

## Kirra Vanzetti

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**From:** Chris & Sonya Schurmann [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 4 July 2017 9:31 AM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Fire Services Reform

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

My name is Chris Schurmann and I am a Leading Firefighter of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade with over 5 years' service. I currently reside in Preston with my family but had spent a large part of my previous years (30yrs) in the Western and Wimmera Districts of Victoria, having been born and raised in Hamilton working on the farm and other jobs.

I am currently posted to the Northcote Fire Station (FS13) having also been posted during my service to Thomastown (FS07), Bundoora (FS14), Pascoe Vale (FS06), Carlton (FS03) and the Preston Fire Stations (FS12).

I am an active husband and father supporting both of my girls aged 7 and 6, with their schooling and many other activities, assisting every Sunday morning as assistant coach with their soccer club when I am not on shift. My wife is a secondary school teacher and has a similar schedule.

I am concerned with all of the bluff and falsehoods that have been allowed to circulate throughout both Melbourne Metropolitan and Victorian Country, both as a person who has lived in rural Victoria, as well as an occupational Firefighter who has an understanding of what fire cover is available to Melbournians, outer suburban Melbourne as well as rural Victorians. Therefore, I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

- As a person who has lived in rural Victoria and still has close family and friends still doing so, I clearly understand the role that the CFA as a fully volunteer organisation and what it means for these areas. I also remember being in secondary school nearly 30 years ago and being shocked to learn that Hamilton, a major city centre of the Western Districts and then, the 'Wool Capital of the World', was supported by not one full time Firefighter. And then I had no understanding of how the system worked. Move forward 30 years, and still, the City of Hamilton, nearly 10,000 people is still not covered by a full time fire service. Now I understand that this is a fringe city as far as population goes, but how about the cities that surround Melbourne? These are now MAJOR centres with huge populations, infrastructure and risks that 200% require a full time fire service. There should not be one person who can halt any movements to allow the populous in the surrounding Melbourne suburbs to have their own full time fire service. Let alone the Hamilton's of the state!
- As a Firefighter, I understand that a fire in a house can go from smouldering to fully engulfed in under 4 minutes. So for this reason our response times really matter. In the MFB district we have a response time of 7 minutes 90% of the time as we have a fantastic fire coverage of the district (which was designed over 50 years ago). This response time not only potentially saves lives (fire, accident and medical response for example), but property as well as the unseen costs of recovery, demolition and **rebuilding property and lives**. So again, what is the argument for not having a full time fire service to the outer Melbourne suburbs who, as stated in the previous point, have large populations, important infrastructure to the community including hospitals, libraries, shopping districts etc.
- Again, as a Firefighter, I wish to raise the point of safety, both personal and for my colleagues as well as for unsuspecting victims of fire and other emergencies, regarding having 7 Firefighters despatched to the fireground. This is one of the most important facets of how we operate. We require two trained BA (breathing apparatus) personnel to enter a home engulfed with fire and smoke before we enter a premises, for the reasons of potential search and rescue. This procedure is of the utmost for our own safety, as well for the best outcome in such situations. To operate with anything less is putting the community and Firefighters at extreme risk and danger. This also goes hand in hand with our intention of containing a fire

to its room of origin. To enter a burning building, knowing you have backup arriving very soon is comforting from a personal view, but from a risk management perspective it just makes sense.

- I also take umbrage to the way that full time fire services and the United Firefighters Union have been bashed in the press by politicians who are only looking for votes by caressing those that they think will take note, listen and believe what they are saying. Of course it is all blatant lies and the only people who they are making out that a joint fire service will affect negatively, are the ones that if there is not better fire service coverage will lose out in the long run.  
Again as a full time Firefighter, I understand what the volunteers do in rural Victoria, and they should be commended, my own family in rural Victoria are members of the volunteer CFA. I cannot see, if explained properly and honestly, how anyone can see that having a full time fire station in a previously 100% volunteer situation could not see the benefit to their community. And as a Firefighter, we all work together to get the best possible outcome for the community and that is how it should be seen. Driving this wedge between full time and volunteers is underhanded, selfish and totally inhumane for the communities it affects.
- I have worked with many CFA Firefighters in training as well as supporting the CFA districts and stations. We have a camaraderie and mutual respect as well as a mentality to work together for the best possible outcome for the community. Having the one full time fire service only makes sense for many reasons.
  - Standardisation of training, equipment (including procurement), procedures and workplace policies.
  - More streamlined management structure designed especially for a full time fire service.
  - Better management during crisis as there will be one fire service working with other emergency services.
  - Better coverage between MFB and CFA districts and interoperability
  - Retainment of support for Volunteer fire brigades including upgrades for fire stations etc.

There are many more as well if you dig deep enough.

- Since I have been employed with the MFB (March 2012) all I have known is dispute the MFB Board as well as political agendas and being kicked and footballed around for the amusement of politicians and the media. My role as a Firefighter has been questioned by my greatest friends and even family because of these agendas and has put personal strain on my personal life with my own wife at times. What I am eluding to is that even though this outcome may take longer, I am willing to persist with the United Firefighters Union and my colleagues to have the best outcome for my family and friends, the local communities that will be enhanced and for the future of Victoria.

Yours sincerely,

LFF Chris Schurmann

