

Kirra Vanzetti

From: g.schlittler g.schlittler [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 July 2017 7:10 PM
To: LCSC

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Graham Schlittler, and I am a leading Fire-fighter employed by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. I have been a professional fire fighter for since February, 2012, and prior to that, I was a police officer with Victoria Police since 2001. In my career as a fire fighter I have attended numerous emergency calls for fires, chemical incidents, motor vehicle collisions and entrapments and medical responses as well as participating in community education and engagement. As a police officer I also attended numerous similar incidents including working out of Yarra Glen on February 7th, 2009 and in the following weeks working with victims and in areas affected by black Saturday. Since joining the fire brigade I have completed my qualifications to become a Leading Fire-fighter as well as having qualifications to operate various appliances such as Pumpers, Pumper Tankers, Water Tankers, Transporters and the MFB Control Unit.

My training for the MFB was undertaken at the Burnley training complex in a 20 week recruitment course covering theory and practical work covering many areas of fire fighting including, Breathing apparatus operation, Fire fighting pump operations, ropes and knots, ladders, search techniques, driving, Emergency medical response, low and high angle rescue, working from heights, Dangerous chemicals and substances response, OHS and health and fitness. In my previous occupations as a police officer and doing an apprenticeship, the initial training, I felt was a small stepping stone to a job which was largely learnt through on the job experiences. The fire brigade training was different, in that I was confident from day one as an operational fire fighter I was capable and competent of performing my duties due to the extensive work that I and my instructors had put in during recruit

training. Likewise if I am stationed with a new recruit fire-fighter I have complete confidence putting my safety in their hands when I am working with them.

As a professional fire fighter one of the parts of my job is to act as an emergency medical responder. As well as carrying first aid equipment on the trucks we carry an oxygen kit and a defibrillator. As a professional fire-fighter we are responded to serious medical calls where a heartbeat and or breathing is not detected which are generally cardiac arrests and drug overdoses. Whilst we are there to assist ambulance Victoria, because of our fast turn out times from stations it is not at all uncommon to arrive prior to paramedics, sometimes working on a patient for a significant time prior to ambulance arrival. As a professional fire fighter I have performed CPR on patient's dozens of times, and have received recognition from the brigade in relation to a patient we revived using the defibrillator who walked out of hospital a week later. This is one of my proudest achievements as a fire-fighter as it meant a family had their Grandfather/Father/husband home again when they thought they had lost him.

I currently stationed at the Croydon Fire Station which is located on the Mfb's Eastern fringe. The nearest station Mfb station is Ringwood to Croydon's West, and then the other stations surrounding Croydon to the North, East and West are volunteer manned stations including Bayswater, Mooroolbark, Montrose, Lilydale, Chirnside Park and Wonga Park. Croydon has two appliances a Pumper Tanker and Water Tanker which are generally both manned by 3 fire-fighters each. It is not uncommon to be responded to jobs to the North South and West and have only the 6 professional fire fighters on the fire ground which creates a safety concern as it is under the desired 7 who can act as a supervisor, pump operators, a Breathing Apparatus crew and back up.

I live in a rural part of Melbourne and my family and I are covered by a volunteer manned station. I commend the volunteers who give their time to work in my local community as I am aware that it would not be feasible to have full time fire-fighters manning the local station. On the other hand my children go to school in Lilydale and I have elderly family members who live in the area as well. Lilydale, Mooroolbark Montrose and Chirnside Park are all suburbs within the shire of Yarra Ranges which are heavily populated with residential, commercial and industrial premises but they are covered for fire services with volunteer brigades. I am concerned that my children and family members are spending a large amount of time or living in an area where the response of a fire truck within 7.7 minutes, which is the acceptable MFB turn out time, is really pot luck.

If a child at my children's school was unconscious and not breathing an ambulance would be called and no doubt attends as soon as possible. Unfortunately a fire truck with a defibrillator and oxygen would not attend, and as we all know every second counts, and the extra 2 minutes can be the difference between life and death. I do not think it is fair and reasonable that someone can be in a built up suburban area which is heavily populated, but because of outdated fire service boundaries which were enacted when these areas were farms, orchards or bush they don't have fire coverage.

Since I have been at Croydon I have attended numerous fire calls in cfa turn out areas to assist the volunteer responders. On occasions I have arrived to find several trucks with numerous volunteer fire fighters, on other occasions I have arrived to find a single truck or ute with 2 firefighters and on other occasions I have arrived to find no responders as anyone who could of come was unable or unwilling to.

I acknowledge the time and effort that volunteer fire fighters put in to responding and supporting their local brigades but these people have full time work and study, minding their children, holidays etc and if a fire call is at Tuesday morning at 10.30 a.m. you need an adequate and professional response, not whoever is available if in fact anyone is available.

The dispute regarding fire services in Victoria has been ongoing for most of my career and has been difficult for all those involved. I am enthusiastic that there is light at the end of the tunnel and look forward to focusing on my work not what is being argued about politically and in the media. I may be able to admit to my neighbours that I am a fire fighter, something that sounds ridiculous but where I live which has many passionate cfa volunteers is not something I am comfortable with at the moment.

I am confident as a full time professional fire-fighter that the people within my working response area have the best quality of protection and service available. I am also confident that my work, mates are highly trained and competent, using appropriate equipment for me to do my job effectively and also in a manner that I will finish work at the end of the day safely and healthy.

Yours sincerely

Graham Schlittler

