

## Kirra Vanzetti

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**From:** Len Trawn [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, 1 July 2017 9:47 PM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Fire Services Reform

Dear FSRC Members,

Thirty five years ago I joined CFA as a volunteer firefighter in Hoppers Crossing. At the time, my father said that the government should provide paid firefighters in such built-up areas. I did not disagree, but it was another 20 years before that happened at Hoppers Crossing.

### Assumptions

I grew up in Yarraville and I recall the furor over the planned closure of Spotswood fire station, when it was near Footscray High School. My wife grew up in Springvale, one block away from the fire station. I thought it was quaint hearing the siren go off at 7:30pm on Tuesday nights. I was surprised to learn that it was CFA and not MFB, but I was told that there were staff firefighters there. After we were married we moved to Hoppers Crossing in 1977. When I discovered it was CFA, I expected there would be paid firefighters to deal with house fires and the like, with the volunteer firefighters dealing with bushfires in their tankers.

I remember seeing the notice at Vincent's grocery store; inviting people to a public meeting at the Mossfiel Hall, to establish a new fire brigade for Hoppers Crossing. I thought it would be interesting but my work in Telecom Australia's radio section had me away extensively, so I did not attend. Didn't I have a steep learning curve when I joined Mossfiel Fire Brigade (now Hoppers Crossing) in 1982!

My wife and all of our five children since, have also become members of the brigade. I have also been a CFA employee for 29 years, joining the Radio Section in 1988.

### Observations

During my time as a volunteer firefighter and brigade officer, I was a brigade VUFBA/VFBV delegate for many years, even having a stint as Region 14 VUFBA Secretary. I have also been the shop steward for CFA Communications for some years. So I believe I have a good insight into both staff and volunteer perspectives.

### Decisions

- Do I support the Fire Services Reform? Definitely.
- Do I want you to vote for the reform? Yes.
- Do I think it will impact volunteers at integrated fire stations? I certainly hope so!

We already have a problem with retaining volunteers at integrated brigades and this has never been addressed.

### Motivations

As a firefighter I have never liked the term vol or volunteer, it carries the same stigma as being a reservist. You're not quite the real thing. I have never been a fan of having Volunteer distinguishing our dress uniform and shirts, from that of the staff; even though I have both. But one key aspect of those who do volunteer, is motivation. This year, at the age of 65, I reached compulsory retirement age from the RAAF. I joined the RAAF Active Reserve in 1984 as an aircraft radio technician. Throughout this career I had to get the same pass mark in my trade tests, promotional exams and courses, as the permanent Air Force (PAF) members and, no matter what rank, I wore *exactly* the same uniform as the PAF. We received a great compliment as members of the reserve, when the Corporal running the Aircraft Radio Workshop in RAAF Townsville made the observation: "I only have to ask you guys to do something once".

With staff turning out in 90 seconds, volunteers at integrated brigades often arrive on scene after the job is done. This does not keep volunteers motivated. It is not enough just to help make up hoses. With this reform, it is not

appropriate for CFA firefighters to look the same as those in FRV. It's too late for that. So if we can't be the same, why not make volunteers at integrated brigades not just different; but better! Better because FRV do not have the specialist appliances that the CFA volunteers have. Better because the volunteers are more highly skilled at operating this specialist equipment. Volunteers are motivated, but they need to be challenged to remain involved. Some need to be the decision makers. So giving volunteers a specialist role, operating specialist equipment, will provide those challenges. This is just one idea and more are needed. But who knows, maybe the answer is in what I assumed all those years ago.

**Conclusion**

I do support the reforms and request you do also. I also think some brainstorming and prompt action is needed to turn around the volunteer retention in interated brigades. More of the same is not the answer. I support volunteerism, but not at the expense of public safety.

Regards,

Len Trawn

