

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Joffa Spencer [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 5 July 2017 5:42 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Firefighters Legislation Reform Bill 2017

To Clerk Committee Coordinator,

INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017

My name is Joff Spencer and I am a Station Officer in the MFB and have been employed by the MFB since 1985. I am a qualified Road Recsue Operator, Marine Response Operator and Instructor and a Peer Support member of the Employees Support Division. I was part of one of the MFB Taskforce Strike Teams that was responded to country Victoria on Black Saturday 2009 and worked side by side with CFA Career and volunteer firefighters.

I live in Surrey Hills and currently work in the Marine Training Dept. for the MFB.

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

- After being an Operational Firefighter and Officer for most of my 30 plus years in the MFB, I have felt and seen first hand the pressure initial crews are put under as first appliance on scene at various Incidents, with back up still not on scene. Knowing that a second, and third if required, appliance is dispatched at the same time allows crews to start initial rescues or aggressive internal attacks on fires. It's absolutely ridiculous waiting until the first appliance is on scene, sizing up the Incident and then requesting more assistance and not being able to run rescue or breathing apparatus procedures because it's unsafe due to lack of crews on scene. The health and safety of all crews is always paramount.
- The flow on effect of ensuring that at least 7 firefighters are dispatched and on scene within 8 minutes is that the community know that their family member, friend or property will have the best and fastest emergency services response getting to work to resolve the Incident with sufficient numbers on scene for everyone's health and safety.
- In my time as an Operational firefighter and Officer and having experience responding with CFA Career and volunteer firefighters in my early years as well as during the 2000's, I have a thorough understanding of Volunteer turnout and surge capacity and I cannot see any way combining all career firefighters into one fire service will change or effect Volunteer response or surge capacity. They are a vital part of Victoria's emergency response. I don't believe it will effect working side by side with Volunteers if I am part of the MFB, CFA or FRV. We all are working to the same beat, to get to the same result.
- The fact that no Government has been willing to tackle the growing sprawl of urban residential spread until now is staggering. My Mother lives in one of those areas, on her own and why should she not be as well protected or have the same emergency response as someones Mother who lives in Carnegie? When she moved out to the Cranbourne area it was classed as rural country with barely any residential areas. Now she is surrounded by housing estates and shopping strips but still has a local volunteer fire station nearby but now backed up by a station with 1 permanently crewed appliance, at an integrated station. She and her neighbours, all getting on in years, are concerned about response times and sufficient crews attending to assist them in their time of need.
- This reform will also standardize training, specialist response and response standards and equipment. Imagine that, a single fire service with all staff using the same equipment, wearing the same uniform and trained to the same level and standards working together. Eventually it will allow transfers across and among parts of Victoria, working in different areas but doing the same work the same way as everyone else. Uniformity! In the specialist area I work in, Marine, it would allow vessel

owners and businesses in and around Marinas around Victoria to have the same fire and emergency protection and response as those owners in the Port of Melbourne or top half of Port Phillip. Shouldn't that be a standard already? Martha's Cove, Queenscliff, Geelong, Patterson River? Remember the drownings at Mornington Pier a few years ago with firefighters responding to and climbing down into the water from the safety of the pier with no rescue vessel there or responding?

- Over the past year or two, I have witnessed and been part of public abuse due to lies and negative press releases over the way this process was first reported. In my role as a Peer Support person, I have been contacted by colleagues struggling with the strain placed on them for the reasons above. Once passed and sorted, the future of new firefighters entering the FRV would be very exciting and motivating, being trained and knowing they are skilled to the same level as a firefighter in Ballarat or Mildura.
- The package offered to assist Volunteers with recruitment, retention, station and uniform upgrades ensures they can respond with more confidence and support than ever before and shows that they are here to stay and there is no hidden plan to remove or shut them down.

Thanks for your time, kind regards,

Station Officer Joff Spencer

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MFB

