

Kirra Vanzetti

From: John Brincat [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 6 July 2017 3:26 PM
To: LCSC
Subject: Fire services review

Station Officer John Brincat
[REDACTED]

I am a professional firefighter with over 27 years experience, 17 as a Station Officer. I wish to make this submission in favour of Fire Rescue Victoria, being one combined fire service for professional firefighters, and the CFA to remain and enhance the efforts of our Volunteer Brigades. I grew up and lived in the then small outer Metro town of Melton from the 1970s to early 2000s. My family owned a small shop on Station Rd which was surrounded by paddocks and a Chaff Mill. (Which ironically burnt to the ground) and saw it grow from a small town of 7000 residents to a town of over 100,000. Despite this rapid growth, it was only fairly recently they received full time professional fire cover.

My first experience with the CFA Volunteers was when I had a fire in my oven at my home ([REDACTED]). I had put the fire out however I rang 000 as the house was smoke logged and I was worried about fire extension. After 20 minutes a volunteer in a ute drove up my lawn, booked on scene as Melton Pumper. Of course he had no Hose, no BA and no structural uniform. When I told him the fire was under control, he cancelled the actual pumper and went to leave. I explained I was concerned about fire extension into the structure and roof, so would require the fire truck which he then called back. I then used their ladder to access the manhole and check the roof cavity. It occurred to me that a lay person would have struggled in this situation. Whilst respecting the job the CFA vols do, it defies logic with Melbourne's huge growth and urban sprawl we can still have fire cover determined by a boundary drawn up in the 1950's. Whilst respecting the efforts and history of the CFA we cannot have volunteers still covering areas which have exploded from small towns to large metropolis. Fire is exponential. They simply don't have the logistics to get crew on scene within a reasonable time frame. They have to drive from their home/ workplace to the station under normal road traffic, wait for a full crew to arrive, then turn out. They lack the skills, training and resources to perform Emergency Medical Response, they are not trained in structural firefighting (CFBT) and most are not BA trained. The residents who live outside this antiquated boundary are still required to pay similar council rates and building insurance. Why should they have a compromised fire and EMR service. The CFA have a proud history in the country and small towns. That should remain and be enhanced, but IN the country and small towns. The Government requires all services (schools, roads, public transport, police, hospitals etc) to be upgraded as the population explodes. How can the fire services remain hamstrung by a boundary devised 60 years ago. Please stop this unnecessary War between professionals and vols. The public denigration of our profession has had a major negative effect on me, my family and my colleagues. Gone from being so proud of the great job we do for the community, to hiding my profession for fear of abuse. We have gone from being admired, trusted and respected, to now being regularly chastised and abused whilst going about our job. The damage done between professional and volunteers is severe, and needs to be remedied by fixing this antiquated fire service model ASAP, and healing the rift. As both should be able to work together to best serve the people of Victoria.

Kind Regards
Station Officer
John Brincat

Please keep my contact details confidential

Sent from my iPad