

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Chris Sayers [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 3 July 2017 9:26 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights and Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

My name is Chris Sayers and I have been a professional MFB firefighter for 8 years. I am currently based at Thomastown fire station and hold the rank of Leading Fire Fighter.

I write to express my support for the proposed fire services reform.

In areas that I have worked in Greensborough, Thomastown and in the earlier years in the Western Suburbs I have seen first hand what happens when permanently crewed trucks are not supported by other permanently crewed trucks. Volunteers do a fantastic job and their community commitment can not be questioned but because of the nature of volunteerism there are times when those trucks respond too late or not at all due to other commitments. The areas that are covered by volunteer brigades were once rural but now in a lot of cases are now built up urban areas. Firefighters lives have been put in danger because there were not enough Breathing Apparatus trained firefighters on scene to back up those inside burning building. There has also been excessive loss to buildings in urban areas such as Greensborough as the crews that were responded were volunteer and therefore had a longer turnout time than that of a fully crewed station. Also as there are currently two organisations working together the assignment rules for MFB and CFA differ and this has resulted in a teleboom being responded from Dandenong (CFA) to a fire in Greensborough (CFA), when the Thomastown teleboom (MFB) was in station and much closer. These issues could be resolved by creating one fire service that can cater to urban areas and has the capacity to expand with the rising population and sprawl of Victorian cities.

Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this outdated system, 35 areas are wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and Geelong are just some of the 35 'country areas'.

These areas need to be modernised as they are highly urbanised areas as part of the reform of the fire service. A rapid 8 minute response, with 7 professional career firefighters on two fire trucks is the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas. This minimum response guarantees that there are sufficient crew members to perform searches through buildings in a safe manner as well as potentially reducing the loss of life and property by a timely response.

I admit that I am not a volunteer firefighter but I fail to see how this reform will negatively impact volunteer brigades. The training support from professional firefighters will be retained and there is a large injection of funds to help outfit stations and crews. As far as I can tell by reading the

proposed amendments no volunteer brigades will be forced out or taken over. As the boundaries of the metropolitan area are expanded the volunteers will turn out along side professionals from new stations in that area. This will mean that those areas that are highly urbanised will receive a more consistent response and therefore will be safer.

All Victorians deserve a modern fire service, professional and volunteer, that meet the needs of our growing communities.

To ensure the safety of all Victorians - including me as a firefighter, I ask you to please seriously consider your support for the proposed fire services reform.

Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of all Victorians in our state whose population is growing rapidly. 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 as I, like everyone, would like to return home safe from work after every shift.

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

Kind regards

Chris Sayers

[Leading Firefighter, Thomastown, 'C' shift]