

Kirra Vanzetti

From: HEARN, Sandra [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 29 June 2017 2:51 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Submission to Fire Services Reform Commission

To the Fire Services Reform Commission,

I am a Station Officer with the MFB and currently stationed at Preston Fire Station. I have worked for the MFB for 13 years. A strong interest of mine is my involvement with the MFBs' Health and Safety Department undertaking roles as a Fitness Leader and as a member of the Peer Support Program. I also recently completed the Fire Investigator Course.

Between January 2014 and June 2016 I was in the role of Peer Coordinator for the MFB. It was during this time that I witnessed the impact of the ongoing industrial dispute on fire fighters and corporate staff. Numerous MFB Safe reports (OH & S reporting system) were lodged by staff to document the personal psychological impact. This was due in part to the relentless media 'attacks' on career fire fighters, which resulted in random verbal attacks from members of the general public. I have personally experienced general members of the public 'giving us the bird' while driving the pumper in our area.

As part of my role as Peer Coordinator I presented to groups of fire fighters on various topics relating to wellbeing and mental health. One of the sessions which I presented was "Dealing with Distressed Relatives and Bystanders/Peer Support" during their Emergency Medical Response Recertification. This session was presented approximately 40 times per year and included a mix of CFA and MFB career fire fighters. At nearly every session where CFA fire fighters were in attendance a comment was made comparing the sub standard of the CFAs' Peer Program in comparison to the MFBs' Peer Program. Being aware of the structure of the CFAs' Peer Program I have seen the Peer Staff do a fantastic job however they have limited resources and prioritise towards the volunteers. This is the clear message to me coming from the CFAs' career fire fighters. In my opinion, and in knowing and having seen the impact that critical incident stress can have on an emergency services worker, this just isn't good enough!

I live in the suburb of East Kew and am fortunate enough to be serviced by the MFB and receive a 24 hour/ 7days a week fire fighting response. Due to Victorias out dated fire services system many of my friends and family live in heavily urbanised areas such as Dandenong, Springvale, Melton and Craigieburn and do not receive the same response as I do. The fire services boundaries have not significantly changed in 60 years and are therefore wrongly zoned as "country" for fire services response purposes, which means that they do not get the fire service response that a busy urban area needs.

Volunteers do a great job and play a vital role in fire coverage in Victoria, however, in urban areas such as those mentioned above, the demands and pressures on volunteers are too great due to the enormous population growth in Victoria.

I strongly believe that reform of our fire services is vital to give Victoria a modern fire services system that ensures the safety of all people and properties in a growing state.

Kind Regards

Sandra Hearn

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Station Officer Sandy Hearn | D Platoon
Preston Fire Station | Northern District
Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
471 Bell St, Preston 3072



www.mfb.vic.gov.au

*The MFB is committed to minimising its impact on the environment.
Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.*

WARNING

This email and any attachment may contain confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient you are not authorised to copy or disclose all or any part of it without the prior written consent of the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board.
