

Kirra Vanzetti

From: Damien Browning [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 7 July 2017 12:35 PM
Subject: Fire Services Reform 2017

Dear Fire Service Bill Select Committee,

My name is Damien Browning, I am a Level 3 Firefighter currently working at Sunbury Fire Station for the Country Fire Authority (CFA). I joined the CFA in March 2015 and over my time I have worked at three integrated stations (Eltham, South Morang and Sunbury) and also provided relief staffing at numerous other stations around Victoria.

Over my short time in the CFA I have both experienced and seen the impact that the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) dispute is having on career staff and volunteers. Since joining the CFA all I have known is the EBA dispute and political games that have been carried out. This has had a personal effect on me and I have only been exposed to it for a short amount of time. It is sad to see so many Station Officers, Leading Firefighters and Firefighters that have worked their whole life in the CFA suffer both mentally and physically as a direct impact on the current climate in the CFA, media, politics and the community. I can't help to think what my mental and physical state will be in 20 or 30 years' time if this continues. The answer is a modern fire service where progress can be made and volunteers received the well overdue funding and training. This is what the Fire Service Reform will provide.

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed reform of the fire services and ask you to consider the following points:

- **SAFETY** – for myself and work colleagues so we can go home to our families safely at the end of every shift. It is extremely important that 7 firefighters are dispatched within 8 minutes to ensure there is back up support for the first responding crew. 7 professional career firefighters on two fire trunks is the minimum standard needed for highly urbanised areas.
- In my area of Sunbury, we are the only staffed brigade (4 members on each shift) around for at least 20 minutes. This means we are not guaranteed of any extra support for some time and sometimes do not receive any current support, depending on the type of call. I have seen firsthand what happens when that extra support does not come, the initial responding crew can be required to put themselves into potentially unsafe scenarios knowing that they are the only hope of the members of the community that have called upon us in the first place.
- **COMMUNITY** - the community has changed and developed, therefore they require a modern, adaptive and flexible fire service that will provide a more reliable and guaranteed service. The fire services reform will develop this and give a model that can evolve with the predicted growth well into the future, it will give a forward thinking approach to what is best for Victoria.
- The Fire Service Reform will have a positive impact on the 35 integrated stations that are now highly urbanised and are not 'country' anymore. A faster response time, guaranteed service and the ability to provide specialist response/appliances are all needed in these modern areas. The reform will have no effect what so ever on rural brigades or bushfire response and will continue to operate how they do now.
- Victoria's fire services boundaries have not changed significantly in 60 years. Under this outdated system, 35 areas are wrongly zoned as 'country', despite being heavily urbanised and residential. Frankston, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Craigieburn, Melton, Springvale, Boronia and Geelong are just some of the 35 'country areas'.
- The reform will benefit all volunteers across Victoria by providing increased funding, increase in volunteer recruitment and retention, opportunities for further training and overdue infrastructure upgrades such as station redevelopments.
- All Victorian, professional and volunteer firefighters, deserve modern fire services that meet the needs of our growing communities.
- Give me the confidence in my management and my need for an EBA for the next 30 years that I intend to work for and support for my communities.

In summary, to ensure the safety of all Victorians - including me as a firefighter, I ask you to please seriously consider your support for the proposed fire services reform. Reform of our fire services will ensure the safety of your constituents, and all communities in our growing state. Additionally, it will ensure the safety of our firefighters and stop the ever increasing and unrealistic demand being placed on volunteer firefighters because of the enormous urban growth resulting in increased emergency calls.

Yours Sincerely

Damien Browning



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