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MEDIA RELEASE

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO FAIR WORK ACT TO PROTECT VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) welcomed today's announcement by the Federal Government of its proposed amendments to the Fair Work Act to protect the role and work of volunteer firefighters.

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford congratulated the Federal Government on the way they had worked with volunteers in preparing the amendments and hoped all federal political parties would support them.

"The amendments aim to fix an anomaly in Commonwealth law that allows enterprise agreements for paid emergency service workers to include provisions which override state emergency management laws such as the CFA Act," Mr Ford said.

"If the law was not changed, the proposed CFA-UFU enterprise agreement if adopted would work in this way," He said

"If the proposed UFU agreement was adopted under current Commonwealth industrial law it would mean that the organisation, operation and support of CFA volunteers as provided in the Victorian CFA Act would be legally changed as provided under the UFU industrial deal," he said.

"The proposed Commonwealth amendments also provide that volunteer organisations like VFBV will have a legal right to make submissions to the Fair Work Commission where the interests of volunteers would be affected by relevant emergency management enterprise agreements.

"We welcomed the announcement by the Prime Minister on 5 June at a VFBV rally that his government would amend the Commonwealth's industrial laws to protect CFA volunteers from industrial interference under the deal between Premier Daniel Andrews and UFU Secretary Peter Marshall.

“That the Prime Minister and his Government are making good on that commitment is very welcome indeed.

“Despite partisan accusations otherwise, VFBV prides itself on being above party politics.

“We welcome support from across the political spectrum to defend, support and build community based volunteer capacity to prepare and respond to fire, floods and other emergency events.”

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