



Friday, 21 August 2009

MEDIA STATEMENT

FIRE UNION'S CLAIMS INSULTING - VOLUNTEERS

Victoria's volunteer firefighters have labelled a union's remarks over a fatal fire as insulting and insensitive.

The statewide body that represents volunteer firefighters is furious, after reports on the ABC and in The Age that the United Firefighters Union linked a fatal house fire with the lack of paid firefighters at the Ocean Grove fire station.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria spokesman Allan Monti said the remark ignored the feelings of everyone affected by the fire.

"Making use of a terrible event like that to sell the idea of having a few more paid firefighters is disgraceful," Mr Monti said.

VFBV represents the state's 60,000 volunteer fire fighters, who provide professionally trained fire fighting services in country towns and rural areas.

"The United Firefighters Union is campaigning for more paid firefighters, but the implication that a small town is in danger because it has an all-volunteer brigade is ridiculous," Mr Monti said.

"It ignores the fact that CFA volunteer brigades are professionally trained and led by volunteer officers with decades of experience," he said.

"And it ignores the fact that having a handful of paid firefighters is no replacement for having a larger force of volunteers during the bushfire season."

"The last thing we need is people being panicked by a campaign that suggests that they are in danger because their local brigade is all volunteer," Mr Monti said.

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