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MEDIA STATEMENT

CFA Volunteers' body says transparency and independence are key

The CFA volunteers' representative body wants a solution to the water quality concerns and future water treatment processes at CFA's Fiskville training facility.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria's (VFBV's) CEO Andrew Ford said "enough of the debate and the slanging match – priority one is CFA members' safety, so let's get the facts and sort it out."

Representing the state's 60,000 CFA volunteers, VFBV has called for Fiskville's water quality and the procedures for managing it to be reviewed in public by experts and with full transparency, with all interested parties involved.

"We are looking for a transparent review involving CFA, the Environment Protection Authority, WorkSafe, and including Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria on behalf of the volunteers, to give confidence that any findings are expert based, independent and transparent," Mr Ford said.

"If there are problems they need to be fixed, if the water is safe we need to let CFA get on with training firefighters at Fiskville, and people attending training need to have confidence that their safety has been protected.

"So far, VFBV has received no complaints about health problems from any of the 96 volunteer groups that have trained at Fiskville in the past 12 months, but the controversy goes on and it is time to resolve it," Mr Ford said.

"We are not saying Fiskville's water is safe or hazardous, we are asking the question and offering a way of finding an undisputed answer, so we can all get on with the business of training firefighters and providing emergency response to the people of Victoria," he said.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria has formally requested an independent review involving the Environment Protection Authority, WorkSafe Victoria, any independent experts that may be needed, VFBV's volunteer representatives and the CFA.

"If that process can't be put into action quickly, VFBV will want to conduct our own analysis of the water treatment situation at Fiskville, using an expert water quality analysis firm of our choosing," Mr Ford said.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria has also called upon the CFA to publish full details of the water testing regime it has been using at Fiskville and its findings, with those details provided to VFBV for provision direct to volunteers.

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VFBV has also requested in writing;

- That CFA provide VFBV with a full briefing on the findings of Professor Rob Joy's Independent Investigation into CFA's training practices at Fiskville,
- That CFA release the full content of Professor Joy's report as a matter of urgency, and
- That CFA follow through on its promise to activate further study to address matters beyond the scope of Professor Joy's investigation, relating to cancer and health implications for CFA members attending CFA training facilities.

"These are matters of importance to all CFA members, paid and volunteer, and they must be cleared up as soon as possible," Mr Ford said.

Ends...

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