While I personally think this risk is overstated, I see that the proposed changes will limit the ability of the UFU or any career employer representative to impact on Volunteer brigades.

- The reforms also package in upgrades to Volunteer Brigades, money for the CFA and Presumptive legislation for Volunteers as well as career staff. I would like to address the criticism of certain members of the community regarding the presumptive legislation. The previous Liberal government had numerous opportunities to implement presumptive legislation for career and volunteer staff and despite extensive lobbying by firefighters and the UFU, never did so, going so far as to be critical of the evidence of the need for such legislation or any links between my occupation and increased cancer risk. Thus I am dumbfounded and saddened that suddenly when they are out of office they are such great supporters of the safety of career and volunteer firefighters, and criticise these reforms based on their 'support' of presumptive legislation.
- I am extremely skeptical of the claims of certain commentators about a supposed reduction in 'Surge capacity'. The CFA Volunteers in the integrated stations will still be able to respond to calls, they will still have fire trucks, uniforms and stations. They will still be able to provide surge capacity when needed. No Volunteer stations will close as a result of the reforms - only new career stations will be added.
- There is a vast difference between the training, skills maintenance and experience levels of volunteer and career staff. I have first hand experience of the differences in training and minimum skills of both volunteers and career and the difference between the two cannot be understated,. In urban areas there are clear benefits to having more highly trained and experienced career firefighters protecting the community with the support of volunteers where required. In more regional or rural areas, career staff would be too costly and not provide benefit for the cost - however these reforms will allow clear allocation of where stations should be based on evidence and not feelings or history.
- I have spoken to many members of my local brigade, all of whom feel that the reforms will have no impact on the vast majority of volunteers in Victoria. This can be seen by the fact that the only stations which will be potentially affected will be the 34 integrated stations. In these stations the only real change will be the logo on the career trucks - the volunteers will still be trained by career FRV staff as they are trained by career CFA staff now. The volunteers will still be able to respond to the same calls they wish to. All that will change is that the community will have a guaranteed quick response from a career crew, just like their neighbors who currently live in the MFD do.
- The reforms will remove duplication of training, administration and leadership. This will improve productivity and reduce costs to the community.
- The reforms will allow standardisation of equipment and training doctrine between career MFB and CFA stations, reducing costs and improving response by frontline firefighters.
- Example 1: Car accident on northern boundary of MFD. As the car crashed on the 'CFA' side of a street, the occupant who required emergency extrication and transport to hospital had to wait for a volunteer response, when a career MFB rescue vehicle was located in station a few kilometers away. This situation occurs often and the volunteer response times can stretch to 20 minutes, while an MFB career crew are sitting in station. If the reforms are successful, this waste of services will be remedied. The Volunteers will still be responded and will still be able to be responded to the call - however members of the community will also receive the quick response of a career firefighting crew.
- Example 2: House fire in Northern suburbs which required Breathing Apparatus to be utilised. Volunteer crews were turned out as part of the response and took an extended time to arrive. This left initial responding career staff without backup in a dangerous environment. When the volunteer crew did arrive, they did not have any Breathing apparatus qualified crews, so were limited in the effective role they could provide.

If you have any questions please get in contact.

Kind regards