

Kirra Vanzetti

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 6 July 2017 10:55 AM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire Service Reform Committee Submission

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

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

My name is Philip Menzies. I am a Station Officer with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, currently stationed at Sunshine Fire Station on B Platoon. In my more than 30 years of professional experience in the MFB, I hold a Heavy Rescue qualification, participate in the JFAIP program, am a Fit to Drive presenter and a National Medal holder.

I am also a volunteer firefighter and life member of the Werribee Fire Brigade.

I believe that reform to the fire services in Victoria is well overdue and will be required to ensure the safety of Victorians, particularly in the rapidly expanding area west of Melbourne.

It is predicted that the West Growth Corridor between Werribee and Melton will house 377,000 people by 2031.

50 years ago, the population of Werribee was about 12,000 people. My wife grew up in Sanctuary Lakes. It didn't have the fancy name then, gated streets and a German car in every driveway. It was a Salt Works farm and had a few families living in weatherboard houses. My niece lives in Manor Lakes adjacent to a shopping centre, with a P-12 school and Regional Rail Link nearby. 50 years ago it was a paddock with rocks and a few horses in it. When my wife and I purchased our family home in Werribee, family members scoffed 'how could you live so far out of town', with paddocks being our neighbours. If I were to sell my home today, the real estate listing would boast of a 'prime central location'. I have friends who grew up on the old farmhouses in Werribee South. Back then, it wasn't part of the Inner Food Bowl, producing 10 per cent of Victoria's vegetables. If I told you 50 years ago that I'm going to Truganina, Point Cook, Hoppers Crossing, Manor Lakes or Tarneit, I would draw blank stares. Those suburbs collectively are now home to 150,000 people.

My local area is in a time of rapid growth. We need a fire service model to meet that.

I'm not saying that local fire brigades aren't able to protect the community adequately. The Werribee Fire Brigade does a fantastic job to consistently meet its turnout target times. But I also believe that this brigade is an anomaly within the CFA to be able to meet its turnout targets while being the busiest wholly volunteer brigade in the state. But as mentioned above, it is an expanding area and the roads are getting more congested. There is more ground to cover and less clear roadway to get to incidents. Werribee is divided by a railway line and accessing the eastern side of Wyndham is going to get increasingly difficult as time goes on. As Hoppers Crossing and Point Cook fire stations become EMR capable, and with a juvenile detention centre to be built within Wyndham, it is anticipated that this will put an increased demand on this volunteer brigade. It isn't to say that Werribee Fire Brigade won't be able to meet this challenge. I'm sure we can. But for how long?

Volunteer community protection takes a large amount of people taking a very large amount of time from their personal lives. I know this as I do it myself. I know this because my three sons are volunteers at the same station. Two of my sons have young children, one with a one week old daughter. Two of them don't

work locally. I worry about the hours they spend on Melbourne's chaotic roads each day. If they had a fire call at 3am, didn't get back home until 4.30am and left for work at 5.30am, you can imagine the concerns my wife and I hold for them. Now, of course, it is their choice, and they are grown men. They are grown men with strong work ethics and they feel an obligation to serve their communities. But they aren't the Energizer Bunny, in time they may have to scale back their involvements so their personal and professional lives don't suffer. If Werribee Fire Brigade were supported by Fire Rescue Victoria firefighters, volunteers would be able to serve, without the obligation to serve.

I also understand that there are concerns over the surge capacity if the fire services reform were to take effect I'm sure there will be resignations of some volunteers if the reforms pass. But if we look at the bare bones of this reform, strip back the emotion that has fuelled the resistance, it is clear that improved coverage for people and their property should only be welcomed. If someone is willing to withdraw their service as a volunteer with the CFA as a result of this, then CFA will grow stronger without their self-serving interests.

I honestly believe that the proposed reforms are a positive thing not only overall, but also for the Werribee Fire Brigade. We have a proud tradition of serving the local community for 102 years. FRV will not impact this.

I understand there are seemingly different interests and ideal outcomes for all sides of this proposed reform. I am a MFB Station Officer, one of my sons a CFA Career Firefighter, my other two sons volunteer firefighters with the CFA. I truly believe that the reform will be of benefit to all parties and at the end of the day, the community comes first. As such, I implore you to pass the reforms.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Menzies

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