



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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Time for Government to deliver presumptive legislation

Recent media reports have suggested presumptive legislation for Victorian firefighters may be announced soon, so it is time to remind your local Members of Parliament this is important to volunteers, and also remind them of the commitment the Government made to Victorian volunteers and paid firefighters two years ago.

Before the 2014 State Election, Labor announced that "Victorian legislation for career and volunteer firefighters will reflect the cancers covered and timeframes for duty of service as in the Tasmanian legislation". Importantly, this promise explicitly contained no reference to unequal treatment or extra eligibility requirements for volunteers. The Government has since hinted at imposing a discriminatory extra requirement for volunteers to prove an arbitrary number of turnouts before they become eligible for compensation and VFBV will be extremely disappointed if this eventuates.

There are still unanswered questions about the legislation:

- will it treat career and volunteer firefighters equally?
- will it cover firefighters who have already been diagnosed?

VFBV has long campaigned for presumptive legislation to provide simpler and fairer cancer compensation for all Victorian firefighters, both volunteer and career.

Victorian presumptive legislation should list the same 12 cancers and the same years of service requirements that appear in the legislation already passed by the Commonwealth and most other States.

Presumptive legislation works by reversing the onus of proof. The cancer is presumed to be work related provided it is one of

12 listed cancers and the firefighter has sufficient years of service.

Western Australia has now passed presumptive legislation, and South Australia and Queensland led the way with equal treatment for career and volunteer firefighters. Presumptive legislation is now in place in all States and Territories except NSW and Victoria.

Your local MPs need to know that volunteers will not accept being given second best just because they are not paid. For more information, type Cancer Law into the search box at www.vfbv.com.au

FUNDRAISING IS STILL IMPORTANT

While VFBV has discontinued its action in the Victorian Supreme Court in the wake of changes to the Federal Fair Work Act that has enabled the legal protections we set out to achieve, our campaign to defend the volunteer based CFA continues, and fundraising is still important.

The new Federal Legislation has changed the legal ground rules to defend fire and emergency service volun-

A WIN FOR VOLUNTEERS BUT STILL MORE TO DO

By Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

VFBV has achieved a major breakthrough in the long running dispute flowing from the CFA/UFU enterprise bargaining deal (EBA) that undermines the volunteer based nature of CFA, impacts on the way volunteers are supported and work, and overrides CFA decision making including on matters impacting on volunteers.

VFBV has successfully campaigned for and achieved a change to the Federal Fair Work Act that protects volunteers and ensures the volunteer nature of CFA cannot be undermined by an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement between CFA and the UFU. The Federal Fair Work Act changes were approved by the Senate on 10 October with support from all Coalition and cross bench independent Senators other than Senator Lambie from Tasmania, and have been given Royal Assent which confirms them as law as of now.

The changes to the Fair Work Act apply to the current EBA negotiations and also all future CFA EBAs.

This means that VFBV has also achieved the outcome being pursued in the Victorian Supreme Court.

Our core claim in the Supreme Court was to achieve a declaration that it would be unlawful for CFA to enter into the proposed 2016 CFA/UFU EBA because of clauses that contradict and override the CFA Act - the changes to the Federal Fair Work Act now disallow this in federal law.

The change to the Fair Work Act makes it unlawful for the EBA to include arrangements that restrict or limit CFA's ability to:

- Engage or deploy volunteers
- Provide support or equipment to volunteers
- Manage its relationship with or work with any other emergency management body in relation to its volunteers
- Manage its operations in relation to volunteers
- Consult with volunteers,

or require or permit CFA to act other than in accordance with the powers, functions and duties conferred or imposed on CFA by the CFA Act in relation to volunteers.

The changes to the Fair Work Act prohibit the CFA from having EBA arrangements that require CFA to consult or reach agreement

can make a direct deposit via the Bendigo Bank to the VFBV Valuing Volunteers Fund, BSB 633 000, Account number 157 728 221, send a cheque to the Valuing Volunteers Fund, PO Box 453, Mt Waverley 3149, or make a donation by visiting www.mycause.com.au/cfa

Note that VFBV is a non-party political organisation: it does not accept donations from political parties.

teers from industrial interference, but it must be supported in the Fair Work Commission and possibly Federal courts.

We still need volunteers to actively seek donations from the public and other supporters, to fund our campaign to maintain and strengthen volunteer capacity for future generations, and stop industrial interference in CFA volunteers' service to Victoria.

Members of the public, corporate donors, community organisations and volunteers

VFBV Brigade Delegates' Course

VFBV is launching a newly developed short course for Brigade Delegates to District Councils.

Participants completing the course will be awarded two modules from Cert II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations): PUACOM001C Communicate in the Workplace, and PUACOM002B Provide Services to Clients.

The course will be taken to all Districts over the coming two years, and will give Delegates the chance to gain new skills, network among their peers, improve teamwork and communication, and assist with succession planning for their District Council.

The course consists of two sessions of one day each, with a small amount of work to be done from home, and covers useful skills including: Facilitation, Leadership, Effective Communication, Reporting, Networking, Working in a group, Note Taking, Decision Making, Managing Issues, and Problem Solving.

The course is an important investment in volunteer lead-

ership skills; talk to your District Council or watch www.vfbv.com.au for more details.

FIRE SAFETY MEDIA TIPS

Make the most of media opportunities to publicise safety and the professionalism of volunteers.

When you have an exercise, training or safety message to publicise, be prepared with: a simple list of your messages for the public, Brigade facts and figures, examples of the Brigade's recent work, and a call to action; something that prompts the public to take action on fire safety preparation, volunteering, making a donation or supporting CFA volunteers.

For VFBV's Brigade publicity kit, volunteer facts and figures and key summer messages from CFA and EMV, email p.beaton@vfbv.com.au or call Peter Beaton on (03) 9886 1141.



firm, working to ensure CFA and others are focussed on supporting and strengthening volunteerism for the benefit of future generations and getting on with protecting our communities.

The focus of our advocacy and legal action will now shift to the Federal sphere and play out in the Fair Work Commission and from there the Federal court system if required. We will also be freed up to focus on potential challenge to the Fair Work Amendment in the High Court of Australia as threatened by the UFU. At the Federal level we will not be alone - the Fair Work Commission now has clear rules to follow which protect emergency service volunteers; the Federal Employment Minister has also committed to challenge the EBA at the full bench of the Fair Work Commission if required, and if the matter goes to the High Court then the Federal Government will have a keen interest in defending the robustness of their legislation.

We think VFBV and volunteers can now set the scene by proactive leadership to ensure CFA remains a strong and successful volunteer based organisation where paid staff and volunteers work side by side for the benefit of the communities we serve.

VFBV greatly appreciates the support and monetary donations that have made our campaign action to date possible. A big thank you to everyone who has supported our campaign to date. There is still an enormous amount of work to do and we are still seeking donations and support, so please keep spreading the word.

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YOUTH NETWORK UPDATE

The VFBV Multi-Agency Youth Network is running hot, with Life Saving Victoria now officially involved, along with VFBV, VICSES, the Red Cross and the Victorian Council of Churches.

VFBV HELPS WITH VESEP GRANTS

If your Brigade is considering applying for a VESEP grant in the future, for a vehicle, new equipment or facilities improvements, start your planning and preparation now.

Go to the VFBV website and type VESEP Resources into the search box in the top right corner of the page, to find a copy of our most recent Application Help Pack and case studies that demonstrate how successful past applications worked.

For additional practical advice, contact your VFBV Support Officer via the VFBV office on (03) 9886 1141.

Youth Engagement Officer Christine Fryer and our VFBV Support Officers are working with District Councils to organise informal get togethers for young Network members, their District Champions and VFBV District Council executive members, as well as encouraging young volunteers' attendance at District Council meetings.

District 12 will have an informal event on 13 November, and Districts 9, 10 and 27 will have theirs on 20 November.

Districts 22 and 24 are planning their first gatherings of young members, and District 15 has had its first get together, where they discussed rotating the role of Youth Panel Chair so everyone can lead meetings and initiatives, and appointed a member to design a logo for the Youth Network.

Read Fire Wise or visit www.vfbv.com.au for updates, or to get involved contact Chris on (03) 9886 1141 or at c.fryer@vfbv.org.au

2016/17 affiliations

The number of Brigades affiliating with VFBV for 2016/17 is on track to match and probably exceed last year's record number, a sign of continued strong support for the association's work on behalf of volunteers.

A record 93% of Brigades affiliated with VFBV in 2015/16, and this year a number of Brigades have affiliated with VFBV for the first time in many years.

If you are not sure whether your Brigade or Group's VFBV Affiliation and Brigade's VFBV Volunteer Welfare Fund subscription have been paid, contact your Secretary as soon as possible.

The modest cost of \$77.50 for VFBV affiliation is the same for all Brigades and Groups.

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 more information visit the VFBV website www.vfbv.com.au and go to the Member Services area.

For any enquiries, contact your VFBV State Councillors or call us on (03) 9886 1141.

VEOHRC REVIEW CLOSING SOON

Past and present CFA members have until 18 November to contribute to the Independent Review into Equity and Diversity being conducted by the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC).

VEOHRC is talking to CFA members about workplace culture, discrimination (including bullying) and sexual harassment. You can tell VEOHRC about the amazing work CFA does as well as any difficult experiences you've had. The Review will report in mid-2017.

The online survey is independently hosted by VEOHRC. A paper-based version is also available upon request, or you can arrange a confidential interview on the phone or in person.

You can participate confidentially and anonymously. Call the confidential phone line (03) 9032 3464, send a confidential email to independentreview@veohrc.vic.gov.au or for more information, visit www.victorianhumanrightscommission.com/EDR/

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.

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