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MEDIA STATEMENT

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS MUST HAVE A VOICE IN ROLL OUT OF INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) today called for the CFA to remember its long standing agreement to consult the volunteers when they begin to roll out the Bushfire Royal Commission's recommendations.

VFBV Chairman Gary Lyttle said, "The Charter quite clearly spells out that the CFA has to consult with, and listen to, volunteer fire fighters on any issue of significance."

"If the Royal Commission's Interim Report is not significant, what is?" he said.

The VFBV says there is disquiet among its members because they are not having their voices heard at a time when they are expected to be implementing major change with another serious fire season only 10 weeks away.

"Volunteer fire fighters have to be involved step by step in the implementation of these recommendations because they will be largely responsible for making the changes work," said Mr Lyttle.

"Our 60,000 members must be given clear and prompt briefings about the changes; they need to be resourced properly and they need to be given strong support to get on with the job," he said.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria repeated its assertion that the CFA had to be given responsibility for all bushfires that threaten lives and property, irrespective of whether the fires were on private or public land.

"We also stress that the operational commander of all bushfires must have wildfire management experience and a background in working with volunteers," said Mr Lyttle.

"All of this is important, and adds to the pressing need to brief the volunteers and hear what they have to say about the changes that arise from the Royal Commission's Interim Report."

"Failing to listen to the volunteers at this vital stage will have its price, and may cost Victoria the loss of numbers of experienced fire fighters," he said.

"That experience is irreplaceable without spending years catching up, and the unpaid work

of these men and women provides Victoria with emergency services valued at nearly \$1 billion each year.”

“Victoria needs its 60,000 volunteer firefighters, there is no viable alternative and no sense in not listening to their experienced, practical advice on how to improve the state’s ability to protect lives and property from wildfire.”

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