

Kirra Vanzetti

From: MASON, James [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 July 2017 3:14 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Victorian Fire Service Reform

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

RE: INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS AND COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017

I live, and pay the fire levy, in The Basin, City of Knox. Also, I am a Qualified Fire-fighter, employed with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade for the past five years. I am currently stationed at West Melbourne Fire Station 02 (FS02), and have been posted at Metropolitan Fire District fringe stations in Templestowe (FS30), Croydon (FS26), Ringwood (FS20) and Vermont South (FS28).

During heavy fire-periods I have also, as part of the manning at West Melbourne Fire Station, stepped-up to Patterson River Fire Station (CFA), and responded to fires in Morwell.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire service for the following reasons:

The standardisation of professional services is long overdue. In my experience as a fire-fighter, I have seen how pivotal the standard of a two-appliance response, with a minimum of 7 fire-fighters in attendance to any fire or incident can be. This affects my own safety, the safety of my fellow fire-fighters, the quick and efficient rescue of and casualties, and the minimization of fire spread and property damage.

I have seen how critical an early response to a fire or medical emergency can be. It is the difference between confining a fire to the room of origin to potentially losing the entire building. In the professional fire services there is a standard of a 90-second dispatch of appliances, to be at the scene of the incident in 8 minutes. The volunteer services have 7 minutes to dispatch from the fire station, before the alarm cascades to the next closest station, which in turn has 7 minutes to dispatch, and so-on.

Currently in Melbourne we have 2 professional fire services, trained in different techniques, and skilled in different equipment responding to the same types of fires and incidents. Also, in highly urbanised areas, there volunteers responding to house fires, who have not yet been trained in, or have decided against training in, the elements of fire-fighting necessary to work with/assist professional services.

All Victorian homeowners pay the fire services levy, however there is a gross level of inequality in the amount of fire safety provided by the fire services between a long-standing urbanised area and areas that have become more densely populated in the last decades. As the population and sprawl of Melbourne's suburbs increase, so too should the level of fire protection. Today there should be no difference between these types of areas.

Furthermore, to improve the safety of the community and in response to the dramatic increase to the population of Victoria, and the urban sprawl of Melbourne over the last 60 years, and into the future, a single fire service with all fire-fighters trained in the same strengths is necessary.

Victoria's volunteer fire fighting services provide an essential protection of Victoria's rural areas. The fire services reform will have absolutely no effect upon the ability of volunteer fire-fighters to continue to protect the community as they have done for so many years.

I hope you have the time to take my opinion and my experience as a fire-fighter and as a resident of Melbourne's rural area.

Yours sincerely,

QFF James Mason



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