

**Kirra Vanzetti**

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**From:** Marty Newstead [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 7 July 2017 10:23 AM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Fire Services Reform

Good Morning,

My involvement with Victorias Fire Services started as a volunteer with the Mooroolbark CFA in 1992 feeling extremely privileged and proud to be a volunteer firefighter serving my state. My passion for the fire service gained momentum and in 1999 I was employed with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade as a recruit firefighter. In my 18<sup>th</sup> year with the MFB I am now a Station Officer stationed at Glen Waverley on the urban interface supported by both CFA career and volunteer firefighters. The proposed Fire Service reforms for Victoria are well overdue and if passed will see the people of Victoria get a guaranteed response to a fire emergency by professional firefighters backed up by a professional well trained volunteer organisation.

Victoria should be proud of its volunteer culture, especially that of the CFA. When I was a volunteer, I felt part of a family and proud to be with a group of friends sharing a common passion and interest. When the pager went off and we all raced down to the fire station with our hearts pumping, it was a great feeling that we were going to help people in need. I am still good friends with all these people today, even though some would say I have jumped the fence.

But times are different now, as Melbourne's population has increased dramatically and people are busier and employers expect more from their employees in a competitive world. This is making it harder for volunteers to commit to their role and maintain their response times. Other factors are,

- Increased traffic volume, making it harder for volunteers to drive down to the fire station to get on the truck and go to the emergency
- Cheap poor quality, more flammable building materials being used as we have seen in recent times around the world notably in London
- The introduction of Emergency Medical Response in some CFA areas which will put more stress and commitment onto volunteers
- Once semi rural, small communities transforming into high density multicultural communities or high density industrial estates posing numerous threats to the safety of people through hazardous chemicals etc

These are just a few things in which I believe are impacting on the ability of our volunteers to respond effectively. Without naming any area or Brigades involved, I have had numerous occasions where the safety of my crew has been jeopardised through a failure to respond or a lack of experience by volunteer crews. Some of these are,

- Being responded to a car accident with persons trapped well into CFA area and arriving on scene some 3 minutes before the volunteer crew. It was around 12 minutes from the time of despatch to their arrival on scene which is unacceptable considering it ended up a fatality
- Being supported by a CFA crew of just 2 Firefighters to a structure fire, when to work safely on the fireground we need a minimum of 7.
- Supporting CFA volunteers to a house fire and arriving on scene to find critical decisions and actions not being taken due to the inexperience of the available crew

- Witnessing CFA crews refusing to get out of an appliance because they simply dislike their neighbouring brigade
- CFA Brigades simply not responding because they haven't got a driver

These examples are totally unacceptable in this day and age and the Victorian public deserves better. The creation of Fire Rescue Victoria will ensure the community gets a guaranteed response to fire and other emergencies in our fast developing state.

And by separating the career and volunteers we should no longer have the constant us and them approach that has taken over a once proud organisation. I want to reiterate that I have no malice towards our volunteers and believe that in becoming a holey volunteer organisation, will be better able to improve on their skills away from the politics of the current model.

Kind regards,

*Marty Newstead*

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