

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Adam Young [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 5 July 2017 7:41 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Submission Fire Services Reform - Confidential

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 Country Fire Authority stationed at Mildura.

I have been a CFA staff fire-fighter for five years at Mildura and previously a CFA volunteer fire-fighter for seventeen years in many Brigades from small rural Brigades to large urban Brigades.

Before becoming a staff fire-fighter I worked for CFA corporately in varied roles from Brigade Admin Support Officer, PAD (Practical Area Drill) Supervisor Peshurst Training Ground, Manager of Community Safety and Project Manager working on projects from the 2009 Black Saturday Royal Commission.

I also worked as a Regional Officer – Emergency Management for the Victoria State Emergency Service. I worked with emergency service & government agencies to develop Municipal Emergency Management Plans, supported and managed VICSES volunteer units, incident management and volunteer training.

I am a qualified and practicing School Teacher with a Bachelor of Arts / Bachelor of Teaching from the University of Ballarat. I taught for six years both in Greenvale and Lancefield within the Catholic Education System. I continue to assist schools in the Mildura District performing Casual Relief Teaching.

I hold qualifications in fire-fighting, specialist rope rescue, road accident rescue, hazardous materials detection, juvenile fire and intervention and incident management.

I am a qualified and endorsed Structural Fire Investigator with the Country Fire Authority.

I have over twenty years of service and experience with the Country Fire Authority having served at a significant number of large scale incidents across the state including: Dandenong Fires 1996, North East Fires, Alpine Fires, Black Saturday Fires 2009, Mallee Complex Fires, Hazelwood Mine Fire etc...

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

I have worked in the emergency management sector for a significant period of time across many agencies, in many positions across the state. I believe I have a substantial insight into the emergency management arrangements in Victoria both from a staff and volunteer perspective.

I am seriously concerned about the current state of our fire services in Victoria. Our fire services are out dated and antiquated operating in a 1958 era hampered by constant conflict between organisational management, staff fire-fighters, volunteers and government.

For nearly five years as a career fire-fighter I have known nothing but industrial conflict and the toll it is taking, not only on myself but also my colleagues and volunteers is significant. I have witnessed in my colleagues and their families severe depression, trauma and anxiety. Two of my colleagues in Mildura have taken their own lives and this dispute contributed to such actions. Staff fire-fighters over the past five years have been demonised by politicians, volunteer unions and community members. Staff

fire-fighters have and are still being abused both verbally and physically by members of the community and volunteers as a result.

What cannot be understated is the desperate need for reform of the fire services.

The interference of the federal government influenced by a volunteer union unwilling to admit and acknowledge that volunteers are struggling to address service delivery has made the fire services arrangements across Victoria untenable. Relationships have been broken and the scarring between both staff and volunteers is both deep and irreparable.

Staff believe their working conditions and ultimately their safety is being comprised by a volunteer union not prepared to acknowledge the issues and by Victoria's antiquated fire services arrangements currently in place.

The fire services reform will not affect volunteers or the surge capacity that volunteers provide.

The only volunteers affected by the reform are those at integrated (staff / volunteer) fire stations. The number of volunteers affected at these stations is very low due to the following.

At Mildura Fire Brigade we have nearly 70 volunteers listed on our books. Only 5 of those 70 volunteers actually respond operationally and of those 5 most do not respond regularly. The numbers of volunteers registered as members of integrated brigades throughout the state is not an accurate representation.

The effect of the fire services reform will have on volunteers is almost non-existent. The threats of mass desertion, loss of volunteer surge capacity and reduced volunteer numbers is just scaremongering from the volunteer union, politicians and a biased media.

Change is needed. The Fire Services Reform will enable that change and

propel the fire services into a workable and modern day fire service that overcomes the current engrained conflict.

Community and Firefighter Safety with the reform will once again be at the forefront of the fire services.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Young
Station Officer
'C' Platoon / Shift

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