



Friday, 12 August 2016

MEDIA RELEASE

STATEMENT BY VFBV CEO ANDREW FORD ON THE ACTIONS OF THE CFA BOARD TO ADOPT THE UFU'S EBA ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON, 12 AUGUST 2016

Today is a day of infamy that will burn into the memory of every CFA volunteer.

It is the day that that a CFA Board decision, and those Board members who voted for it, betrayed volunteers and ignored their responsibility and obligations to the public of Victoria under the CFA Act and Victoria's most successful emergency management arrangements.

This evening the CFA Board, made up of a majority Andrews Government-UFU 'yes' people accepted the UFU's Enterprise Bargaining Agreement which will see the powers of the Chief Officer overridden, union interference with volunteer organisation, operations and support, and see volunteers treated as second class just because they are not paid.

The EBA fundamentally alters the nature of CFA organisation, operations and support for volunteers as required by the CFA Act and hands control of key activities within the organisation to the Fitzroy based UFU as part of the grab for power by union secretary Peter Marshall.

The UFU have made no secret of their objective to replace urban volunteers with paid staff, members of the UFU – just look at their various inquiry submissions including the Black Saturday Bushfire Royal Commission for confirmation. They would relegate remaining volunteers to second class status.

Every inquiry and commission has dismissed these submissions and recognised the fundamental importance of the current CFA volunteer arrangements and the need to continually grow our volunteer capacity to keep pace with urbanisation and the growth of bushfire risk because of climate change.

But consideration of these issues was ignored by the majority of the current CFA Board and the Premier and Minister who pushed them to accept the infamous Andrews-Marshall industrial deal.

The fact that the majority succumbed to political lies, manoeuvring and pressure reflects badly on them in the manner they have exercised their duty as CFA Board members.

We say the Board members who supported this deal have ignored their statutory and fiduciary obligations under the CFA Act and Commonwealth corporate law. They must be held accountable for this failure.

After the sacking of the previous CFA Board for acting in a lawful and responsible way, a way that did not suit Premier Andrews and his dirty deal with Peter Marshall, together with the forced resignation of Emergency Services Minister Jane Garrett who acted with enormous integrity in support of CFA and its vital role, outstanding CFA CEO Lucinda Nolan and our Chief Officer Joe Buffone who concluded that the UFU agreement is destructive of CFA efficiency and effectiveness, who is left to defend the real CFA?

After recent sackings and resignations there is only the state's 60,000 volunteers through their association – VFBV – to stand up for the real CFA and effective public safety services for Victorians.

We have instructed our legal team to take further action immediately to defend the CFA as an effective volunteer based fully integrated fire and emergency service.

Our legal action is unprecedented for volunteers, or in the emergency services – but the consultation process with the CFA has been a sham and our careful analysis ignored.

We now have no other choice if the real CFA is to be defended.

But our campaign to defend CFA will not end there.

Volunteers across the state are mobilising in their local communities and regions. They will make sure Victoria is ready for the summer fire season and at the same time develop local campaigns to mobilise their communities in support of our campaign to defend the real CFA.

Like in countless battles against fires which threaten life and property, CFA volunteers will not give up – it's just not in our DNA

Ends...

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