



Tuesday, 15 September 2009

MEDIA RELEASE

VOLUNTEERS VOICE COMMUNITY CONCERN OVER UFU'S CAMPAIGN

Today's UFU rally is just another attempt to increase pressure on the CFA and MFB as part of current industrial negotiations for their 2009 Enterprise Bargaining Agreement .

VFBV spokesman Allan Monti says "part of the UFU's claim is for more paid firefighters working shift work for greater income and promotion opportunities."

The Union wants to expand its financial membership.

In other words union bosses at UFU are simply doing what unions do – that's what they are paid for.

"They'll use any argument and tap any public emotion to drive their claims."

"It's inappropriate to try and manipulate public emotions over 'Black Saturday' and other fire tragedies as part of their campaign." Mr Monti said

"Currently thousands of trained and qualified CFA Volunteers are on call 24 hours a day to protect most of suburban Melbourne and all of provincial and country Victoria."

"Our 60,000 Volunteers are supported and supplemented at about 25 brigades out of over 1200 brigades by 500 paid firefighters." He said.

CFA's 500 paid firefighters are on very good wages and conditions. They mostly work a 10/14 roster – two day shifts of 10 hours followed by two night shifts of 14 hours. They sleep during the night shift in specially built single bedrooms at fire stations but are on call. This shift cycle is four days on and four days off. They receive a range of good allowances for aspects of their shifts. They also get 12 weeks paid annual leave each year.

"The UFU want to greatly increase their members at CFA regardless of need and any better use of limited financial resources." Mr. Monti said

The CFA Chief Officer and local volunteers have determined that additional paid firefighters are needed at 10 brigades in the near future. They are mainly needed for day shift only to flexibly meet local needs where sufficient volunteers are not available at the moment – mainly during week days.

But the UFU is pushing for the initial allocation of paid firefighters at 25 brigades to work day and night shifts. And they have another 50 – 100 brigades where they want paid firefighters around the clock when the CFA says this is totally unnecessary.

Mr. Monti said “VFBV has one objective – to maintain and build an even more effective Volunteer based CFA and that includes deploying paid staff where they are really needed for community safety.”

“We are steadfast that industrial relations agendas and union campaigns can’t be allowed to drive public safety funding. Community safety is too important.”

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Media inquiries/interview requests:

Peter Beaton, VFBV, (03) 9886 1141 or 0419 504 111