

**Kirra Vanzetti**

---

**From:** Dean Blyth [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 5 July 2017 2:08 PM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Fire Services Reform Select Committee Submission

My name is Dean Blyth and I have been a professional CFA firefighter for 14 years and a CFA volunteer firefighter for 17 years. I am currently based at Eltham fire station as a professional firefighter and Mooroolbark fire station as a volunteer firefighter.

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

- In my area of Eltham
- I've seen first hand what happens when volunteer support brigades fail to respond with the appropriately skilled personnel or vehicle types due to member availability. Vehicles turn up with 1 person on board without the skills to be useful at the fire call they are attending. Having to wait more than 10 minutes for a second vehicle to arrive, not only from support brigades, but from Eltham Volunteers as well. I've seen the two trucks responded from the MFB to our calls for years to ensure that the MFB firefighters would have the 7 on the fire ground in a prompt manner, with the appropriate skills, regardless whether the Eltham vehicle held staff or volunteer members.

I puzzled as to why it was accepted as standard for one fire service in the state, but not for the other.

Why it is acceptable that volunteer brigades send inappropriately skilled firefighters, inappropriate vehicles, undermanned vehicles or multiple vehicles that are undermanned to try to reach minimum crewing for one vehicle, whilst leaving their own fire district will no coverage, to calls without any repercussion or application of common sense and following CFA SOPs and OH&S requirements. The reform will allow the CFA to better gauge it's response to fires and manage the volunteer firefighters more efficiently with appropriate SOPs and guidelines put in place for all volunteers, for their safety and that of the community they serve.

2 vehicles with a minimum of 7 appropriately qualified personnel within 8 minutes of a call arriving on scene allows for unrestricted operations, with the personnel allocated to the following tasks as per CFA & MFB SOPs and OH&S requirements and standards.

- 2 BA operators doing internal attack
- 2 BA operators on standby for rescue and safety
- 1 Driver/Pump operator
- 1 Officer In Charge
- 1 Driver of the second vehicle to be tasked as required once they have arrived in the second appliance on scene.

- In my volunteer area of Mooroolbark, which will undoubtedly fall within the Fire Rescue Victoria boundaries after the reform, and will still see me responding as a volunteer firefighter.
- I've seen first hand what happens when my brigade fails to respond at all during the day, leaving surrounding brigades, both CFA & MFB, waiting more than 10 extra minutes for support

to respond, let alone arrive, or responding with a minimal/under skilled crew, or having to wait for the neighbouring brigades to fail to respond in the 4 minutes, being asked at 6 minutes if another support brigade was required, then waiting for the whole process to start again. I've felt the relief in knowing that the MFB were sending two support vehicles when they come to Mooroolbark calls, meaning an appropriate level of skill and numbers on the fire ground. Recently there have been calls where three brigades have all failed to respond within SDS times, and the first appliance that arrived was more than 20 mins after the initial call. As with most outer metro areas people that live in the area are no longer working in the area, and this makes the volunteer service model untenable, especially during the day. This in turn places the surrounding community at a greater risk, a community that is only becoming more densely populated and busier than when they fire districts were first drawn up. The brigade at Mooroolbark are a second family to me, and want the best for their community.

- 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 areas need to be modernised as they are highly urbanised areas 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, not only for the safety of the crews, the ability to halt fire spread before flash over and escaping the room of origin, but also meet required safety & both CFA & MFB operating standards when operating teams in Breathing Apparatus inside a burning building. Both organisations require a team of 2 BA wearers on standby when there is a team inside a building.

With a single vehicle this is impossible, and in times when support fails to respond within the Standard Delivery Service time (4 mins for volunteer brigades), firefighters already on scene are left with the choice of not going into a building to rescue someone, or extinguish the fire quickly, or to wait another 10 minutes for support to arrive.

In reality it is no choice, every firefighter will risk their life to save someone else's.

Firefighters should to be in the position to make this choice based off an antiquated system. It is a standard that needs to be implemented across the services, and it is only training, skill and a helping of luck that it has not yet led to the death of firefighters in the country area of Victoria.

Personally, aside from the legislation being passed, I would like to see the CFA place a requirement on its volunteers, of which I am one, that has a minimum crewing requirement based on call type. In the event of a structural fire call, that there be one driver/operator of the appropriate vehicle and 2 structurally qualified BA wearers (that currently meet the CFA SOP & Australian Standard for facial hair and wearing BA), for the safety of the crew I am part of, and for those we are going to support and the public we are going to help.

- 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 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 meet with you in person to talk to you further about my personal experiences as a professional firefighter and why this reform is so important.

Kind regards

**Dean Blyth** Leading Fire Fighter / Volunteer Firefighter

Eltham CFA – 61 Brougham St, Eltham, Vic, 3095 / Mooroolbark CFA - Hull Rd, Mooroolbark, Vic, 3138

[www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) [www.twitter.com/cfa\\_updates](https://twitter.com/cfa_updates) [www.facebook.com/cfavic](https://www.facebook.com/cfavic)



This email is for official use only. The information in this communication is privileged and confidential, intended only for the use of the individual or entity named. If you are not the intended recipient, any dissemination, copying or use of the information is strictly prohibited. Any personal information in this email must be handled in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and applicable laws. If you have received this transmission in error please inform us by return email and then delete it immediately from your system.