



United Firefighters Union

Victorian Branch ABN 74 030 569 265

410 Brunswick Street
Fitzroy Victoria 3065
Australia

Email: officeadmin@ufuvic.asn.au
Phone: (03) 9419 8811

Website: www.ufuvic.asn.au
Fax: (03) 9419 9258

AN OPEN LETTER TO CFA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS FROM CAREER FIREFIGHTERS

Dear fellow firefighters,

We write out of concern because there are people trying to divide firefighters - through political interference and blatant mistruths.

In October last year, the CFA referred the firefighters' workplace agreement to Fair Work. After six months of listening to the parties, the independent umpire ruled last week to settle the dispute. The UFU had made more than 120 bargaining concessions at the Fair Work Commission. Firefighters accept the Fair Work recommendation - and reject the misinformation being disseminated to upset volunteers.

Fair Work Commissioner Roe pointed out several times that **the recommendation DOES NOT affect volunteer firefighters**. In his own words:

“The role of volunteers in fighting bushfires and maintaining community safety and delivering high quality services to the public in remote and regional areas and in integrated stations is not altered by this Agreement.”

We value the relationship between career firefighters and volunteers and are concerned that outside interests are attempting to drive a wedge between us for political gain. We do not believe that firefighters should be used as a political football.

We hope that you respect the bargaining process for our workplace agreement, as we respect your volunteer charter. In addition to the big lie, that our agreement is designed to “take over” the CFA, we wish to address some of the other popular misconceptions about the Agreement and put them to bed, once and for all:

Allegation: There must be 7 career firefighters at every CFA fire in Victoria before any firefighting can begin.

The Truth: At 31 of the 34 integrated stations (that's 31 out of 1200 CFA fire stations), 7 career firefighters will be *dispatched* to fires that they are attending. Whoever arrives first, volunteer or career, will immediately begin the firefight. If the first responding vehicle advises that the matter is under control, other trucks will be recalled.

Allegation: A UFU veto over clothing and equipment.

The Truth: The UFU will be allowed consultation (as happens in many industries); there is a Dispute Resolution officer if the parties don't agree. Sometimes, as with structural PPC, the benefits won by the UFU flow to volunteers too.

Allegation: Career and volunteers crews can't share trucks.

The Truth: They can, they do, and they will continue to do so.

Allegation: Paid staff only to report to paid staff.

The Truth: Volunteers can continue to be incident controllers as occurs at present. The agreement clearly allows staff to report to incident controllers who are volunteers.

Allegation: No new appliances without UFU approval.

The Truth: The process for volunteer procurement, including appliances, remains unchanged.

Today, career and volunteer firefighters stood together in the rain outside Parliament House to speak up against the politicisation of our Enterprise Agreement negotiations with the CFA. Just as we stood up to end the disgraceful cover-up at Fiskville. Just as career and volunteer firefighters proudly stand shoulder to shoulder to protect our communities.

After three years of negotiations and an independent ruling from the Fair Work Commission, it is time for this to end. Firefighters must be united to fight fires and not each other. Thank you for your support.

Yours in unity,



Peter Marshall
Secretary
United Firefighters Union