

## **MEDIA RELEASE – 5 September 2016**

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria has launched a crowdfunding campaign to support volunteer firefighters as they tackle the State Government's decision in court on 22 September 2016.

The campaign '*Supporting and Valuing our CFA Volunteers*' will officially launch on 5 September 2016 on Australian crowdfunding platform, mycause.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria is fighting to maintain CFA as a volunteer based and fully integrated fire and emergency service with employees fully integrated with volunteers to provide seamless public safety services to Victorians. This fight has extended to the Supreme Court of Victoria with a case beginning on 22 September 2016.

CFA and its workforce – 97% volunteer - protect 60% of suburban Melbourne, regional cities and all of country Victoria.

The community volunteer nature of CFA is under attack from an industrial deal done by the Andrews Victorian Government and Peter Marshall of the United Firefighters Union. The deal negatively impacts on CFA as a volunteer based and fully integrated organisation, its operations and support including consultation with volunteers.

The Emergency Services Minister, Jane Garrett, sharing volunteer concerns refused to support the deal and resigned in June. The CFA Board that was opposing the deal was sacked by the Andrews Government. The CEO, Lucinda Nolan and Chief Officer, Joe Buffone subsequently resigned in protest over the deal.

Only Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria is left to defend CFA from the deal and its detrimental effect for CFA services to the Victorian public. The campaign, particularly through the courts costs money. Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria does not intend to use government grant funds or individual brigade affiliation fees to pay for the campaign. Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria has been raising funds through donations to pay for these costs. As the costs are now escalating they now need your help.

“Any action in the courts costs money, so we are asking the community that we serve to support us. This funding will be used to pay for Supreme Court and other action to preserve and protect the powers of the CFA Act,” said VFBV Chief Executive Officer Andrew Ford.

“The ongoing support of the community means a lot to us. That's why we are asking for your support to help your CFA volunteers. We would welcome your help as part of the campaign to support and value CFA volunteers,” he said.

Volunteers want to make it very clear that they are not against our paid staff and colleagues and have no interest in interfering in their legitimate pay and conditions. Our vision is for CFA to be a modern and contemporary emergency service where volunteers and paid staff work side by side, as equals and respect one another.

Ninety-seven percent of CFA's workforce are the volunteers selflessly giving up their time to provide emergency services to the community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Your local CFA Brigade is much more than 3 or 4 firefighters on duty, it is dozens of trained, experienced volunteer firefighters. In fact, many of the most active, experienced firefighters and major incident management personnel in the state are volunteers.

Volunteers attend tens of thousands of calls each year. Their local knowledge plus the ability to mobilise volunteer firefighters is a key strength when battling major fires like the Wye River and Black Saturday fires.

"The arrangements in the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement approved by the new government-appointed CFA Board will give the union power of veto and effective control on issues affecting our volunteer based and fully integrated organisation, operations and support," Mr Ford said.

Encouraging, maintaining and strengthening the capacity volunteers is vitally important for Victoria.

**To those who value the capacity, determination and service of the volunteers please support our campaign in the Supreme Court on September 22 by donating to our campaign on mycause.**

<https://www.mycause.com.au/cfa>

**Media contact:** Garth Head 9802 0501