

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Joel Dare [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 7 July 2017 11:59 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fire service reforms submission

Dear Committee,

My name is Joel Dare. I am a Senior Station Officer with the MFB and have been a career fire fighter for the last 14 years. I have been stationed at numerous stations throughout the Metropolitan Fire District (MFB) with the majority of my time being stationed at Carlton, Thomastown, and Brunswick (where I am currently based).

The reason for my e-mail is to express my great support for the proposed fire services reform.

During my career I have been witness to some of the best and worst of society. One of the things I enjoy most is having the great honour of delivering Fire Education to the Foundation and upper primary school children in my area. These sessions provide children with practical knowledge which can save lives and also allows them to enjoy the excitement of pretending to be a firefighter. Conversely, and unfortunately my crew and I also witness death and destruction on a regular basis, be it by car or industrial accident, fire and heart attack to name just a few. The one thing that always gives me solace is the knowledge that when I respond to a call for help we do our utmost to bring the situation to an end as quickly, safely and respectfully as possible.

The word I would like to highlight is "Quickly". As you would now be aware Victoria's fire services boundaries (MFD) have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this out-dated system, 35 areas are wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia, Geelong and half of Greensborough and all of Apollo Parkways (where I grew up) are just some of the 35 'country areas'. Volunteers have and continue to serve these areas, however, as these areas become more densely populated with more factories, houses and people, it is critical that they also have career firefighters that can rapidly respond to any emergency. This would ensure the expedient conclusion to any emergency, on par with those living in the current Metropolitan Fire District receive. Career stations work on the system that we have 90 seconds to turn out (leave the station) and just under 8 minutes to book on scene (from time of initial call) this 8 minute response time ensures the best chance of a successful outcome. Unfortunately volunteers cannot provide this level of initial response due to the simple fact that they are volunteers. They have their own jobs, families, hobbies etc. that demand their time and thus cannot and should not be expected to be at the station ready to respond in the same time critical way career staff can.

For your knowledge, the 8 minute response matrix is designed around the time it takes for a fire to Flash Over. This is when the smoke and super-heated gasses in a house reach the critical temperature where they all begin to burn at once resulting in a chain reaction where all of the other materials also heat up almost instantaneously to a point where they will also combust. Please take a look at this segment from ABC's Catalyst program, it shows exactly how fast a fire grows out of control in a normal house <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1WRTQaQnFs>. It also clearly demonstrates how necessary it is to have a rapid 8 minute response, with 7 professional career firefighters on two fire trucks as the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas. As a side note the one thing we teach all of our students and the public is to close the door behind you when leaving a room with fire as it will slow it down providing us with critical extra seconds.

As I have already stressed, time is the key to any structure fire. My father was a volunteer with the South Morang CFA over 50 years ago when there was a bush fire that ripped through the gorge. He with my grandfather and great uncle fought that fire with many others because that's what farmers do, they look out for each other and that is what the CFA was founded on, farmers and others in the country looking out for each other. What it was not founded for was high density urban fire fighting that requires very fast response to time critical incidents. I believe the volunteers of this great state of ours do an amazing job when time is not so much of an issue, we cannot however expect them to do the impossible. Expecting them to respond with the same speed as career staff is unrealistic, unfair. This reform will recognise the volunteers for the great work they do by ensuring the CFA does what it was designed for, to attract, develop and support volunteers and unachievable. while also modernising an old antiquated fire service with fixed boundaries so that our growing communities receive the level of emergency cover they deserve.

To ensure the safety of all Victorians - including myself as a firefighter, I ask you to please seriously consider supporting the proposed fire services reform. Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of your constituents, and all communities in our growing state. Additionally, it will ensure the safety of our firefighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer firefighters because of the enormous urban growth resulting in increased emergency calls.

I also respectfully submit that you give consideration to my request to modernise the fire service along with the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect fire service employees. Both are needed to be endorsed and implemented by Parliament before the commencement of the fire season. This is important to me and my colleagues.

I would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you all in person to talk to you further about my personal experiences as a professional firefighter and why this reform is so important.

Kind Regards,

Joel Dare

