

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Nicholas Büsst [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 6 July 2017 9:01 AM
To: LCSC
Subject: Victorian Fire Services Bill Committee 2017

To the Fire Services Committee,

Dear Members of the Fire Services Select Committee, I thank you for your consideration of my personal and professional support of the proposed Fire Services legislation.

Firstly, my name is Nicholas Büsst, I am a professional fire fighter with MFB, working predominately in Melbourne's Northern suburban district, between southernmost suburbs or Brunswick and Northcote, to northernmost suburbs of Tullamarine, Somerton, Epping and Greensborough.

I am a second generation fire fighter, with my father (before his passing to an occupationally linked cancer) working for the MFB for 25 years. Michael Busst (my father) succumbed to bladder cancer which had spread to his lymphatic system and subsequently the rest of his body, in 2012. His death occurred whilst I was conducting my own entrance to the MFB during my recruit course. This was an understandably difficult time for me and my family, exacerbated by the lack of presumptive legislation. His disease has later been recommended to fall under presumptive cancer legislation for fire fighters by the federal government. It is almost 5 years since this legislation was passed. Yet at present, Victorian fire fighters are not covered, without proving evidence based linkage to particular fires or exposures that the cancer is linked. I know all too personally this is unjust and the proposed fire services bill goes a long way to making amends. Please consider the torment someone suffering with cancer needs to go through to support medical bills, finances and their own wellbeing, whilst also fighting for workcover. It **was** and still is heartbreaking.

I believe the Fire Service legislation also presents a method of modernising a currently flawed system. Currently, due to a recent passing of Federal legislation, a career fire fighter within the CFA it seems has no measure of bargaining for any new workers' rights (or their employment contract), as they fall within a volunteer organisation, which any member can protest any clause within their contract. However, this issue, it is not the predominant one and only serves as a catalyst for well needed change. As mentioned, I work within the MFB, which stands for the (Melbourne) Metropolitan Fire Brigade, however, our designated metropolitan boundaries have not changed with the actual defined Melbourne metropolitan area. If projected population growth continues, Victoria is soon to overtake NSW as the most populous state. Emergency services should be determined by safety to its community, calculated methodically by the risks of an area, such as population, hazardous sites, essential services, congestion, estimated growth, etc.

To me it seems that this has not occurred in a professional sense. And I wish to make no disservice to the fantastic job volunteer fire fighter do. However, it must be said that given traffic congestion and work commitments, a volunteer's ability to provide best practice emergency service of 90 second turnout is being diminished.

Within emergency services, time is of essence. As I have learnt over my 5 years within the brigade (and prior knowledge from my father's experience), a difference in seconds can be the difference in a fire contained to room of origin, survival of cardiac arrest, evacuating a premises from danger.

Speaking of valuable seconds, the MFB has been conducted Emergency Medical Response (EMR), with same dispatch times as Ambulance Victoria for any "code Zero" category medical calls, with great success. There are numerous studies into how valuable this program has been, but the real evidence of its success can be seen in the cardiac arrest survivors, whom without the program would not be with us today. This is currently being rolled out in career CFA stations, which will greatly protect the communities which fall within the stations zone.

One of the most significant changes to the proposed legislation will come in the form of fire fighter safety, with minimum 2 truck dispatch and 8 fire fighters (all of whom have extensive training to enter a burning building, with Breathing Apparatus), for all career station fire call turn outs. The need for this type of turnout is simple, a fire fighters safety cannot be guaranteed with less. It ensures that there are failsafe measures in place, with backup crews ready to enter and retrieve firefighters (and trapped occupants), in a emergency. The MFB follow best practice of this type of turnout, which is essential (even though safety precautions are taken), given the job is a dynamic and hazardous environment.

My question with all this is, how does one value life and property of one suburb over another, when they pay the same Fire Service Levy (or in some cases more), and meet or exceed all key criteria's in terms of population, risks and congestion? This shouldn't be left for the rhetoric of, "this is my patch", and should be calculated with modern and calculated measures.

Once again, thank you for your consideration of the proposed bill and taking the time to consider my support for the proposed Fire Service Legislation, which is particularly important to me as a fire fighter for the proposed presumptive legislation, fire fighter and community safety.

Kind Regards,

Nicholas Büssst

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