



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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MOTORCADE OF SUPPORT

Congratulations to everyone involved in the Volunteer Motorcade of Support for the Minister, CFA Board, CEO and Chief Officer.

We must maintain the dignified approach shown at the motorcade, and we should be proud of the non-political, dignified and respectful way volunteers showed their support for CFA and Minister Jane Garrett's moral stand to ensure CFA is not sold out.

There were 421 vehicles from hundreds of brigades, with CFA appliances, privately owned fire appliances and support vehicles.

Of great importance were the hundreds of Brigades that registered with their Groups to assist with local coverage and to ensure our communities were protected whilst each District convoy left for Melbourne. Every one of CFA's 21 Districts was represented, with vehicles from all corners of the state.

Crews were professional and disciplined throughout the entire day, ensuring as little inconvenience to the public as possible, and we acknowledge the great support of Victoria Police, the City of Melbourne and the PSO's from Parliament House.



The 'motorcade of support' comprised 421 appliances from all over the State.

Photograph courtesy ABC News

EVIDENCE OF CFA'S VOLUNTEER SURGE CAPACITY

Following the success of our earlier animated video on volunteer surge capacity, VFBV has been working with the University of Melbourne on a computer-generated time lapse video that graphically demonstrates CFA's huge volunteer surge capacity.

You can see the computer modelled video on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/VFBVTV

The video shows incidents and crews responding, and will help educate the public and Government on how CFA Volunteers are essential for Victoria's Safety and Emergency Services.

We have been building versions for each District, and will shortly distribute copies to your District Councils, for use with the public, decision makers and your own volunteers.

Memorial Service

Our Board Members and other senior VFBV officials were among the many volunteers who attended the moving ceremony at this year's CFA Annual Memorial Service at Wodonga.

The service paid respect to the 67 Victorian firefighters who have died in the line of duty over the years, with this year's service held in Wodonga to mark the 10th anniversary of the line of duty deaths of Trevor Day, Campbell's Creek Fire Brigade and Rebecca Helwig from Barnawartha Fire Brigade.

The memorial is held on the Sunday closest to International Firefighters' Day, known as St Florian's Day (4 May), and is a formal and reflective day to acknowledge and remember those that have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their communities.

A MATTER OF CFA'S FUTURE AND VICTORIA'S SAFETY

By Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

Over the past few weeks there has been a lot of attention, both publicly and within CFA, regarding concerns for the future of CFA as we know it.

As this copy goes to print, CFA has published an Ops EBA Update that clarifies some of the key facts about the concerns that have underpinned the recent attention.

Certainly there is significant concern amongst volunteers across Victoria, but VFBV and individual volunteers are not the only ones who hold these concerns.

Despite the claims that a very small minority might be peddling, this is not a media beatup, it is a genuine concern held by VFBV, the CFA

Board, CEO and Chief Officer, the Minister for Emergency Services Jane Garrett, and - behind closed doors - many other senior officials in the emergency management hierarchy.

The concerns come from the United Firefighters' Union's current Enterprise Bargaining Agreement log of claims that include numerous interrelated clauses that seek to; give the UFU control and power of veto over CFA operational and resource decision making; direct how volunteer support is provided in CFA; sideline and diminish the role of volunteers; and dismantle the CFA's current volunteer and integrated model.

These are real concerns, they drive a wedge between paid staff and volunteers, and to use CFA's own words, the log of claims is unworkable.

Let me be quite clear, VFBV has no interest in those aspects of the log of claims that relate to CFA career firefighters' pay. From the outset our message has been very clear, both publicly and within CFA; give the CFA paid firefighters their 19% increase and settle the pay dispute as quickly as possible.

But we must support the views of those charged with public safety and the safety of the people of Victoria and must support them in their view to not sit by and let control of CFA be handed over to the UFU, not just from our own perspective, but on behalf of the communities we have sworn to protect.

Our motorcade in Melbourne on 23 April was a fantastic show of a united CFA, getting behind the CFA Board, CEO and Chief Officer,

and Minister Jane Garrett, who are doing the moral and proper thing of standing firm against the UFU's attempt to control CFA.

There is a huge amount of detail sitting behind this issue and I don't have space to go into it here, so I encourage you to read CFA's latest EBA Update or visit www.vfbv.com.au for more information.

These are very testing times, we all need to show personal leadership and remember the only thing we are driving for is a strong, sustainable CFA, focused on supporting and protecting our communities.

Many people are pondering what the solution might be. Here are the basics of the solution as I see them, for all of our leaders including those from Government, CFA Board and management, Emergency Management Victoria, the UFU and VFBV.

Commit to working together to achieve an EBA that;

- Cannot override CFA operational and resource decision making

- Does not diminish or interfere with the roles performed by volunteers or the support provided to volunteers

- Does not dismantle CFA's volunteer based and fully integrated model

- Does not block or reduce CFA and Government's obligation to consult with volunteers on matters that affect them before decisions are made.

There is now formal advice available to all CFA members, through the CFA EBA Ops Update released on 3 May, that outlines clauses in the current UFU log of claims



that go beyond dealing with pay and conditions and work directly in contradiction to the four points listed above.

I have written to CFA requesting that these clauses be considered in light of CFA legislation, the CFA Volunteer Charter and the future of CFA itself.

I ask everyone reading this to remember that this debate is not about volunteers versus paid firefighters. We all know that volunteers and paid staff generally have great working relationships and we must continue to respect one another.

Before anyone starts judging the other's argument, anyone in a position to do so should ring the UFU office or CFA for a copy of the latest log of claims and take a look at what is written. I think you will find very quickly that there is cause for concern and that most CFA members, paid and volunteer alike, will agree that some aspects of the UFU's log of claims simply go too far.

This is not an issue between volunteers and the UFU, nor is it between VFBV and the UFU; this is an issue about the future of CFA and ensuring that CFA and its Chief Officer can manage the organisation without union interference.

Let's remember this is a unique situation where volunteers, VFBV, CFA management, the CFA Board and the Minister are all of one view; that the log of claims will give the union too much control over CFA, will dismantle CFA's integrated model and will diminish and erode the work volunteers do.

The attention that volunteers are bringing to this issue is vital to ensuring a sensible outcome for Victoria. We should keep this up and escalate it if need be, until the matter is resolved fairly and sensibly. In the meantime, I say this again; we have absolutely no quarrel with paid firefighters receiving their pay increase, and only wish that matter could be resolved quickly, so we can get on with the work of protecting Victorian communities.

VFBV YOUTH NETWORK

There has been an overwhelming response to the CFA Multi-Agency Youth Forum to be held on 21 May – the forum will involve St John, Red Cross, SES and Ambulance Victoria as well as CFA, and VFBV will be showcased.

VFBV is hosting the Emergency Management sector Multi-Agency Youth Network, providing the foundation for young people to help us implement other initiatives to engage young people; to consider new ideas and perspectives across the range of issues we deal with, and to shape VFBV, CFA and the Emergency Management Sector into the future.

Our call for Expressions of Interest has gone to all Districts to identify VFBV Champions, experienced CFA volunteers who will support our young people in their work in the Youth Network. Stay tuned to www.vfbv.com.au for updates, or call Chris Fryer on 03 9886 1141.

VFBV AFFILIATIONS DUE

Renewal notices for your Brigade/Group's VFBV Affiliation and Brigade's VFBV Volunteer Welfare Fund subscription are with your Secretary now, with a due date of 30 June, 2016.

We also strongly encourage Brigades to subscribe to the VFBV Welfare Fund in the interests of supporting your members in times of personal hardship.

For enquiries, contact your State Councillors or call (03) 9886 1141.

Photograph courtesy Nine News



BOARD VACANCIES

Four positions on the VFBV Board will become vacant this year, and interested volunteers are invited to apply. The closing date for written applications is Monday, 1 August 2016. For more details, see the advertisement on page 10 of this edition.

DIGITAL SCANNERS PAYMENT DUE

The VESEP-funded subsidy program for digital scanners has now been completed - Brigades are reminded they must pay for their Tier 2 orders by 15 May.

For enquiries, call (03) 9886 1141.

THE LATEST NEWS

Get the latest in our email newsletter or VFBV's popular Two Minute Briefing from the VFBV/CFA Joint Committees. Register at www.vfbv.com.au - click on the VFBV Newsletter box.

Join the discussion on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/cfaval or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/vfbv or on Instagram @volunteer_fire_brigades_vic

National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week is May 9 to 15, and an opportunity to set aside the customary volunteers' modesty for a moment and accept the thanks of the community.

It is also a chance to thank those who volunteer in supporting roles, and members of the community who help to make your Brigade's vital work possible.

Volunteer Week is an also opportunity for recruiting and fundraising. For assistance in engaging local media contact VFBV on (03) 9886 1141.

And we'd like to extend our thanks to every volunteer who takes part at any level, and helps to make VFBV, the voice of the volunteers, such an effective representative organisation.