

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Paul Sigmont [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 5 July 2017 12:39 AM
To: LCSC
Subject: Victorian Fire Service Reform/Presumptive Legislation Submissions

Paul Sigmont
[REDACTED]

4th July 2017

Fire Services Bill Select Committee
Email: lcsc@parliament.vic.gov.au

RE: VICTORIAN FIRE SERVICE REFORM/PRESUMPTIVE LEGISLATION SUBMISSIONS

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Paul Sigmont and I am a Station Officer with the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade and have been a firefighter for almost 33 years. I hold an Associate Diploma of Applied Science (Fire Technology), Graduate Membership of the Institute of Fire Engineers (London) and have undergone training in Heavy Rescue, High Angle Rescue, Urban Search and Rescue, Basic Lock smithing, Methods of Entry (Vehicle) and was part of the initial pilot of the EMR program when I was stationed at Richmond Fire Station.

In my time in the fire service I have seen many changes that have enhanced community and firefighter safety and I believe that this piece of legislation before you now is **the** most important. In the last 50 years the population density in areas of Victoria that were once considered holiday towns or rural towns has increased immensely and so have the risks and the traffic. While it was perfectly fine 50 years ago to have these areas protected by volunteers due to the low number of calls, it is no longer feasible nor fair to expect volunteers to be able to respond 24/7 in the timely manner that the community pays for and expects. As the urban sprawl increases and people are commuting further to their workplaces it is not possible for them to respond and this is why we are seeing more and more calls where brigades are unable to turn out. I have seen occasions in years gone by when volunteers have turned up to structure fires and been dressed in Wildfire gear and the majority of them were not BA qualified, one example being the Bolwell fire in Mordialloc. This is not the fault of the volunteers but a by-product of the fact that people are working longer hours and are becoming more and more time poor and are unable to find the time to become qualified in some of the most essential areas a firefighter should be qualified in.

The ratepayers in the densely populated urban fringe areas are at times paying a higher fire services levy than those who live in metropolitan areas and rightly expect a modern, fully equipped and well trained emergency service that is able to respond to a call within 90 seconds and be on scene in under 7 minutes, and without a permanently staffed fire station there are going to be times when this is just not possible. Who is then going to look people in the eye and tell them that they have lost their house or something worse still because no one could get a crew together to respond?

I would implore you to look positively at the presumptive legislation to give firefighters the assistance they need if they succumb to cancer from their work. Over the years I have lost many friends and work colleagues to cancer and I have had to watch them not only battle the disease but also battle the insurance companies so they can get the necessary medications and doctors to give them the best prognosis and the fight with the insurance people takes up way too much time and energy so they give up on that. If this legislation was passed it would allow sick firefighters to concentrate solely on fighting the disease and have a much greater chance of survival.

I consider myself very lucky that I live in a suburb that is protected by career firefighters and that when I go to work quite a few suburbs away I know that my family are protected 24/7, 365 days of the year. Obviously volunteers will always be an important and respected part of Victoria's fire service, I firmly believe that the time has come to reassess the boundaries and bring our fire service up to date.

Yours Sincerely,
Paul Sigmont.



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