

**Kirra Vanzetti**

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**From:** Tim Sandri [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 5 July 2017 11:10 PM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Submission to the Fire Service Bill Select Committee

Attention Fire Service Bill Select Committee,

I am writing this letter to express my support for the recent fire service reform proposals and would like to provide a small insight into why I support it.

I have been a professional firefighter with the CFA since August 2016, and a volunteer firefighter with the CFA for the past 5 years. I served all my time as a volunteer as a member of Doreen fire brigade, and as a career firefighter I have worked at South Warrandyte, Boronia and currently I am appointed to South Morang.

As a previous active volunteer and now professional firefighter I have a true appreciation for the amount of hard work needed to safely operate a fire ground, and the importance of having enough firefighters on scene to perform this work. It is essential in built up and urbanised areas to have at least 2 appliances and a minimum of 7 firefighters guaranteed to be responded to a fire call. It seems that the number 7 has been interpreted as a random number, but there is logical reason behind it. As an initial responding crew arriving on scene first at a going fire, we need 1 person to run the job (incident controller), 1 person to operate the appliance (driver/pump operator) and 2 people to begin the fire attack. It is then important to have another crew of 2 to provide backup and 1 more to operate the second appliance and/or assist with obtaining an adequate water source. In my time I have seen this work effectively, both responding as a volunteer and also as a career firefighter, however I have also seen this fail. An example of this follows.

At 0915 on a Wednesday morning in June, 2015 I responded to a reported strong smell of gas at a child care centre in Doreen. When I got the fire station I discovered I was the first to arrive, and soon after one other member arrived. Neither of us had our truck licence so we were unable to take the primary appliance. We waited a short time hoping a qualified driver may turn out, but eventually decided to proceed to the job. We had to take our Ultralight tanker which is a rural firefighting appliance fitted with a small water tank, pump and rural firefighting equipment, but does not have essential equipment such as breathing apparatus or a ladder. We were first on scene and were only able to begin basic external investigation works and due to the potential risks inside were unable to confirm or enact an evacuation. The next closest brigade, Mernda, failed to respond on this occasion, and it was South Morang career firefighters who arrived to support us with 1 crew of 3. This now gave us 5 people on scene and only 1 appropriate appliance to begin work. The risks present were far too great and this response was not good enough.

There is reason to say that *if* this call was on a different day, or *if* it was at a different time, there may have been an adequate response. But these are big ifs.

The effort of these volunteer brigades should not go unnoticed, but it just a reality that the demand put on them and all volunteer brigades in these urbanised areas is great and unfair, and the risk to the community is even greater for times such as I have mentioned above.

In such a built up and urban area, the question can now be asked, 'Why is this the current response?' and 'Is it acceptable?'. The answer to the latter is no. And the answer to the former is because this area, along with pretty much the entire outer suburbs of Melbourne are recognised by our fire services as country! People move who move to the country generally accept that they are giving up quick and reliable emergency service response, much like being close to an airport for example. But that's the country life and people accept that. People do not move to Mernda, Werribee, Bayswater or Edithvale and expect to give up a guaranteed fire service. Yes these areas are supported by career firefighters but by dragging a fire truck out of Hoppers Crossing to service Werribee is only robbing Peter to pay Paul.

So many areas of the outer suburbs deserve the same fire service response that metro Melbourne currently gets. I really don't understand what is so hard about looking at the population and infrastructure growth and recognising the risks. Over CFA's history there have been many areas that have had integrated stations open up to support the growth, but each time it seems to be incredibly difficult. There are endless meetings and ongoing disputes simply because the existing volunteers in these areas don't want to lose what they've got – their hobby. I think it's fantastic that these people (myself included 5 years ago) have made the decision to give up an enormous amount of time from their lives and become volunteers. Sure it seems good to have so many people that are so passionate and actively try and stop career staff from "taking over" their areas. But their reasoning behind this is just ridiculous. You can't think that keeping fully volunteer responses in these areas because it sounds nice is worth the risk of families, homes and businesses can you? As a previous member of Doreen, I have had a great understanding of the time and effort and passion, volunteers put in to keep up skills, training and maintenance of equipment to ensure they can provide a quality emergency service to their local community, however with the commitment of work, family and many other personal reasons, there is no guarantee that this service can be provided 24/7.

There really are more points to back the needed reform and I am sure they are being made aware to you, because if I were to go through them all, this letter would be too much. But I do want you to consider something. What are all the points being made against the reform, and are they valid? I'm sure there are many people against it and writing letters similar to myself, but what is there reasoning? My reasoning is purely that our current system is far from good enough and we (the Victorian public) deserve better. On top of this, from my position as a firefighter, it is extremely important to me and my family that I am safe at work, and having guaranteed back up in a timely manner is vital for this.

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. I find it hard to believe the claim that volunteers are being discriminated in the presumptive legislation. A study conducted by Monash University cleared stated that they found no increased risk for volunteers contracting any of the 12 cancers. Even with this the legislation still allows claims with evidence to be made, which I think is the fairest answer.

Thank you for your time reading this and all the submission you have received.

Kind regards,



**Tim Sandri Level 1 Firefighter**

South Morang Fire Brigade – 875 Plenty road, South Morang 3752



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