

My name is Paul Curran and I am a CFA Leading Firefighter currently stationed at Traralgon fire station. A brief summary of my qualifications is as follows:

- Graduated CFA recruit course October 2010
- Attained rank of Qualified Firefighter in June 2014
- Attained rank of Leading Firefighter in July 2016
- Qualified on five different pumper designs
- Qualified on three different tanker designs
- Qualified on 42m Ladder Platform
- Qualified on Breathing Apparatus Support Vehicle
- Qualified in Emergency Medical Response
- Qualified in Steep Angle Rescue
- Qualified in Gas Flare Off
- Qualified to Monitor Hazardous Atmospheres

In my seven years I have worked at several stations though the bulk of my time has been spent at Traralgon and Springvale. This has given me a good understanding of fire service delivery in both urban and regional locations.

I write this submission in support of the proposed fire service reform and will address the terms of reference for this select committee in the points below.

Impact on fire service delivery across Victoria

1) This proposed fire service reform will lead to:

- improved fire service delivery to existing CFA integrated brigades
- improved firefighter safety on the fire ground
- improved volunteer service

Improved fire service delivery to existing CFA integrated areas

- 2) The best response to a house fire relies on four figures: 7, 2, 90 & 8. This means 7 professional firefighters on 2 trucks responding within 90 seconds with one of those trucks arriving on scene within 8 minutes.
- 3) 7 professional firefighters allows for:
- 1 incident controller (the boss)
 - 1 pump operator (responsible for getting water out of and into the truck)
 - 2 wearing breathing apparatus to go into the house fire
 - 2 wearing breathing apparatus on standby to assist if the two inside get trapped
 - 1 responsible for first aid, assisting the pump operator, fetching equipment etc
- 4) A two truck response means you have sufficient crew, equipment and water on the way to initially combat an incident.
- 5) When an incident occurs professional firefighters will drop whatever they're doing, get dressed into their safety gear, find on a map where they are going and be driving out the door within 90 seconds. This is a requirement for all fire stations with professional firefighters 24/7/365.

- 6) Arriving within eight minutes gives firefighters the best chance to contain a fire to the room it started in. Firefighters aim to be within a structure fire in time to stop an event called a 'flashover'. This is because after flashover occurs the odds of preventing a fire from doing substantial damage to a property is extremely low. (see appendix iii)
- 7) The entire Metropolitan Fire District (MFD), the area covered by the MFB, receives the level of response specified in points 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- 8) There are select areas of the Country Area of Victoria (CAV), the area covered by CFA, which receive the level of response specified in points 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- 9) Traralgon and Morwell are examples of these of point 8 because professional CFA firefighters from both Traralgon and Morwell support one another to their jobs.
- 10) This means that if there is a house fire within the MFD or one of those select areas of CAV as a minimum you will get the response detailed above in points 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- 11) However, there are growth corridors surrounding Melbourne that do not receive this level of fire service coverage. In many of these areas the truck providing support/backup to CFA professional firefighters is crewed by volunteers; this arrangement leads to an uncertainty of response as detailed in the points below.
- 12) People have asked why the seven dispatched need to be professional firefighters and why volunteers can't be included in that seven.
- 13) To put it simply with 7 professional firefighters dispatched to an incident it is guaranteed that you will have the qualifications required to complete the tasks detailed above, with a volunteer response it is not.
- 14) This guarantee is thanks to the compulsory training and assessment regime professional firefighters undertake. This regime begins with a 5 month recruit course and continues for the next three years to achieve the rank of 'Qualified Firefighter' (QFF). Future promotion to the ranks of 'Leading Firefighter' (LFF) and 'Station Officer' (SO) require an additional 3 weeks of compulsory training (for each rank) with several months of study and a full week of assessments.
- 15) With a solely volunteer response, or using a volunteer truck as 'back up', it is not guaranteed you will get volunteers with the required qualifications to complete the tasks stated in point 3. A volunteer brigade may have members with the required qualifications but it is unknown whether those specific volunteers will be available to respond when required. To be brutally honest it is not guaranteed you will get a volunteer qualified to drive the fire truck to the incident.

(Four recent everyday examples of this can be seen in Appendix i)

- 16) When a volunteer truck is your back up there are three questions running through your head:
 1. How many (if any) will respond?
 2. When will they respond?
 3. What qualifications will those responding volunteers have?

Improved firefighter safety

- 17) For professional firefighters at many CFA stations the only guaranteed response you will have to an incident is the other professional firefighters who are on the truck with you. You are at the mercy of the three questions detailed in point 16.
- 18) The figures specified in point 3 ensure that when you respond to an incident you will have enough to safely combat that incident in the initial stages.
- 19) If additional resources are required they can be requested and if fewer resources are required then some can be cancelled; the important thing is that you have that guaranteed backup on the way.
- 20) As a firefighter when you attend incidents you are responding to situation full of unknowns; the backup you have coming should not also be an unknown quantity. This 'unknown' illustrated by the three questions of point 16.

Effect on volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery

- 21) As has been stated by CO Steve Warrington and EMV Commissioner Craig Lapsley, CFA currently has 1220 brigades, after the formation of FRV CFA will still have 1220 brigades. No brigades are being disbanded and no volunteers are being asked to leave any brigade or any area.
- 22) There are three types of brigades within CFA:
 1. Fully volunteer brigades with no regular support from professional firefighters
 2. Fully volunteer brigades regularly supported by professional firefighters
 3. Integrated brigades with both volunteer and professional firefighters

Fully volunteer brigades with no regular support from professional firefighters

- 23) An example this type of brigade would be Sale CFA. At an incident these brigades will only encounter professional firefighters if they specifically request their support. For example Sale CFA requesting Traralgon professional firefighters respond the ladder platform to a job in their area.
- 24) These brigades will see no change on station or on the fire ground. The existing rank structure which has several volunteer Lieutenants reporting to a volunteer Captain (who is the head of the brigade) will not change if the proposed legislation is passed. The Captain of that brigade reports to a professional firefighter at the rank of Operations Officer.
- 25) This Operations Officer is located at a District HQ and is in charge of a 'catchment' of 10 - 15 brigades and this will not change. If the proposed reform passes this Operations Officer will complete the same tasks in the same role and wear the same uniform, the only change will be that they will be paid by FRV not CFA.

Fully volunteer brigades regularly supported by professional firefighters

- 26) An example of this type of brigade would be Tyers CFA. Because this type of brigade borders the area of an integrated station they both receive support from and provide support to professional firefighters.

- 27) The main change these brigades will see is that at jobs in their own area (where they already receive support from professional firefighters) they will see an additional truck of professional firefighters respond to make up the required minimum of seven professional firefighters dispatched. This additional truck of professional firefighters can be cancelled by the volunteer brigade if they determine that the additional support is not required.
- 28) Lastly, the existing arrangements see the crew leader of the first arriving fire truck, be they volunteer or professional, assume control of an incident, this will not change. Professional firefighters will not be taking control from volunteers at any incident.

Integrated brigades with both volunteer and professional firefighters

- 29) An example of an integrated brigade is Traralgon CFA. Currently the head of an integrated brigade is a professional firefighter at the rank of Operations Officer. The Operations Officer is responsible for managing both the professional and volunteer aspects of the brigade and as mentioned above has the responsibility for a 'catchment' of brigades as well.
- 30) The main change for volunteers at an integrated brigade will be the implementation of a 'Captain' into their ranks. This would mirror the rank structure of all existing volunteer brigades with the new captain reporting to an Operations Officer who is charge of a catchment of brigades.
- 31) Professional firefighters at these now co-located brigades would be managed by a Commander from FRV.
- 32) If the proposed legislation passes volunteers at integrated brigades will continue to respond to incidents in their current areas and continue to work side by side with the same professional firefighters they do now, they simply now be from a different organisation.
- 33) To ensure the required minimum of 7 professional firefighters dispatched an extra truck of professional firefighters may be required to be dispatched to incidents in the brigade's area; unless of course the integrated brigade is currently already supported by another integrated brigade, then nothing would change.
- 34) As mentioned above this extra truck of professional firefighters can be cancelled if they are not required.

Traralgon as an example of an Integrated Station

- 35) Traralgon CFA has 50 volunteers with 15 designated as operational volunteers (operational firefighters are those who respond to incidents).
- 36) Traralgon brigade has 27 staff positions spread over 5 shifts. One Operations Officer, six Station Officers, ten Leading Firefighters and ten Firefighters. All 27 staff are operational firefighters and can respond to incidents as required.
- 37) For the 2016/17 financial year five out of the 15 operational volunteers managed to respond to more than one job per week and only another two could respond to one job per fortnight.
- 38) This means out of Traralgon's 50 volunteers five are responsible for the bulk of the volunteer response.
- 39) Points 35, 37 and 38 are not meant to denigrate volunteers, these people give as much time as they can for their community and I am grateful for their efforts. The point I am making

relates to 'volunteer engagement and participation in fire service delivery' and is stated in point 40 with related questions in points 41, 42 and 43.

40) At Traralgon CFA only 1/3rd of the operational volunteers or 1/10th of total volunteers, significantly participate in operational fire service delivery.

41) Will that 1/10th of Traralgon volunteers see a change in how they participate in fire service delivery?

No, as detailed in points 30 and 32 they will continue to respond as they always have working with both Traralgon and Morwell professional firefighters.

42) Will the remaining 9/10^{ths} of Traralgon volunteers see any change in how they participate in fire service delivery?

No, the majority of that 9/10^{ths} are not engaged in operational fire service delivery and for those that are point 32 applies.

43) Lastly, is Traralgon CFA an isolated example of low volunteer response at an integrated station?

No, many of the 35 CFA integrated stations suffer from a lack of volunteer response, one of the key issues as made clear in points 17, 18, 19 and 20.

Short term and long term cost impact on fire service provision

44) The government has decided there will be no change to the Fire Service Levy (FSL) rate for the first two years if the proposed reform is passes parliament. This will allow time for the dust to settle before reviewing if any required change to the FSL.

45) When talking about costs related with fire service provision it important to note that under the current FSL residents and businesses located within MFB areas pay approximately half the FSL rate compared to those located in CFA areas.

46) This means that those in the MFB area will receive the guaranteed response detailed in point 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 for approximately half the rate that those in CFA areas are charged.

47) In the long term there will be adjustments to the CFA budget, this is undeniable. For the 15/16 financial year the total CFA income was \$510.1 million with \$265.7 million spent on 'employee expenses'.

48) As the approximately 1200 professional firefighters transition to FRV, along with some non-operational staff from other areas, a lot of that \$265.7 million would need to also make the transition to FRV, this is only logical.

Underlying policy rationale

49) The existing borders between Metropolitan Fire District (MFB area) and Country Area of Victoria (CFA area) were set mid last century and have not satisfactorily coped with the prolific growth that Melbourne has experienced in the last 50 - 60 years.

50) For some time there have been highly urbanised areas within the CAV which have not received the same level of service as those within the MFD.

- 51) Additionally many of Melbourne's growth corridors, mainly within CAV, do not receive the same level of service as those within the MFD as detailed in point 3.
- 52) Victoria has four of the five fastest growing suburbs in Australia and they are all located within the CAV. These are South Morang, Cranbourne East, Craigieburn-Mickleham and Point Cook; why shouldn't suburbs with this level of growth, and others like them, be provided the same level of protection as a suburb within the MFD?
- 53) This legislation will improve fire service delivery for those captured by points 50 and 51 by ensuring the guaranteed response as detailed in point 3 whilst preserving volunteer 'surge capacity' by allowing volunteers to stay within all existing stations, brigades and response areas.
- 54) This legislation will allow for CFA management to provide a better service to volunteers due to it only having to manage one type of operational workforce, volunteers.
- 55) Under the existing model CFA attempts to balance the needs and wants of both the volunteer and professional workforces simultaneously. This takes an inordinate amount of time and manpower to accomplish and results in many cases one workforce being favoured over the other leading to anger, resentment and division.
- 56) An example of this is reoccurring EBA negotiations. Whenever an EBA is set to be replaced the VFBV, representing CFA volunteers, protest the replacement. This is occurring during the current dispute, it occurred during the 2010 EBA negotiations, the 2006 EBA negotiations and occurred during EBA negotiations prior to that. (An example of this protestation from 2006 can be seen in appendix iv)
- 57) This legislation will remove one of these workforces from the responsibility of CFA and allow them to better focus on the needs and wants of the remaining volunteer workforce.
- 58) This legislation will see the formation of a 'Fire District Review Panel'. This independent panel will look at criteria such as population, risk and whether brigades are meeting required 'service delivery standards' to ensure communities are being provided with acceptable fire service protection.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my submission with regards to this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Paul Curran

Leading Firefighter

Traralgon CFA

[REDACTED]

Appendix i

1. Structure fire in Stratford where the brigade had to be re-paged 12 minutes after the initial page because no volunteer qualified to drive/operate the fire truck had yet arrived.

M 000568312 @@ALERT F170617050 STRT1 DRIVER REQUIRED
 STRUC1 FIRE CLOSE TO BUILDING CNR LLOYD ST/REDBANK RD
 STRATFORD SVSE 8586 E9 (076974) [MAFF] 18:58:22 30/06/17

2. Gas leak in Warragul where the brigade had to be re-paged eight minutes after the initial call because no volunteer qualified to drive/operate the fire truck had yet arrived.

0568032	08:36:40 2017-07-01	@@ALERT F170700104 WARA1 INCIC1 DRIVER NEEDED UNITED - WARRAGUL - ALBERT RD 114 ALBERT RD WARRAGUL /ALBERT ST //SOMERSET DR SVSE 8603 K9 (071757) CWARA [WARA]
0567848	08:28:20 2017-07-01	HbWARA1 INCIC1 GAS LEAK AT UNITED PETROL STATION ALBERT ST WARRAGUL SVSE 8603 J9 (065759) F170700104 CDROU CWARA
0567872	08:28:17 2017-07-01	@@ALERT F170700104 WARA1 INCIC1 GAS LEAK AT UNITED PETROL STATION ALBERT ST WARRAGUL SVSE 8603 J9 (065759) CDROU CWARA [DROU]
0568032	08:28:14 2017-07-01	@@ALERT F170700104 WARA1 INCIC1 GAS LEAK AT UNITED PETROL STATION ALBERT ST WARRAGUL SVSE 8603 J9 (065759) CDROU CWARA [WARA]

3. Grass and scrub fire in Warragul where the brigade had to be re-paged nine minutes after the initial page because no volunteer qualified to drive/operate the fire truck had yet arrived.

0568032	08:53:04 2017-07-01	@@ALERT F170700111 WARA1 G&SC3 DRIVER REQUIRED WILLOW CR WARRAGUL SVSE 8603 H4 (062779) CWARA [WARA]
0578648	08:51:14 2017-07-01	QDHello Team, Just A Reminder: This Sundays Truck Duty Roster is group #7 Keith Barns & Dennis Nolan. Note that this Sunday is Group Radio Check @ 9am. Cheers Dave [SHEK]
0567848	08:44:22 2017-07-01	HbWARA1 G&SC3 COLUMN OF SMOKE ISSUING WILLOW CR WARRAGUL SVSE 8603 H4 (062779) F170700111 CDWST CNITH CWARA
0568032	08:44:19 2017-07-01	HbWARA1 G&SC3 COLUMN OF SMOKE ISSUING WILLOW CR WARRAGUL SVSE 8603 H4 (062779) F170700111 CDWST CNITH CWARA [WARA]
0567968	08:44:16 2017-07-01	@@ALERT F170700111 WARA1 G&SC3 COLUMN OF SMOKE ISSUING WILLOW CR WARRAGUL SVSE 8603 H4 (062779) CDWST CNITH CWARA [NITH]
0567888	08:44:13 2017-07-01	@@ALERT F170700111 WARA1 G&SC3 COLUMN OF SMOKE ISSUING WILLOW CR WARRAGUL SVSE 8603 H4 (062779) CDWST CNITH CWARA [DWST]

4. Car fire in Trafalgar where the brigade had to be re-paged more than 5 minutes after the initial page because no volunteer qualified to drive/operate the fire truck had yet responded.

0567648	13:22:43 2017-07-06	@@ALERT F170702918 MOEE4 NOSTC1 CAR FIRE PRINCES FWY TRAFALGAR EAST SVSE 6829 B3 (317728) DRIVER REQD [TRAU]
1327056	13:21:44 2017-07-06	@@ALERT F170702922 CORO6 INCIC3 16 / 18 SEPARATION ST NORTH GEELONG /DWAYNE ST //DUNN ST M 441 K6 (676785) CFAFSCC
0567648	13:19:34 2017-07-06	HbRE: EVENT F170702918 - FIRST EXIT BEFORE MOE NEAR MCDONALDS. OUTBOUND SIDE OF ROAD HEADING TOWARDS MOE FROM TRAFALGAR. [TRAU]
0567600	13:19:31 2017-07-06	HbRE: EVENT F170702918 - FIRST EXIT BEFORE MOE NEAR MCDONALDS. OUTBOUND SIDE OF ROAD HEADING TOWARDS MOE FROM TRAFALGAR. [NEWB]
0567568	13:19:28 2017-07-06	HbRE: EVENT F170702918 - FIRST EXIT BEFORE MOE NEAR MCDONALDS. OUTBOUND SIDE OF ROAD HEADING TOWARDS MOE FROM TRAFALGAR. [MOEE]
0567848	13:17:33 2017-07-06	HbMOEE4 NOSTC1 CAR FIRE PRINCES FWY TRAFALGAR EAST SVSE 6829 B3 (317728) F170702918 CMOEE CNEWB CTRAF
0568384	13:17:30 2017-07-06	HbMOEE4 NOSTC1 CAR FIRE PRINCES FWY TRAFALGAR EAST SVSE 6829 B3 (317728) F170702918 CMOEE CNEWB CTRAF
0567600	13:17:17 2017-07-06	@@ALERT F170702918 MOEE4 NOSTC1 CAR FIRE PRINCES FWY TRAFALGAR EAST SVSE 6829 B3 (317728) CMOEE CNEWB CTRAF [NEWB]
567648	13:17:14 2017-07-06	@@ALERT F170702918 MOEE4 NOSTC1 CAR FIRE PRINCES FWY TRAFALGAR EAST SVSE 6829 B3 (317728) CMOEE CNEWB CTRAF [TRAU]
0567568	13:17:10 2017-07-06	@@ALERT F170702918 MOEE4 NOSTC1 CAR FIRE PRINCES FWY TRAFALGAR EAST SVSE 6829 B3 (317728) CMOEE CNEWB CTRAF [MOEE]

These four examples occurred within seven days of each other and are not isolated examples. Many CFA brigades fail to secure volunteers with appropriate qualifications to respond to and/or effectively resolve incidents on a daily basis.

CFA aims to have a fire truck at an incident within eight minutes, yet as you can in the above examples there are many times brigades have not yet left the station within eight minutes. These examples demonstrate the problems discussed in points 11, 15 and 16.

With these examples it was a fire close to a building, a gas leak, a grass and scrub fire and a car fire; what if next time it is a house fire with people trapped? What if next time it's a brigade paged to support professional firefighters?

The nature of a volunteer response is that you cannot guarantee answers to these three questions:

1. How many (if any) will respond?
2. When will they respond?
3. What qualifications will those responding volunteers have?

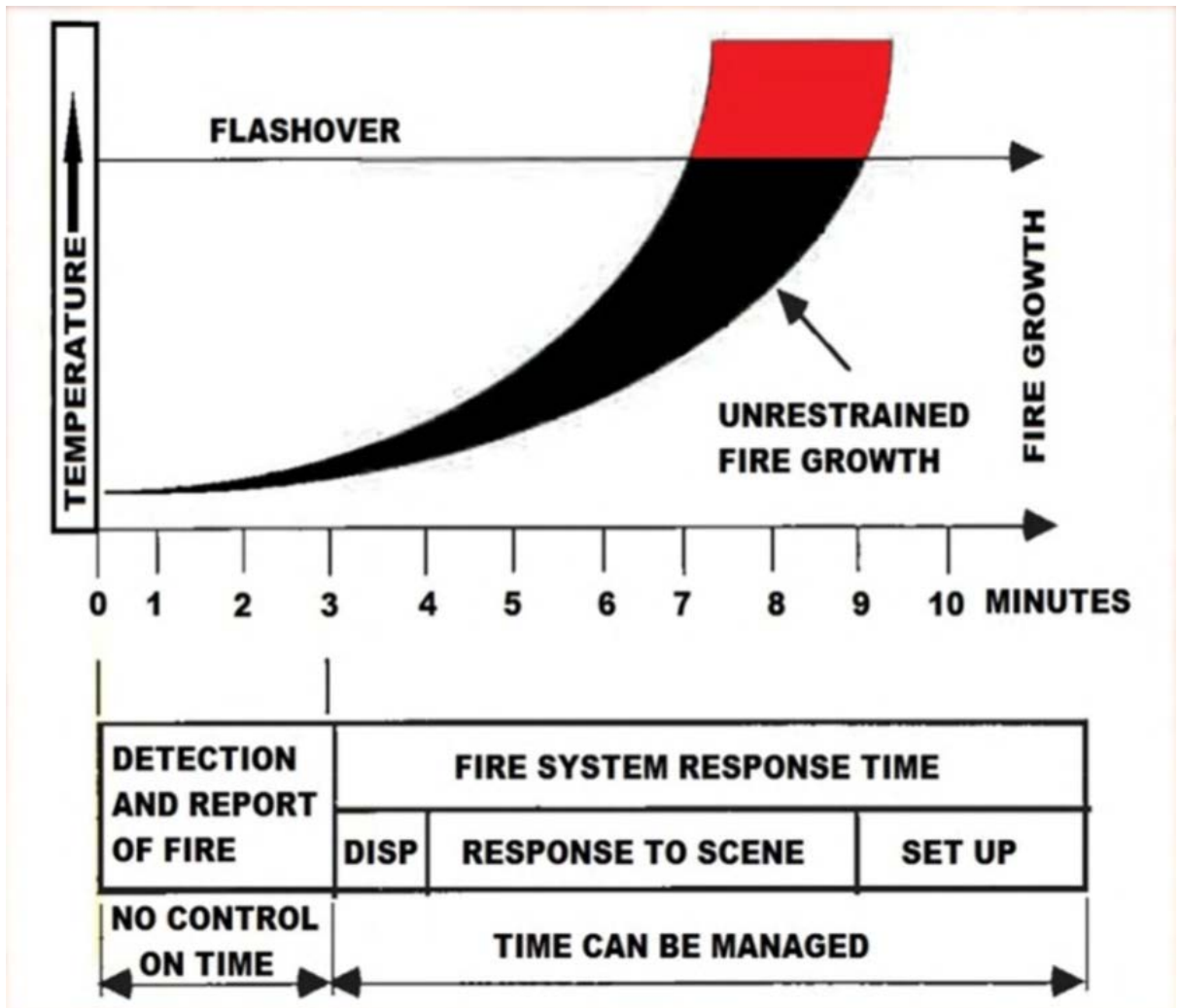
Appendix ii

Top suburbs by growth

Suburb	Area	Population	Change
South Morang	Greater Melbourne	64,354	4,971
Cranbourne East	Greater Melbourne	23,901	4,956
Craigieburn-Mickleham	Greater Melbourne	52,848	4,491
Yanchep	Greater Perth	18,904	4,289
Point Cook	Greater Melbourne	50,774	3,512
Baldivis	Greater Perth	32,817	3,389
Cobbitty-Leppington	Greater Sydney	15,450	3,338
Epping	Greater Melbourne	42,236	3,226
Riverstone-Marsden Park	Greater Sydney	16,492	3,146
Ellenbrook	Greater Perth	37,204	3,141

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/population-booms-victoria-has-four-of-the-five-fastest-growing-suburbs-in-australia-20170330-gv9smg.html>

Appendix iii



Appendix iv

Our Ref: 530
 Contact: Executive Officer Peter Davis 0407 334 655
 Executive Officer Bob MacDonald 0415 322 690
 Tel: 03 9556 1141
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 Email: vfbv@vfbv.com.au
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20th July 2006

Dear Captain/Secretary/Group Officer/Group Secretary,

You will be aware that CFA has been negotiating an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) with the UFU for over 12 months. This EBA contains clauses that seriously impact on the autonomy of CFA to make decisions, including some related to the relationship between CFA and its volunteers. On this basis, and because it undermines the statutory responsibilities of the CFA Board, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Officer, the CFA Board has refused to sign the agreement.

Volunteers in Victoria are very concerned with the implications of this EBA on CFA's ability to support them in providing the highest level of emergency services to Victorian communities. As such, we have unanimously supported the CFA Board's position in refusing to sign this agreement.

At a mass meeting held in Melbourne last week, volunteers agreed that action must be taken to increase public awareness of the threat to our capacity to do our job, and agreed to stage a public rally within the next few weeks; we have deferred this rally for the reasons mentioned below.

Since this meeting, VFBV has set up a Task Force with representatives of rural and urban volunteer associations to draw public attention to this issue. We believe that to be successful, a public campaign needs to be carefully developed and coordinated to ensure that the right messages are reaching the right people at the right time. Accordingly, we have developed a multi-pronged strategy which will be implemented over a sustained period and which will culminate in a major rally in Melbourne involving a greater number of our volunteers.

This strategy will have a local and regional focus, and will be expanded on a State-wide basis to highlight what VFBV sees as issues most affecting fire protection services to Victoria. Our campaign will include media, meetings with MPs, and mass public rallies. Within the next few days we will be appointing five volunteer coordinators at each Region. Their role will be to make sure all activities are coordinated and that we speak with one united voice. With 100 coordinators supported by 58,000 volunteers, we will send a strong message that this situation must never arise again.

We will let you know details of this arrangement shortly, and details of how you can help.

In the meantime, it is important you understand that the issue we have with the EBA is not a campaign against our career firefighters. In fact, we strongly support their rights to negotiate pay and conditions of employment. We are all professionals, and we must continue to work as a team with our career firefighters to achieve the best outcomes for public safety. It is important that we maintain our professionalism and avoid being led into any reaction that may undermine the relationship with our career staff and CFA's overall operational effectiveness.

Could you please ensure that all members of your Brigade receive a copy of this letter or are fully briefed on what will be a major campaign in reinforcing the vital role of volunteers within CFA.

Gary Lyttle AFSM
 Chairman



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