



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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ACTIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are continuing to raise their concerns with the proposed EBA, by:

- Emailing and talking to local Members of Parliament
 - Seeking meetings with MPs to tell them about volunteers' concerns
 - Raising the issue with local media and the community
 - Keeping signs, leaflets and other campaign materials ready, we may need to hit the streets at short notice
 - And at all times, maintaining our normal professional standards of behaviour and emergency response to your community
- Stay up to date via your State Councillors, FireWise, VFBV updates and www.vfbv.com.au

DIVERSITY REVIEW

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's (VEOHRC) Independent Equity and Diversity Review of CFA and MFB is examining the nature and prevalence of discrimination, including bullying, and sexual harassment amongst all CFA and MFB employees and volunteers

This is an important opportunity, and a result of the Fire Services Review. For more, talk to your State Councillors, or visit www.victorianhumanrightscommission.com/EDR/

LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS

The 2016 VFBV Volunteer Leadership Scholarship participants will make their final presentations in September.

The two groups working from Woodend and Dandenong (pictured below) include 48 volunteers from CFA, VICSES, Ambulance Victoria, St John Ambulance and Life Saving Victoria.

They are working towards Certificate IV in Leadership and Management (BSB42015) with practical projects in the areas of fatigue management, diversity, training, technology, and volunteer recruitment, retention and succession.



AFFILIATION DUE NOW

Are your Brigade/Group's VFBV Affiliation and Brigade's VFBV Volunteer Welfare Fund subscription up to date? If you are not sure, check with your Secretary.

Affiliation is at record levels, with 93% of Brigades supporting VFBV's work through their affiliation in 2015/16. For more information, visit www.vfbv.com.au and go to the Member Services area, contact your State Councillor or call (03) 9886 1141.

VALUING VOLUNTEERS FUND DONATIONS

VFBV has established a Valuing Volunteers Support Fund to receive donations to support the work we are doing to protect, advocate and represent CFA volunteers.

Donations will be accepted from members of the public. Donations are not tax deductible, but donors can request a receipt.

There are full details of the wide range of work to be supported by the Fund on the VFBV website www.vfbv.com.au and Victorian Farmers Federation members can donate through the VFF.

HAVE YOUR SAY NOW

The 2016 VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey is open now and attracting record numbers of volunteers, with close to 2,000 already taking part as we go to press. Visit www.vfbv.com.au to take the survey.

VFBV designed the survey to measure how things are going on issues like how well volunteers are being supported, trained, recruited and retained by CFA, and how well they're managed at Brigade level.

This year, VFBV is hosting dedicated versions of the survey for emergency volunteers

with VICSES, Ambulance Victoria, Red Cross Victoria, Life Saving Victoria, St John Ambulance, The Salvation Army and the Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry. VFBV is also hosting the survey for fire agency volunteers in other states on behalf of their associations and the national body CAVFA.

Since the survey was launched in 2012, each year's results have been compared with previous years' figures, to show trends in how volunteers feel on each of the

VOLUNTEERS VOICES MUST BE HEARD ON EBA

By Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

The action on the CFA/UFU Enterprise Bargaining Agreement has moved from public protests to formal representations, with VFBV addressing the full CFA Board and appearing before a Parliamentary inquiry, while volunteers continue to get their message to State MPs, the community and local media across the state.

With the Supreme Court-ordered formal consultation with CFA ending on 20 July, CFA did not agree to our request to extend consultations now that the full CFA Board including the four volunteer-nominated members was in place, but VFBV and the United Firefighters Union were invited to make presentations to the full CFA Board on 1 August.

I am pleased to report that this meeting was constructive and I am hopeful that progress on our issues can be made – we'll wait and see.

Ahead of the meeting, we wrote to CFA on Friday 29 July with further questions arising from our consultations so far and feedback from our members. We also sent CFA

an updated, clause by clause assessment of the proposed EBA, with comments and the actions that we believe are required.

We expressed the strong view that the completion of a genuine and meaningful consultation process under the Supreme Court undertakings, as well as the CFA Volunteer Charter, is dependent on the provision of all the information pertinent to the matter. We also expressed concern as to the lack of response and clarification from CFA, relating to the issues we have raised so far.

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

On 2 August, we made a presentation and submission to the 'Inquiry into Fire Season Preparedness' by the Victorian Parliament's Environment and Planning Standing Committee.

The presentation and evidence lasted several hours and covered the vital importance of CFA volunteers to fire season preparedness, the essential nature of CFA's volunteer surge capacity, the interrelationship between fire service delivery in outer metropolitan Melbourne and Victoria's fire season preparedness, and the importance of CFA's integrated model for managing this interrelationship.

We drew attention to the proposed EBA's many impacts: on the powers of the Chief Officer, the volunteer based and integrated nature of CFA, and Victoria's fire season preparedness and operations. We also expressed concern over the widely varying cost estimates that range from the hundreds of millions to over one billion dollars.

We urged the Committee members to do all they can to investigate the EBA problems we have raised, ensure appropriate awareness of the problems and seek necessary remedies to them.

You can see a summary of VFBV's evidence on the VFBV website, and copies are in the hands of your State Councillors and District Council executive members.

THE PREMIER'S TROUBLING COMMENTS

In recent weeks Premier Daniel Andrews has told the media that the proposed EBA will not affect volunteers. He has accused those who say it will affect volunteers and public safety to be liars, spreading grubby mischief and following a political agenda.

In the past week he has even implied that if the dispute went on, lives may be

lost because CFA members were not focussed on the job if the industrial dispute continued, telling a radio interview:

"... the price is me having to sit in this studio and say to you that lives were lost, property was lost, because the CFA was not focused on keeping Victorians safe, I'm not prepared to do that."

These comments are an insult to all CFA members, volunteers and paid. For all of us, our public service to the people of Victoria, our commitment to public safety comes first and we will never be distracted from that. The very reason we are taking a stand on the EBA is because of a profound commitment to a volunteer based, fully integrated CFA as the best way to provide public safety for Victorians.

OUR REQUESTS TO CFA

VFBV is waiting for CFA's reply to our requests for further information on:

- Whether the catchall clause 7A is the only proposed protection for volunteers
- How the proposed CFA Greater Alarm Response System (GARS) would work
- The effects on volunteers of clause 43.2.7; "seven professional firefighters to fire-ground incidents are dispatched before commencement of safe firefighting operations..."

Why BASO and Volunteer Support Programs are sought to be included in the Operational EBA. These are fundamental volunteer support programs and impacts on volunteer brigades across Victoria, which is a direct contradiction of the Premier's and Minister's assurances that the proposed EBA has no effect on volunteer brigades

- How CFA will ensure VFBV and volunteers are genuinely consulted on issues handled by the EBA's dispute resolution processes
- The content of the proposed Infrastructure Agreement between CFA and UFU, to be placed on file at the same time as the EBA is lodged with FWA, and how VFBV and volunteer members of those Brigades will have genuine opportunity to have input before any decision is made

The listing of four additional locations above the quoted "34" for integrated brigades - a direct contradiction of the Premier's and Minister's assurances that the proposed EBA will only affect 34 locations

- How the Emergency Management Commissioner will ensure genuine consultation, ensure the CFA Act is not overridden, take any necessary action in the Fair Work Commission, and protect the roles of volunteers in accordance with the CFA Volunteer Charter?

When VFBV will receive an updated proposed EBA, showing amendments that are proposed to accommodate the volunteers' concerns

- Whether there is a proposed interpretation document that will guide the application of clauses in the EBA, and when it will be provided to VFBV for discussion and consultation



CFA BOARD APPOINTMENTS

The CFA Board is now complete, with the appointment of four volunteer nominated members, chosen by the Minister from a panel provided by VFBV under the requirements of the CFA Act.

The Act requires four volunteer nominees to ensure the CFA Board has strong volunteer expertise, knowledge and an understanding of CFA volunteerism, as well as knowledge of, or experience in, commercial, technical, operational, legal or financial matters; as well as expertise in fire services, emergency management, land management or any other field relevant to the performance of the functions of the Authority.

The four new members, Hazel Clothier, Lynda Hamilton, Peter Shaw and Timothy Young, now have a statutory responsibility as CFA Board Members and do not have the role of representing VFBV, but we will ensure they have access to the best advice and feedback from our statewide network of volunteer representatives to support their work.

VFBV'S NEXT STEPS

VFBV continues to work to ensure the now-complete CFA Board fully understands volunteers' concerns, the ramifications of approving the EBA and ways in which those concerns can be resolved. It is important to repeat that none of our concerns are about the pay and conditions of paid firefighters.

We are working with Federal Government to ensure its intended legislation to change the Fair Work Act is effective in protecting volunteers from the effects of enterprise bargaining agreements.

VFBV will keep raising the issues with Members of Parliament, business and community leaders and the general public, and it is important that volunteers across the state continue local activities to support our push for a fair outcome.

You can see suggested local actions elsewhere on this page, including promoting our newly established Valuing Volunteers Support Fund that now accepts donations to support the work we are doing to protect, advocate and represent CFA volunteers.

The important message for volunteers now is that the final outcome on the EBA, and therefore the future of the volunteer based and fully integrated CFA, is by no means determined and we must continue to make sure our voices are heard at every opportunity and in every corner of the state.

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; follow on Twitter www.twitter.com/vfbv or Instagram [@volunteer_fire_brigades_vic](https://www.instagram.com/volunteer_fire_brigades_vic)