

Kirra Vanzetti

From: BROWN, Ashley [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 July 2017 9:19 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Services Reform Bill Submission ** Confidential **

Name: Mr Ashley Brown
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

*** I request that this submission be kept confidential ***

Firstly, I thank you for taking time to read this. I understand that people in your positions of representing and supporting the public are very busy, however, I feel this is an important issue and would like to speak openly about the proposed Fire Services Reform. I have taken the time to personally write to you and as such I hope you will take the time to read and consider my points outlined below.

My name is Ashley (Ash) and I am a son, son-in-law, brother, brother in-law, local Kinder Treasurer, school parent helper and most importantly husband and father to two beautiful little princesses (although I would be quickly reminded that they aren't that little any more – they grow so fast). I am also a professional MFB firefighter and have been for almost 5 years. Before this, I worked in the corporate world and was also a volunteer CFA firefighter at my local station (this was where I discovered my desire to play a larger role in servicing the community and helping those in need which consequently lead me to my current career). I am currently based at Eastern Hill fire station; however, I have worked at a number of stations throughout the Eastern suburbs, including those that boarder with CFA volunteer stations and integrated stations.

I write to express my support for the proposed fire services reform. The past few years have been very difficult for both career firefighters and I am sure it has taken its toll on a number of volunteers as well. I am also sure that no one would be happy with the way this has played out, least of all the actual fire fighters – both career and volunteer who simply want to serve the community the best they can. Ultimately this ongoing issue needs to be resolved and resolved now. The proposed fire services reform is a significant but appropriate solution, I believe, and most importantly, a solution that will service and protect the community for years and decades to come. It allows career fire fighters to negotiate their employment terms and conditions (as almost every other employee and industry within Australia can) and it allows the volunteers to continue to volunteer in a entirely volunteer organisation. But most importantly this solution allows us firefighters to do what we do best – protect and service the community.

Both previously as a volunteer and now as a career firefighter, I have witnessed the pressures and sometimes inability for volunteers to attend to calls. As a volunteer I was working in Melbourne during the day and as such if a call came through, myself like others were unable to attend, sometimes even resulting in a non-response from the brigade. This is not having a go at volunteers or degrading the great work that they do, however it is evident of how things have changed over the past 60 odd years. 60 years ago if I lived in Dandenong, Springvale, Craigieburn, Rowville, Boronia or many other what were once outer 'country' areas, but have since became part of the metropolitan area, I would most likely have worked in and around these areas and as such I would have been able to attend to calls from my place or employment or my house. This is rarely the case now with urban growth expanding outwards and with most people traveling away from their place of residence for employment – hence potentially leaving their areas unprotected for sometimes long lengths of time. Similarly these areas have continued to grow in population and as such the number of turnouts have

increased as has the need for fast response times. Surely as areas such as these continue to grow they should be entitled to the same coverage as other metropolitan and built up areas are. This current system of not addressing these growth areas with appropriate fire protection needs to cease. Not only does this current system put these communities at risk, but it also puts career fighters responding to these areas without backup or support at risk. At least if I am responding with another MFB station, I can be certain someone is on the road on their way to have my back. This is not always the case when responded with a volunteer brigade.

For the safety of the community and my fellow firefighters we need to modernise this system and this is what the Fire Services Reform is all about. Try and imagine what you would loose if we revert back 60 years – no mobile phone, no email, no internet, no microwave... etc, etc... (hard to imagine isn't it) these things were created and accepted because it made sense and so does the Fire Services Reform. The once country areas on Melbourne's outer and regional centres have changed... the fire services model protecting these areas also needs to change and needs to be modernised as they are highly urbanised areas. The only accepted system for these areas is a rapid 8 minute response, with 7 professional career firefighters on two fire trucks. As with all progress and change, as other areas continue to grow and expand, these areas should also be afforded this same response. This doesn't mean the volunteers can't or won't respond... this simply means that if they don't for some reason, at least the community is getting a response and at least my fellow firefighters will have the safety of knowing that backup is on its way.

All Victorian, professional and volunteer firefighters, deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities.

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 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.

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards

Ashley Brown

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