

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Tony McCoy [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 July 2017 10:36 AM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Service Reform Bill

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of the Fire Service Reform Bill. I have been a professional Firefighter with the MFB for over 32 years, my current position is as a District Operations Commander in Southern District. I also served as a CFA volunteer Firefighter for several years while living at Phillip Island, this allowed me to understand the pros and cons of the CFA volunteer system.

Passing the Fire Service Reform Bill is essential if we are to improve the safety of all Victorians and provide those living in urban areas with the protection they expect and deserve. It will deliver a far more efficient and flexible professional fire service as well as enhancing an independent volunteer service. It will not have any negative effect on surge capacity, in fact it will improve it, due to the ability for professional Firefighters to move seamlessly around the state.

The CFA Volunteer system was initially intended to protect rural communities from the summer fire risk in Victoria, but due to the urban sprawl and the fact that MFB/CFA boundaries have not changed in over 60 years, means that heavily urbanised areas now rely on volunteer brigades to respond to complex structure fires and rescues in the urban environment.

Structure fires spread quickly and occupants only have minutes to escape before being overcome by smoke. Saving life and property in the urban environment relies on three factors;

- **Response times** (when responding to structure fires you need a fire truck on scene in **under 8 minutes** from the time of call to prevent a condition known as flashover, put simply, this is when a fire can spread from one room to an entire house)
- **Fully trained Firefighters** (Firefighters trained in structural firefighting, Breathing apparatus (BA) and pump operation) at least seven Firefighters are required to implement industry standard BA and incident management procedures. Note: Firefighters never delay attacking a fire to wait for seven Firefighters to arrive on scene, but they know back up won't be far away
- **Incident management** (Officers trained in assessing a situation then providing a proper incident management structure, risk assessment, action plan and calling of appropriate resources)

I know from experience that the volunteer system can't provide the criteria above due to a number of factors, I appreciate the work volunteers do throughout the state but the volunteer system is not suitable in responding to emergencies in the urban environment. I know from experience that with a volunteer response you don't know how many people will answer their pagers, how long it will take them to arrive at the Fire Station? What training they will have? Will they be able to drive or operate the truck? Are they trained in breathing apparatus and structural firefighting?

Most members of the community do not understand the difference between a volunteer and professional service until they experience an emergency such as a fire, but when five or six minutes is the difference between losing one room or an entire house, they are very grateful when they learn that they live in an area protected by professional Firefighters.

Professional Firefighters measure success in the lives and property we save, the fires you won't see on the news because they have been contained to the room they started in. This is only possible with a fast responses and an efficient internal attack on the fire.

In considering this reform I ask that you consider facts and logic and disregard arguments over turf. I am happy to discuss further if you wish.

Regards

Tony McCoy

