

Kirra Vanzetti

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 July 2017 4:47 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire service reform submission

Dear Parliamentary Committee members

My name is Graham Holinger and I have been a professional MFB firefighter for 28 years holding the rank of Leading Firefighter.

I write to express my absolute support for the proposed fire services reform.

I have been stationed at Templestowe for the past 25 years and can fully appreciate the need for fire services reform.

- Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this outdated system, 35 areas are wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and Geelong are just some of the 35 'country areas'.
- These highly urbanised areas need to be modernised as part of the reform of the fire service. A rapid 8 minute response, with 7 professional career firefighters on two fire trucks is the minimum standard needed in highly urbanised areas.
- All Victorian, professional and volunteer firefighters, deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities.

My work area of Templestowe is a perfect example of a ridiculous outdated system with outdated boundaries. How can the surrounding areas of Eltham and Warrandyte still be classified as rural? We have had a number of enquiries/commissions post Black Saturday all recommending change to our system to provide these areas of Melbourne with improved coverage, public safety and firefighter safety.

It is very important to note the following. Victoria has approx 1200 CFA stations with 30 odd integrated stations. These integrated stations are the CFA stations predominately in these areas of Melbourne that are no longer rural areas. These stations are made up of both CFA full time paid staff and volunteers. Unfortunately this means we are unable to guarantee a rapid 8 minute response with 7 professional firefighters on two fire trucks.

I have personally experienced this occurrence on many occasions. Why should ANY Victorians living in these now Metropolitan areas receive any less fire cover than others purely due to an outdated system requiring urgent reform?

The Andrew's Govt has rolled out these reforms to improve public safety and firefighter safety and has assured the volunteers that nothing will change to their structures as well as receiving \$100 million plus for improvements in stations, equipment, training etc.
So you may ask what is the problem? I think this.....

Majority of volunteers will welcome these reforms. However, perhaps some volunteers in these integrated stations will feel I guess less valued, needed or as important. I am certainly not criticising our volunteers as they do a fantastic job but I do feel this is a major issue that no one wants to raise through fear of being accused of criticising our wonderful volunteers. It's certainly not their fault. They are caught up in a broken system that needs urgent reform. The volunteer association can not say this is the reason as they wont get public support nor should they. As harsh as it sounds our public safety and firefighter safety can and should not be put at risk any longer.

I could be wrong but I have followed this matter from the very beginning and no one has been able to demonstrate to me any valid reasons as to why we shouldn't have fire services reform.

Why should someone in Metropolitan Rowville, Boronia, Eltham, Dandenong and many others get less coverage than someone like me living in Blackburn.

I applaud our current Govt for tackling a problem that has simply been in the 'too hard basket' for too long.

To ensure the safety of all Victorians - including me as a firefighter, I ask you to please seriously consider your support for the proposed fire services reform.

Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of your constituents, and all communities in our growing state. Additionally, it will ensure the safety of our firefighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer firefighters because of the enormous urban growth resulting in increased emergency calls.

I also respectfully submit that you give consideration to my request to modernise the fire service along with the introduction of presumptive legislation laws to protect fire service employees. Both are needed to be endorsed and implemented by Parliament before the commencement of the fire season. This is important to me and my colleagues.

I would also welcome the opportunity to further discuss my personal experiences as a professional firefighter and why this reform is so important.

Kind regards

Graham Holinger



Leading Firefighter – MFB Templestowe

Sent from my iPhone