

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Robyn Burns [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 July 2017 12:47 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Services Bill Inquiry

Put simply I want an emergency service staffed by the most professional and highly trained personnel. Fire fighters who have had to go through a most rigorous selection process, be successful and then have undergone an intensive and comprehensive academy training program. Volunteers have not had this.

I want an emergency service which is guaranteed to respond immediately to a potentially life-threatening crisis. Volunteers, through no fault of their own are unable to do so. I know that career fire fighters at integrated stations must meet a 90 second response time. This is especially critical in the densely populated areas of major regional centres where fires can spread to adjacent properties rapidly.

This is not a slight on volunteers but their principal role is not a fire fighter. Their ability to respond will be constrained by job, family and other commitments. Further their attendance cannot be guaranteed. Their training amounts to one night a week. One can't expect them to have the skills and competencies of professionally trained career fire fighters.

In my mind too much emphasis in the debate has focused on the impact on volunteer engagement and participation in the fire delivery service. Of the approximately 1200 CFA stations in Victoria 35 are integrated, about 3%. We are talking about impacting an extremely small number of the 10,000 volunteers. It would be interesting to obtain from the CFA how many volunteers are registered at these stations, and further how many of these are active. The focus of the debate should be on making the CFA the most effective, efficient and skilled emergency service the people of Victoria deserve. The CFA doesn't exist to give volunteers any guaranteed role. By definition they are volunteers.

Just as I would want qualified ambulance/paramedic officers to attend in a medical emergency rather than volunteers so if my house was on fire and/or my family was threatened I would want the best qualified fire fighters to attend. I believe the vast majority of Victorians would feel the same. There are not enough career fire fighters at present to service the entire state but there are sufficient numbers to protect the major regional centres. The volunteers would still fulfil an essential and valuable role servicing the areas outside these centres.

I live in the south-west of Victoria. Our local parliamentarians have by and large only consulted with volunteer groups regarding the restructure of the CFA. Our local member, Roma Britnell, when calling for submissions to your committee on radio only identified volunteers to do so. I hope when deliberating this bill and making your recommendations that you consider the entitlement and right of the much larger group, Victorians who aren't CFA volunteers, for the best emergency fire service OUR government can provide.

Brad Burns