

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Nathan Williams [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 5 July 2017 9:31 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Submission

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017

My name is Nathan Williams and I am employed by the Country Fire Authority (CFA). I hold the rank of Leading Fire Fighter at Morwell Fire Station in the Latrobe Valley. I have been involved in the CFA for 8 years and am a Volunteer at Nilma North in West Gippsland. I hold all the general on station increments, as well as specialist qualifications such as Hazmat Technician, and Technical rescue operator. I am the OH & S Officer at Morwell.

I wish to write this submission in support of the proposed fire service reform for the following reasons:

- I find that the current system, including integration, is misleading the people of Victoria we serve. The belief of 60,000 volunteers is extremely false, and solely a loose number used as a source of security to the community. Where I work and with my knowledge of many other integrated stations, the true number of active volunteers is minimal, with only 1 or 2 being able to turn out to a fire call if we are lucky. Generally speaking there is no response from volunteers. Consideration must be given in Latrobe Valley where we service major industry (power stations), often referred to as critical infrastructure, as well as a Major Hazard facility. I cringe when I hear stories from career fire fighters of the times when homes have burnt to the ground due to no volunteer response prior to increased manning of integrated stations over the past 15 years. Unfortunately today, the increased level of service put upon our volunteers is untenable. Pressures placed upon both employers and employees today is far greater than 20 years ago, and I believe it to be disgraceful that Governments today expect that volunteers across Victoria still endeavour to provide a far greater level of service than in the past.
- I have read the legislation supporting fire service reform in Victoria and there is nothing that I can see that will affect volunteer response or "surge capacity". This is simply propaganda dished out by the Liberal Party driven Victorian Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) that is designed to have a divide and conquer attitude, and reflect the views of the older misinformed members of CFA, not the modern fire service that CFA should be today. Reform will bring together standardisation of the fire service in Victoria which will in effect have a greater cost effectiveness. One central point for training, Procurement, logistics, etc, surely is a huge benefit in an efficient management structure. Standardisation of equipment and training, policy, procedures and legislation will bring Victoria's Fire Service into the modern day, effective, and top class service it should be.
- As an OH&S representative I am always conscious and Critical of the safety of fire fighters both on station and on the fire ground. When we respond to a structure fire where people are reported trapped within the structure, we send 1 or 2 fire fighters inside with no rescue available. Fire ground world standards show that there are 7 fire fighters required to conduct operations safely. It is both dangerous and frightening as a crew leader to expose my crews to these ongoing situations, as well as heightened risks for those persons trapped. The ability to have "safe" numbers on the fire ground, and or responded to the fire ground is paramount to safe and effective fire ground operations.



- This long protracted dispute has had an effect on myself and my family. I can no longer volunteer within my community as the poison that has spread from the VFBV down through its channels has divided myself from my fellow volunteer members at Nilma North. It is very disappointing when I am attacked for being a “Union thug”, and for supposedly not wanting to get onto a volunteer crewed truck because career staff won’t “cross crew”. Then we have the unprecedented situation where the National Liberal Party becoming involved and changing legislation-for whatever reason it saw fit! The venom and misinformation dished out early on by politicians, various media outlets, and members of the community has taken its toll. Although, it was refreshing to hear social commentators finally broadcast the facts when understanding the truth behind the proposed EBA.
- Unfortunately, I still today hear over the radio brigades failure to respond. The constant cry of “Re-page” for crews, or “driver required urgently” most often become unanswered. To hear of buildings burning to the ground because of brigades failures to respond is nowhere near acceptable in a modern world. As Victoria’s regional population increases dramatically, greater pressure is placed upon volunteers, with the need for an efficient, professional modern fire service being long overdue. The reliance on volunteers to perform road accident rescue, technical rescue, and other demanding roles is also an antiquated outdated expectation in a modern populated society.
- This dispute has been going on now far too long, and has had quite an effect on me and my family. Constant ridicule and unnecessary ill-informed comments from friends, volunteers, and members of the public have left me somewhat disillusioned and distressed. The incredible uncalled for intervention by the Prime Minister and his Employment Minister Ms Cash, simply to gain support to secure votes from a supposed 60,000 Volunteers has caused damage that can now never be repaired. The changing of legislation to allow consultation by all parties has created unprecedented pressures on negotiating workplace enterprise agreements.

In summary, reform is very long overdue, and I support its implementation with utmost urgency.

Yours sincerely
Nathan Williams



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