

Kirra Vanzetti

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 30 June 2017 9:31 AM
To: LCSC
Subject: Victorian Fire Service review

My name is Colin Fowler

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I was an operational Firefighter with the MFB for 27 years from 1984 – 2011 reaching the rank of Station Officer before I retired.

My career was mainly in the northern Melbourne suburbs and I regularly turned-out with border CFA stations from Greenvale, Epping, South Morang, Eltham and others on a variety of calls.

I worked at some of the MFB's busiest stations (Preston, Broadmeadows, Thomastown and others) and we responded regularly in the 1980's to vast areas of open grassland from Greenvale out to Craigieburn and across to South Morang with the outlying CFA stations. We regularly fought and extinguished large grass and scrub fires together in the Summer period.

Today not much of this area is open space anymore and has become a collection of new housing estates and commercial zones for factories, storage, distribution and retail businesses. And still the MFB/CFA boundaries have not been altered to include the advancement of these new outer suburbs of Melbourne!

The subject of service boundaries has been a discussion point since well before I began my Firefighting career in 1984, yet nothing has changed? The outer regions of the extensive Melbourne sprawl should now be supported by a greater Fire and Emergency service cover in this the 21st century. We've seen a small contingent of CFA career staff placed in a few of these outer Melbourne areas in recent times. As suggested, these career staff should be included in the new FRV structure plan, and be incorporated in an expanded Metropolitan Fire district.

The CFA volunteers have provided a great service over the years but with today's job commitments and job demands, they quite often struggle to get away from work to attend some of their calls.

This review needs to seriously look at this concern in these areas and make the appropriate adjustments to accommodate an expanded Metropolitan Fire district boundary.

Career staff as you know also provide Emergency Medical Response (EMR) in Melbourne and the larger regional towns. This service would expand under the potential FRV changes to further assist Ambulance Victoria and the Victorian public.

The separation of CFA into a fully volunteer service and combining the career staff under the new FRV changes would be the most responsible way to move forward. There is nothing in this much needed re-structure that will adversely impact the services provided by the regional CFA fire stations and volunteers. Separating career Firefighters into the new FRV, and creating a fully volunteer CFA service should be a relatively straight forward transition. Having spoken to several regional brigades and members (I have family who are volunteer Firefighters in the Mallee) they want to embrace change. Our current volunteer Firefighters will continue to provide the excellent service they always have when needed.

This re-structure has been a long time in the making and is vital to ensure a modern, efficient and reliable service that will benefit **ALL** the communities of Victoria. We support Emergency Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley, and Chief Fire Officer Steve Warrington who both believe the changes can be actioned.

The volunteers have been supported by the VFBV (Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria). Why then has a new group VVFA (Victorian Volunteer Firefighters Association) started? These questions need answers. In none of the media reports on this subject so far have the VVFA group been included or asked for their input!

You all have an important task to perform to ensure the right decisions are made in this Fire Service review, and I hope that all these decisions are made based on facts and not by any Political agenda.

Good Luck,
Colin Fowler

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