

**Kirra Vanzetti**

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**From:** Mick Hog [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 30 June 2017 4:33 PM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Fire Service Reform Bill 2017

Assistant Clerk Committees --- Fire Services Reform Bill 2017

Dear Sir, Madam,

I write to you regarding the Victorian Governments proposed Fire Service Reform Bill. I am a career Firefighter with over 30 years experience. The last 20 years I have served the community at Templestowe and Croydon fire stations. Both these stations are on the MFB/CFA interface and as such I feel qualified to comment on the status quo with regards to fire service delivery to the Victorian community. It must be noted that the MFB and CFA have worked very well together over the past 50 years. It also must be noted that the MFB/CFA boundaries which identify the urban/country interface has not changed in the past 50 years. This means that communities that were relatively small, and which relied on volunteer firefighters 50 years ago, are NOW large and highly urbanized communities which are still serviced by volunteers. The implication is that many heavily populated areas are now still serviced by a less than optimum fire service response.

Scientific studies are very clear with regard to the spread of fire in a structure - take a house fire for example. Once a fire has started, there must be a firefighting agent ON SCENE to deal with the fire within 8 minutes otherwise the spread of the fire will become uncontrollable, and in the case of a house fire, a total loss is almost always assured - not to mention the potential for injury and loss of life. Given this fact, it is long over due that the proposed changes to the Fire Services is vitally important for the safety of the community. The proposal shall provide for more firefighters on the MFB/CFA boundaries, offering a rapid response, in which as stated earlier are HIGHLY URBANIZED communities that deserve a rapid response to an alarm of fire.

Being a firefighter on the interface for the last 20 years I can assure you that on many occasions the volunteer response falls well short of acceptable, particularly for a highly urbanized area. The CFA's own data confirms that there is a serious "on scene" response time failure rate. I have seen homes lost in the CFA area as a DIRECT RESULT of a delayed initial response time, to the alarm of fire. On many occasions the volunteers have simply been unable to respond in time for what ever reason. When this happens, homes are destroyed or otherwise are badly damaged, which could be averted with the implementation of an improved Fire Service. Please understand - this recognition that there is a problem with the current model of the volunteer response, is NOT A CRITICISM of the volunteers, but just a reality of the situation given the outdated MFB/CFA boundaries - CFA volunteers can not respond as efficiently as career firefighters who are at the station 24/7. Volunteer firefighters have jobs and other commitments, therefore they cannot be expected to respond to a fire or incident within 8 minutes all the time. As stated earlier I have worked with the volunteers for the past 20 years and have the greatest respect and working relationship with them. But it is DESPICABLE that those on the conservative side of politics and media have chosen to use the identified issue with response times, as a MALICIOUS CRITICISM of the volunteers by career firefighters. This is an absolute disgrace and must stop, with the ultimate goal being to achieve a better emergency response for the safety of the Victorian community. Further - the outrageous claims of "union take over of CFA" are just that - outrageous! The actual proposal involves just the 35 integrated stations that lay on the MFB/CFA interface and regional highly urbanized centers like Geelong/Ballarat etc. There will be NO closures of CFA stations/no detriment to "surge capacity" and the remaining 1200 CFA fire brigades will remain TOTALLY UNAFFECTED not withstanding the hysterical interjections from the political mischief makers and the ill informed.

The implementation of the reform will not only improve safety for the community but will also improve safety of firefighters. I know I shall feel much safer as I enter a house on fire knowing that I have a FULLY TRAINED back up crew responding hard on my heels. In addition, the implementation of the reform shall even give tens of thousands of people living in the urbanized areas a highly qualified medical response provided by suitably trained firefighters (working hand in hand with Ambulance Victoria). This service is currently being enjoyed by people living in Metropolitan Melbourne.

Despite the opposition to this bill, generated by those seeking to advance their own political agenda, this reform is vital to bring the fire services into the 21st century. I respectfully ask that you consider giving your support to the bill, in doing so you will be supporting a better emergency response to the areas that need it most and at the same time giving me peace of mind, that back up is not far away when I respond to emergencies into the future.

Kind Regards

Michael Coney

Senior Firefighter 3891 / 32 years service

