

Kirra Vanzetti

From: MALES, David [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 6 July 2017 12:16 AM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Service Reform

Dear Assistant clerk committees,

Inquiry into the firefighters presumptive rights compensation and fire services legislation amendment (reform) bill 2017

I am Station Officer David Males, registration # 10337, from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Melbourne.

I have been employed as a career firefighter for the past 12 years

I am currently stationed at Carlton Fire station (03) as a heavy rescue technician.

I am also trained in:

- Trench Rescue
- Urban Search and Rescue
- High Angle Rescue, as both a technician and Instructor
- Safe working at heights instructor
- Emergency Medical Responder

I live in Upwey, a CFA designated area, and work in the metropolitan Fire District.

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

1. For 25 years the Metropolitan Fire Brigade has provided a medical first responder service to assist Ambulance Victoria in all medical calls registering no pulse, no breathing. A casualties likelihood of surviving such an event depends on earliest possible intervention. Due to our 90 seconds out the door, and on scene time of less than 8 minutes, permanent fire brigade staff play a vital role in administering lifesaving medical treatment prior to Ambulance Victoria's arrival. In our rapidly growing community this is a critical service that needs to be extended to as many people as possible. This is not possible from a volunteer service, although there has been suggestion of trials, volunteer brigades simply cannot guarantee a minimum 3 crew, medically trained, response within an effective time frame.
The Fire Service Reform would extend the coverage of this life saving service to another 35 communities.

2. Presumptive Legislation.

I am currently watching a very close friend of mine try and battle an insipid cancer, cancer of the bowel. He joined the brigade at the same time as me, and was first diagnosed with cancer a couple of years ago. His journey through chemo therapy was heart wrenching to bear witness to, however the doctors managed to control it. Recently the cancer returned violently in the form of a tumour in the bowel, multiple tumours in his neck, one of which cracked a vertebrae, and rapidly growing spots on both his lungs, his stomach and his liver.

He has just finished radiation and is still suffering from the burns in his throat and bowel as I sit writing this submission. Chemo started yesterday 05/07/2017

He has been informed he will require chemo for the remainder of his life, however, to prepare for the fact that it won't be for much longer

He is in a race against time.

The chemo makes him sick to the core and weakens him beyond despair yet he has to keep on fighting, because he has 5 children aged between 10 and 22 and a wife that is petrified, all begging him to fight for them.

It's nothing short of cruel to watch, and until you have had the misfortune to witness, hard to comprehend.

Numerous studies support presumptive legislation, and whilst it can't save him, it would be such a major factor in easing peace of mind at a time where everything else is so critical.

I urge you to consider

3. There has been a lot of misinformation around the 7 on the fire ground.
In short this is basic occupational health and safety. The fire ground, when broken down, is a dynamic work place. As with all professions we have an obligation to mitigate, or if not, minimise risks to personnel whilst at work.
7 on the fire ground does not mean we don't start work until we have 7 firefighter, as has been misleadingly reported. On the contrary, we use our faster response time to get to work earlier with the knowledge that if a misfortune occurs there is guaranteed back up support already responding; critical in an event like entering a burning house to try and locate an occupant unaccounted for.
7 on the fire ground is as important as having handrails on staircases, it's basic OH&S. and therefore an obligation of the employer.
4. Guaranteed 8 minute response
Nobody under values the work of volunteer brigades, they are a vital link in the emergency management of Victoria, and will continue to be. The reality is volunteers can't be expected to stop what they're doing, either at home or place of employment, get to they're local station, get prepped to respond and turn out, once they have filled an appliance with staff, in the same time a career station can respond; 8 MINUTES.
The Metropolitan boundaries are currently locked and unable to expand whilst growing communities, like Dandenong, with dense populations are still considered "country".
What was right in 1892 is not sufficient in our modern society and the fire services should reflect that, not continue to be hamstrung by old policy.
The reform is critical to providing adequate and timely response to our ever expanding population which not only increases numbers but introduces more specific hazards like shopping complexes and high rise living.
The cascading response method currently used by CFA is simply put, inadequate to cope with the changing demands of population growth.
5. Dispute Damage
Placing all the benefits of reform aside, Victorians need an end to this prolonged dispute that pits fire services against each other.
For too long now, political interests have dominated the fire service landscape. It is not OK.
Campaigns like keep your hands of the CFA, instigated by the Liberal party, and misrepresentation of issues like 7 on the fire ground have to stop.
These campaigns are destructive!
The damage being caused could take decades to recover from. The fire services are not a political football!
It is imperative that the destructive nature of these campaigns is brought to an end.
Fire service reform is the only way forward and our best opportunity to reunite the services for the benefit of all Victorians, something they quite rightly expect.

Enough is enough; it's time for reform.

Yours sincerely,

David Males 10337 | Station Officer
Carlton Fire Station | 160 Bouverie st Carlton 3053
Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board

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