

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Glen Stenhouse [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 29 June 2017 9:46 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Services Reform Legislation

Gordon Rich Phillips
Daniel Mulino
Colleen Hartland
Daniel Young
Cesar Melham
Harriet Shing
Luke O'Sullivan
Wendy Lovell

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Glen Stenhouse and I have been employed as a professional firefighter with the MFB for a period of 27 years and am currently stationed at Croydon Fire Station, with the rank of Leading Firefighter, it is in an area that is serviced by both professional and volunteer fire services. In addition to the knowledge and skills I share with my fellow career firefighters I am also road and industrial accident rescue qualified and certified, I am also certified and qualified to operate 27, 35, 37 and 44 metre ladder platforms and 17 metre teleboom, I also hold an Associate Diploma of Applied Science in Fire Technology and Graduate membership of the Institute of Fire Engineers.

I respectfully submit to the committee that the crux of this matter and the major benefactor of this legislation being passed is the people of Victoria. The current fire services model used in Victoria is outdated and has not allowed for the massive increase in population and infrastructure that has occurred over the last 50 years. As areas grow there is a need for an increase in police, paramedic, medical and other critical service improvement but fire service delivery is often neglected.

This legislation is important as it will allow for the most effective fire service delivery and to allow it to grow in correlation with growth as the urban areas of Victoria continue to spread and build.

This legislation is not about a division between professional and volunteer firefighters, it is certainly not about disrespecting volunteers, volunteers will always be required, however as urban areas continue to expand, fire service coverage needs to be increased to meet the higher demand. Increased call numbers plus our changing demographics put an enormous stress on the volunteer system leading to a not always certain response in regards to both time and skills, again this is not about volunteers desire to serve their community but about the systems ability to deliver. It is about delivering the best possible emergency service for the Victorian community.

Fires and incidents are time critical, not only have urban areas seen a dramatic increase in housing and business, the massive increase in fuel loads (both volume and type), as well as changes in construction materials and methods of both residential and commercial properties has dramatically changed fire behaviour, resulting in far quicker fire propagation, shorter time to flashover and reduced escape windows. The same time critical criteria also applies to motor vehicle and industrial accidents, chemical incidents, emergency medical incidents and the multitude of other non-fire related incidents, we as firefighters deal with. In short Victorians, all Victorians, deserve the best emergencies that can be provided.

I have personally been involved in incidents such as the one I am about to outline, again please do not take this as criticism of volunteers, but put yourself in the place of the victim. We were responded to an industrial accident with a male trapped in an industrial auger, this incident was in an area that is the responsibility of a volunteer brigade and SES were the responsible rescue authority. We responded our Heavy Rescue appliance after ascertaining that the SES unit had been paged but had not responded at that stage, we were on scene with our rescue unit for approximately 20 minutes prior to the arrival of the SES crew and by that time the rescue had been partially affected with the rescue completed shortly afterwards after liaising with the SES crew. I am outlining this incident not to cast negativity on volunteers but to highlight the shortcomings of a system that cannot guarantee a timely skill based response.

Yours sincerely

Glen Stenhouse



29th June 2017