



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

STATEMENT

27 September 2021

VOLUNTEERS DISMISS UNION PROPAGANDA

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria notes with disappointment the commencement of yet another UFU TV and print campaign that attempts to scare and mislead the public.

VFBV rejects the unions divisive campaign, and reminds Victorians that all firefighters are professional, including those that choose not to be paid. We work as one and we respect one another.

To choose a term to headline their campaign that they know volunteer firefighters will find insulting just illustrates the divisive and disrespectful approach of the UFU towards Victoria's 55,000 strong CFA volunteer first responders.

Alarming, the campaign appears to be an obvious attempt to influence and politicise the Governments 'independent' fire district review panel to try and initiate a further review of fire district boundaries before the next election. A tired argument with no other goal than to further expand the union's membership across regional Victoria.

Of significant concern is the campaign message that Victorians do not need to be prepared for an emergency because the State's small paid workforce will somehow be there. This is the opposite of changes made since Victoria's 2009 Black Saturday Royal Commission that urged agencies and Governments to support and encourage all Victorians to prepare for emergencies and take an active part in their own and their family's safety.

It is an irresponsible and dangerous message that demonstrates how out of touch the union is on how to build safer and more resilient communities.

All of Victoria's firefighters (volunteer and paid) have been working hard over the last twelve months to rebuild respect and courtesy between agencies and each other - regardless of the badge on the side of the fire truck. VFBV is proud of our career firefighter brothers and sisters and rejects any provocation that attempts to pit firefighter against firefighter.

To return to the politics of the past and try to stoke peoples fear and anxiousness on the eve of a fire season is concerning behaviour but aptly demonstrates the perception that the union cannot change and is simply unwilling to work collaboratively with others. It is an insult to all firefighters and displays an ugly and selfish side of a small militant union desperately trying to redeem itself and its image after years of self-inflicted controversy.

CFA volunteers have stood by Victorians during their darkest days and will not be distracted from preparing for this year's fire danger period. They will stand united against such unprovoked attacks.

CFA volunteers have continued to engage with communities, run community education campaigns, and essential firefighter training and skills maintenance right through the COVID pandemic. They are highly trained and highly professional.

As Victoria's largest, and most diverse fire service – CFA volunteers selflessly respond to structure fires, bush fires, industrial fires, HAZMAT incidents, road accident rescue, and other highly specialised incidents including co-responding with ambulance Victoria to emergency medical incidents.

The respect and trust of the Victorian community in CFA and CFA volunteers is well earned over many decades of service and built on actions and deeds - not words or fancy PR stunts.

CFA volunteers stand by Victorian communities 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Together, we are building a safer and more resilient Victoria standing united with our communities against the threat of emergencies and other natural disasters. You can be confident in CFA and CFA volunteers.

As volunteers ourselves - we are proud of our communities and proud of our community-based fire brigades located across 1,217 communities right across Victoria. We work with and for the communities we are based in. Victoria's emergency management volunteers contribute \$2.5 billion dollars of value to Victoria every year.

CFA volunteers – proud to serve.

Media: Quotes may be attributed to VFBV CEO, Adam Barnett on behalf of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria. VFBV is the CFA Volunteer peak body and member association recognised under the Country Fire Authority Act.