

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Shane Phillips [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 July 2017 10:33 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Service Reform Submission

I WISH TO MAKE MY SUBMISSION CONFIDENTIAL

To Whom it may concern

My name is Shane Phillips, I am employed as a Senior Station Officer at the Ballarat City Fire Station where I am the senior member in a crew of nine. Ballarat City is one of the 35 integrated fire stations in CFA.

My service history includes 10 years as volunteer firefighter and 16 years as a professional firefighter. I am a third generation CFA volunteer / career firefighter.

I am an active supporter of volunteers and the vital role they play in keeping Victorians safe. I grew up in a small rural town where CFA is one of the main focal points in town. Many of my family are still active members of CFA and I am very supportive of them, therefore I am fully aware that the state of Victoria cannot do without Volunteer firefighters and the CFA.

Ballarat City is classed as one of CFAs major brigades and attends around 1800 calls per year annually (not including EMR response). I have observed over the time of my career a gradual decline in the ability of Volunteers to respond to calls not only in Ballarat but most places that I have worked over my time.

I cannot stress enough that I do not and never have blamed the volunteers themselves for this decline, the pressures of modern-day life is proving difficult for people to find the time to balance pressures created by finances home life and work life, I believe employers are less likely now to allow their employees to be released for volunteer duties than in the past. The workload and frequency of call outs have increased across the board with the growing population.

I am in support of the proposed legislation as I feel that CFA has tried to expand to cope with the rapidly expanding population in Melbourne and major regional cities in Victoria, unfortunately I believe that CFA has a structure created in the 1950's and is now doing far more than was ever expected of the organisation. Unfortunately the volunteer system is failing constantly, all of brigades that I work with have Primary Service Delivery Standards (SDS) below 50% confirmed by CFAs own figures.

I have included two examples of when the current system has failed to provide a safe workplace for myself and my crew by the local brigades not being able to supply appropriate crews to the fire ground.

29/06/2015

Ballarat City Pumper 1 responded to a structure fire in a Ballarat suburb. Crew of 4.

- I was advised by ESTA on route that the Primary Volunteer Brigade had failed to respond and I requested they be re-paged

- On scene structure was well alight in two rooms and approx. 80% of the roof space.

- Primary Volunteer Brigade failed to respond again and I requested Ballarat City P2 and an additional brigade respond.

- Once on scene the occupant of the house was located at the front of the house with burns to the hands and I did not have anyone available to treat her correctly.

- Ballarat City P2 was the next appliance on scene at 0132hrs

- This put the initial responding crew on scene for 13 minutes by ourselves
- Pumper 1 was forced to go 5 lengths of hose to find water around a corner putting the pump operator under significant pressure.
- Primary Volunteer Brigade pumper when it did respond only had a crew of 1
- My initial responding BA crew operated internally to prevent the spread of fire but I was not able to provide support to them if something was to go wrong.
- Turnout times were as follows

Primary Volunteer Brigade failed to respond to initial page. Repaged @ 01:18.

Primary Volunteer Brigade Pumper responded 21 mins after call @ 01:32 - Crew of 1 only. Primary Volunteer Brigade tanker responded some time later.

Ballarat City Pumper #1 responded at 01:13, on scene @ 01:19. On scene for 13 mins before BCP2 arrival.

Ballarat City Pumper #2 responded at 01:27, on scene @ 01:32- Second appliance on scene.

Another Volunteer brigade paged @ 01:22 due to Primary Volunteer Brigade failing. Responded @ 01:29, on scene 01:38. - Crew of 4.

21/1/2016

- On route to structure fire in industrial zone.
 - Two Pumpers mobile from Ballarat City.
 - Primary Volunteer Brigade pumper turned out at 17:17:48hrs on Vicfire, as per SOP Pumper 2 downgraded to code 3. (non-emergency response)
 - After travelling approximately 2kms we passed Primary Volunteer Brigade station and the pumper was still on the apron waiting for people to get dressed, at 20:20:29hrs Pumper 2 was upgraded so we had appropriate support.
 - Once on scene at the structure fire Primary Volunteer Brigade pumper had a crew consisting of 1 person in structure gear (not BA qualified) and 3 in rural turnout gear (not structure or BA qualified).
 - This crew was insufficient to assist in the initial attack.
 - As the crew leader on the first appliance I was lead to believe that I would have a pumper mobile 3 minutes earlier and that this appliance would have a suitably qualified crew.
 - This could have seriously impact on crew safety if I was to rely on their timely arrival and if I needed BA operators as they were not present on the appliance.
- Important to note that all career firefighters are required to be qualified in structural firefighting and breathing apparatus. This is not the case for volunteers.**

Bringing together the career component of CFA and the MFB makes sense. Both do a very similar role and of late the push towards interoperability has seen the introduction of several initiatives including a joint recruit course for both services, development of a Pumper with the same stowage to be deployed to both services, same breathing apparatus and similar training and career paths to name a few.

The creation of the Fire District Review Panel and the Emergency Services Infrastructure Authority will assist the organisations to not only look forward but start to plan for the rapid growth in Victoria's population as predicted in the future. We need these organisations to look at the facts and base their recommendations on what is best for the community, not based on emotion, tradition or a 'my patch' mentality.

I have seen many colleagues and retired members sick with similar illnesses. The introduction of presumptive rights for cancer compensation is important to me for a few reasons. If I was to get sick due to the exposures that I received at work then I know my family will be protected and it would be one less concern. Also, my father who was a CFA member for over 35 years has been exposed his whole career to the daily toxins that are faced by firefighters, also he was very much involved with training at Fiskville during the 70's and 80's when the exposures were proven to be huge and no one can be sure what these people were actually exposed to.

I hope that you look favourably towards a fire service reform that delivers an appropriate structure that moves us from the current 1950's model to a forward thinking and progressive system.



Shane Phillips
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