

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Scott Darcy [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 3 July 2017 8:16 AM
To: LCSC
Subject: Submission to Fire Services Reform Commission

To the Fire Services Reform Commission,

I am a Station Officer with the MFB and currently I am the Peer Coordinator. I have worked for the MFB for 19 years. A strong interest of mine is my involvement with the MFBs' Health and Safety Department as a member of the Peer Support Program since 2012

In March 2016 I started in the role of Peer Coordinator for the MFB. It was during this time that I witnessed the impact of the ongoing industrial dispute on fire fighters and corporate staff. Numerous MFB Safe reports (OH & S reporting system) were lodged by staff to document the personal psychological impact. This was due in part to the relentless media 'attacks' on career fire fighters, which resulted in random verbal attacks from members of the general public.

As part of my role as Peer Coordinator I present to groups of fire fighters on various topics relating to wellbeing and mental health. One of the sessions which I present is "Dealing with Distressed Relatives and Bystanders/Peer Support" during their Emergency Medical Response Recertification. This session is presented approximately 40 times per year and includes a mix of CFA and MFB career fire fighters. At nearly every session where CFA fire fighters were in attendance a comment was made comparing the substandard of the CFA's Peer Program in comparison to the MFBs' Peer Program. Being aware of the structure of the CFA's Peer Program I have seen the Peer Staff do a fantastic job however they have limited resources and prioritise towards the volunteers. This is the clear message to me coming from the CFA's career fire fighters. In my opinion, and in knowing and having seen the impact that critical incident stress can have on an emergency services worker, this just isn't good enough!

In December last year I was asked by all heads of organisations, CFA, MFB and UFU if I would go to Mildura fire station and work with the crews up there after the suicide of one of their fire fighters. It was stated to me that the peer program didn't have a great relationship with staff in Mildura and they were hoping sending myself up there would help connect any staff with the relevant and needed services. After attending the station on 4 separate occasions and working closely with a psychologist and UFU welfare officer who attended we built a good relationship with crews. It was during these interactions with CFA crews that I got a close and personal understanding of the challenges and issues that CFA staff face and every person I spoke to expressed their keenness to become one service.

Victoria is a major international city with a growing population faster than anywhere else in Australia. With this knowledge we need to look at how we can provide the best professional fire service to our state to protect all citizens equally. I live in the suburb of Ascot Vale and am fortunate enough to be serviced by the MFB and receive a 24 hour/ 7days a week fire fighting response. Due to Victoria's out dated fire services system many of my friends and family live in heavily urbanised areas such as Dandenong, Springvale, Melton and Craigieburn and do not receive the same response as I do. The fire services boundaries have not significantly changed in 60 years and are therefore wrongly zoned as "country" for fire services response purposes, which means that they do not get the fire service response that a busy urban area needs.

Volunteers do a great job and play a vital role in fire coverage in Victoria, however, in urban areas such as those mentioned above, the demands and pressures on volunteers are too great due to the enormous population growth in Victoria.

I strongly believe that reform of our fire services is vital to give Victoria a modern fire services system that ensures the safety of all people and properties in a growing state.

Kind Regards

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