

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Rodney Merrett [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 5 July 2017 3:41 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Inquiry into the firefighters' presumptive rights compensation and fire service legislation amendment (reform) bill 2017

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

I am Leading Firefighter Rodney Merrett (2574373) from the Melton Fire Station. I have been employed by CFA for six years, and hold all qualifications expected of my rank. As part of Melton Fire Brigade, I also hold a qualification in Road Accident Rescue as well as a Cert IV in Workplace, Trainer & Assessor. I currently reside in Leopold near Geelong.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services for the following reasons:

I know that the issue of seven on the fire ground has been one of debate for some time now, however it is important to understand that in an integrated area such as Melton, we have to wait for up to 20 minutes for the next arriving appliance. Recently on Saturday 24 June 2017, the brigade was paged to a house fire at 0051hrs. On arrival, smoke was issuing from the structure and all occupants had evacuated. After about five minutes on scene, the Melton volunteers arrived. Two were new recruits and didn't have their low structure another was unable to wear BA due to an injury and the fourth was supervising the new recruits.

This incident being on a weekend and not during working hours should have attracted more volunteers, however this seems to be happening more and more. It is not uncommon to have no volunteer turnout for a similar call during the week and during work hours.

The importance of seven appropriately qualified and trained firefighters on the fire ground for firefighter and community safety is paramount. To have the flexibility and ability to use any member for any task alleviates the concern that if a firefighter or member of the public require to be rescued, any other member can don BA. As the above scenario shows, if the two members in BA conducting the internal attack had required assistance, there were no other BA trained members to assist.

If the seven on the fire ground model had been used, Caroline Springs pumper would have been turned out three seconds after Melton. There may have been a slight delay due to the distance, however all four members on the Caroline Springs pumper are BA qualified. They can also carry out any other task required whereas the four volunteers were limited in their skills.

The ability for volunteers to turn out is becoming harder and harder with the pressures of everyday life. Melton Fire Brigade volunteers are required to travel out of area for work and find it impossible to commit to calls. Also with the high call rates we have, pressure from family to spend more time at home also limits the ability to turn out. These are reasons I hear from volunteers all the time. I have a great relationship with all the volunteers at our station and completely understand why they can't be assisting at every call we attend.

In saying that, the community deserves more. If they call 000, they should expect to get appropriately trained and qualified firefighters. They are getting this when the career staff arrive on scene although who is to know who if anybody will be assisting from the volunteer ranks. As the above scenario shows, the skill and qualifications required did not arrive on the volunteer truck. It is not uncommon for volunteer members with the BA qualification to arrive, however are above 65 years of age. Internal firefighting is incredibly hard and hot work and we should not expect or should we allow members of this age to conduct this activity. You may think this is being age biased, however if we are being serious about our members health and safety be they career or volunteer, these issues need to be looked into.

By despatching another career crew, this would allow those members who do not have the appropriate skills or are of an age where they should not be expected to perform certain duties the ability to be tasked accordingly.

At the end of the day, this is about the community. This reform will not only advantage the community, it will make the fire ground a safer place for firefighters without disadvantaging the volunteers in any way.



Rod Merrett Leading Firefighter
Melton Fire Station – 44 Henry St Melton Vic 3337



Protecting lives and property



cfa.vic.gov.au

A promotional banner for the 2017 Fire Awareness Awards. On the left, it says 'ORDINARY PEOPLE. EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENTS.' in yellow and white. In the center, there is a logo of a house with a flame and the text '2017 FIRE AWARENESS AWARDS'. On the right, it asks 'Have you or someone you know, developed a great fire project in your community?' and features a large 'APPLY NOW' button in yellow. Further right, it states 'Entries close: 17 Sept 2017' and 'Supported by RACV' with the RACV logo.

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.