

Dear Senate Committee Members,

As a long serving volunteer of the CFA, I wish to bring to your attention my concerns that are currently being raised by both the Liberal Party and the VFBV.

Having read the proposed agreement, I do not find any area that will effect the way in which volunteers respond. Unfortunately, the VFBV has had a long hatred of Career Firefighters, and this is evident by the attached letters, from the VFBV, dating back to 2006.

It is quite obvious that the same issues are raised time and time again. To date, no one has been able to show me how the previous EBA's have affected the volunteer members.

Thank you for taking the time to read my short submission.

Regards

Andrew Bishop, Firefighter

Dear Ref: 530
Contact: Executive Officer Peter Davis 0407 334 685
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Your Ref:

20th July 2006

Dear Captain/Secretary/Group Officer/Group Secretary,

You will be aware that CFA has been negotiating an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) with the UFU for over 12 months. This EBA contains clauses that seriously impact on the autonomy of CFA to make decisions, including some related to the relationship between CFA and its volunteers. On this basis, and because it undermines the statutory responsibilities of the CFA Board, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Officer, the CFA Board has refused to sign the agreement.

Volunteers in Victoria are very concerned with the implications of this EBA on CFA's ability to support them in providing the highest level of emergency services to Victorian communities. As such, we have unanimously supported the CFA Board's position in refusing to sign this agreement.

At a mass meeting held in Melbourne last week, volunteers agreed that action must be taken to increase public awareness of the threat to our capacity to do our job, and agreed to stage a public rally within the next few weeks; we have deferred this rally for the reasons mentioned below.

Since this meeting, VFBV has set up a Task Force with representatives of rural and urban volunteer associations to draw public attention to this issue. We believe that to be successful, a public campaign needs to be carefully developed and coordinated to ensure that the right messages are reaching the right people at the right time. Accordingly, we have developed a multi-pronged strategy which will be implemented over a sustained period and which will culminate in a major rally in Melbourne involving a greater number of our volunteers.

This strategy will have a local and regional focus, and will be expanded on a State-wide basis to highlight what VFBV sees as issues most affecting fire protection services to Victoria. Our campaign will include media, meetings with MPs, and mass public rallies. Within the next few days we will be appointing five volunteer coordinators at each Region. Their role will be to make sure all activities are coordinated and that we speak with one united voice. With 100 coordinators supported by 58,000 volunteers, we will send a strong message that this situation must never arise again.

We will let you know details of this arrangement shortly, and details of how you can help.

In the meantime, it is important you understand that the issue we have with the EBA is not a campaign against our career firefighters. In fact, we strongly support their rights to negotiate pay and conditions of employment. We are all professionals, and we must continue to work as a team with our career firefighters to achieve the best outcomes for public safety. It is important that we maintain our professionalism and avoid being led into any reaction that may undermine the relationship with our career staff and CFA's overall operational effectiveness.

Could you please ensure that all members of your Brigade receive a copy of this letter or are fully briefed on what will be a major campaign in reinforcing the vital role of volunteers within CFA.

Gary Lyttle AFSM
Chairman



Volunteer
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VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

News Note

Attn: Victorian State MPs - Thursday, 9 September 2010

CFA union deal a setback for volunteering

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) representing Victoria's 60,000 CFA volunteers is concerned that the CFA's newly signed enterprise bargaining agreement with the firefighters' union is a major setback for Victoria's volunteer fire fighting resource.

This industrial deal significantly disadvantages volunteers and was concluded without reference to them, departing from the CFA's signed commitment to involving volunteers in decisions that affect them.

The industrial agreement goes beyond normal union matters such as pay and conditions, and seeks to regulate CFA operations and management of other staff and volunteers.

In making this deal, CFA has committed itself to processes and practices that should relate to the 1% of their workforce the agreement covers, yet inextricably impacts heavily on another 97% (the CFA volunteers) who have had no say and, it would seem, no rights.

The CFA's deal with the union puts restrictions on volunteers by;

- Controlling and restricting volunteer training arrangements
- Including a clause designed to prevent volunteers making submissions on issues involving them
- Preventing the use of paid firefighters on day shift allocation to support volunteer brigades, unless it is part of a progression to a 24 hour staffed fire station, whether the community needs it or not
- Blocking experienced volunteers and other suitable industry candidates from entering paid employment with CFA in jobs they are qualified and experienced to do.

The industrial agreement represents another hurdle in the path for access to and adequacy of training for volunteers, endorses a push towards more paid staff firefighters simply to

add to union membership and is a departure from the *Volunteer Charter*, in which Government and CFA agreed to involve volunteers in any decision which affects them.

The *Volunteer Charter* was signed the Premier, Police and Emergency Services Minister and CFA Chairman in October 2008 to much fanfare.

VFBV wrote to the CFA, Minister and Premier in February 2010, listing 12 points of concern with the enterprise bargaining negotiations that were then under way, but volunteers were still excluded from having their voice heard.

CFA's vast volunteer fire fighting resource has proven itself to be both professional and irreplaceable.

VFBV stresses that if the state is to retain that protection, there must be greater priority and investment given to maintaining and building CFA volunteer capacity, not just in numbers but in levels of training and equipment of brigades.

The CFA's newly signed enterprise bargaining agreement is a setback for that vital community resource.

VFBV contact: Peter Beaton