

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Michelle McKay [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 5 July 2017 5:56 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fwd: INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017.

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees

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

I am a Station Officer with the MFB, with 22 years of service in the MFB. Prior to joining the MFB I was a Firefighter, with Station Officer Qualifications, with the London Fire Brigade for 7.5 years. So altogether I have 29.5 years of experience within the fire service.

During my time in London I achieved qualifications up to the rank of Station officer plus various other specialist qualifications.

Since joining the MFB I have achieved various qualifications including: Certificate IV Fire Investigation; Station Officer; First Responder; Ladder Platform;

To complement these qualifications I have also obtained Membership (MIFireE) level in the Institute of Fire Engineers, an internationally recognised external organisation for Fire Professionals.

I have also been awarded a Chief Officers Commendation for assisting in saving the life of one of my colleagues.

I live in Mentone and work in the city area.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services because I am very passionate about our community and I want to see the best possible fire service delivered for everybody. I value each and every person's life and property in the same way and I think it is time that we addressed the antiquated system we have in place, with the current structure of the MFB and the CFA. Our population in Victoria is growing more rapidly than any other state and our fire services need to change in order to be able to meet those increased needs.

For people who live in the outer fringes of Melbourne, where the 35 integrated stations are - these areas were once quite rural and a volunteer fire service was sufficient to provide that cover. However now days, the areas around the 35 integrated stations, are highly urbanised. The residential population has increased dramatically since the boundaries were last adjusted, around 60 years ago. As well as the increased residential risks other risks such as hospitals, industry, commercial has increased to cope with the rise in residential population. People who live and work in these areas deserve the same protection as those of us who are fortunate enough to live within an area, already deemed to be "urban" and therefore afforded full time fire and emergency cover.

There are so many reasons I could talk about why it is necessary to change our current fire services but the main one I think is to provide better life safety for both our community and for ourselves, as firefighters. To have less than 7 firefighters on a fireground is dangerous. We need to have eyes and ears everywhere and each one of us has a particular role to play. Working within the MFB, should I turn up first at an incident, I feel reassured knowing that within minutes I will have at least another 3-4 firefighters on scene to assist and to make sure we have sufficient hands available to perform our tasks safely and expediently. This in turn, then ensures that we are able to provide the best possible care to those unfortunately needing our assistance.

Having one fire service for all career firefighters will assist with making sure that everyone is trained on the same equipment; to the same standards; has the same access to career training and specialist skills and offer the same skill set . Uniforms will be standardised, which will be a cost saving exercise long term.

The proposed Fire Service Reform will be beneficial for both career firefighters and volunteer firefighters. It will give much needed direction to both sides. Volunteers roles will in no way be diminished but rather unrealistic expectations will be removed, in areas of high urban density and risk. They will still be turning out in areas less urbanised and provide the same surge capacity as they currently do. Volunteers will also benefit from the change with increased funding to improve their stations; their training; uniforms; recruitment.

The division within our workplaces as it currently exists is untenable and very distressing. I have been made to feel that I am unworthy; greedy; a thug; by the way that we are portrayed as career firefighters in the media. I have been made to feel ashamed of what my career is and that makes me very sad, as my sole reason for this career is to help people. The fighting in the last few years has taken its toll on everyone, both in our workplaces and in our personal lives. I feel that this reform would take away most of that strain.

I realise that it will cost a lot to create this new Fire Service but it is the only way forward for the future. As we have just seen in the tragedy of the Grenfell Tower in London - cost cutting is not worth it when it costs peoples lives!

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission.

Yours Sincerely

Michelle McKay MIFireE

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