



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

NOTE TO MEMBERS

Wednesday 20th April 2016

RE: Latest Reports on CFA-UFU EBA Negotiation Developments – 20 April 2016

You will have read or heard in today's media reports of attempts to finalise the CFA-UFU Enterprise Bargaining Industrial Agreement by the Premier Daniel Andrews in a manner said to be circumventing the role of the Minister for Emergency Services, Jane Garrett and the Board and CEO of the CFA. The same approach is also said to be being used for the MFB.

In summary the features of the agreement would give way to the UFU in most if not all their demands.

The proposed financial settlement included a 19% wage increase over the life of the Agreement (also flowing to existing allowances) and an initial cash payment of \$3,000 per operational employee as a "sign on payment". There are apparently a range of new allowances also claimed by the UFU. The cost implications of such a settlement are large and will lead to significant rises in the Fire Service Levy. This is not an issue for our members as volunteers except to the extent that it reduces or retards the allocation of training, equipment and support for building volunteer capacity to meet growing service requirements including surge capacity.

From a CFA, volunteer and community safety perspective the non-financial demands of the UFU that are intended as part of the Agreement are fundamentally more serious. These include various ways of marginalising volunteers and progressively replacing urban volunteers in Greater Melbourne and regional centres with paid career staff:

- The agreement proposes that there would be a minimum of seven paid firefighters on any CFA fireground before response measures were initiated. Qualified volunteer firefighters are not to be counted.
- A new Board of Reference is to be created comprised of a representative of the UFU, a representative of the CFA and a mutually agreed industrial chairperson to assess and determine staffing disputes between the Union and the CFA as regard the numbers, shift deployment and rank of paid staff at CFA brigades, both existing integrated brigades and purely volunteer brigades. There is also a proposal that the MFB be incorporated into the Board of Reference, although the status of this proposal is unknown to us. The initial negotiation over these matters is limited to the Union and CFA under the terms of the proposal. This arrangement would deal with further new paid staff additional to the 342 paid staff from the 2010 EBA and the 350 paid staff promised by Daniel Andrews at the last election. (It is noteworthy that the then Chief Officer in his evidence to the 2009 Bushfire Royal Commission estimated the then additional requirement for paid staff as less than half this number to 2020.)

The above information has entered the public domain in the past 24 hours – we are not aware of other features of the Agreement. It has not been discussed with VFBV despite the impact various clauses may have on volunteers. Under the terms of the Volunteer Charter as incorporated in the CFA Act 1958 with support of the Coalition and the Labor Party in 2011, VFBV is to be meaningfully consulted on any matter which may affect volunteers before any decisions are made. That consultation has to include details relevant to the decision making and time for proper consultation with the volunteers who may be affected by the decision(s).

It has also become clear that our Minister, Jane Garrett, our CEO, Lucinda Nolan , our Chief Officer, Joe Buffone and the CFA Board have been resolute in opposing the proposed Agreement, particularly the non-financial aspects which impact on statutory and management responsibilities of CFA , particularly with regard to volunteers – to develop policy and organisational arrangements that encourage, maintain and strengthen the capacity of volunteers to provide the CFA’s services as well as the fundamental role of the Chief Officer.

We Need Your Help:

VFBV is solidly in support of the Minister, CFA CEO, Chief Officer and CFA Board’s position and wish to make that generally clear to all Victorians. And we want your urgent help to do this.

You can contact local MPs (Federal and State), candidates, mayors and councillors, community organisations and service clubs to get them to write to the Premier and Minister in support of our position of non-industrial/political interference in the organisation and operation of CFA as a volunteer based emergency service. Write to or contact local media with the same message. And you should write to the Minister supporting her stand and send a copy to the Premier.

We will continue to closely monitor events as they unfold, including invoking relevant clauses of the Volunteer Charter for the provision of information and formal consultation as required.

We will keep you advised, but in the meantime ask that wherever possible you make clear our support of the Minister and the CFA current reported position.



Andrew Ford
Chief Executive Officer



Nev Jones AFSM
State President

For background the Herald Sun article can be accessed from here

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/firefighters-union-tipped-to-get-bulk-of-demands-if-premier-daniel-andrews-caves-in/news-story/49b619c0340322a4e1f441d422f04ebf>