



26 November 2015

Dear Member

RE: Over 900 Days without a new workplace agreement

I am writing on behalf of the Branch Committee of Management to express our concerns over the way in which our Enterprise Bargaining negotiations are being handled by the Andrews Government.

It is essential that you attend the rally on **Tuesday December 8**. Every firefighter must stand up and be counted. This is why:

Background

In the lead up to the 2014 State Election, the UFU membership ran an unprecedented grassroots campaign to ensure that the Napthine Government did not get a second term in office because of the damage they were doing to professional firefighters and the fire services. Firefighters gave up their days off to doorknock marginal electorates, staff street stalls, protest outside Liberal party events and march in the streets. For two weeks leading up to the election, firefighters campaigned at early voting centres across eight marginal electorates. On Election Day, UFU members were present at every polling booth across eight target seats (as well as five key booths in the seat of Brunswick, being the electorate of the Minister for Emergency Services, Jane Garrett), with how-to-vote cards that told voters to put the Liberals last because of the damage they were doing to firefighters. And they did. Each of these target seats saw an ALP victory and, for the first time in over 50 years, a first-term government was defeated in Victoria. **Your efforts were a significant contributor in making this happen.**

You may recall that 11 days before the election Daniel Andrews stood in front of you at Collingwood Town Hall and said:

I value the work that you do. I respect the sacrifices you make. I honour the risks you take every hour of every shift to keep every Victorian safe.

Since that time there have been 11 months of meetings regarding your enterprise agreement with the Andrews government and the Andrews Government has dragged Victoria's firefighters through five different levels of negotiation.

Each negotiation forum resulted in matters being progressively agreed, however the multiple levels that the government insisted on caused a significant delay.

The UFU, on behalf of its members, has adhered to every negotiation procedure required by the Andrews government. The highest levels of the Andrews government gave assurances that matters



would be resolved within specified time periods, and these assurances were taken on good faith. Yet these promises were not kept.

Despite Government delays, after painstaking negotiations, by October 22, only a few matters remained outstanding within the new CFA agreement. That day, within the first 15 minutes of a bargaining meeting, government representatives informed the UFU that the Minister for Emergency Services was not happy with the progress, and would be holding a press conference in 40 minutes. The representatives then refused to reaffirm that any previously agreed clauses remained agreed. Without further negotiation, Minister Garrett subsequently referred the matter to the Fair Work Commission.

In the days following that press conference, Minister Garrett and Premier Andrews attempted to paint the UFU and its members as greedy by misrepresenting our wage claim in the media. In March the government had asserted that we had a wage claim of 32%; on October 22 the figure was 50%; the next day 55%; and by November 5 the government projected our wage claim as 59%. These ballooning figures were based on an ambit claim of 9.7%, which was provided to the government in March 2014, in response to bargaining orders by the Fair Work Commission. This figure was subsequently superseded by further bargaining and recorded and confirmed in an independent facilitator's report. When promoting to the public that firefighters wanted a wage rise of nearly 60% over five years, the government knew that not to be true.

At the same time as publicly demonising firefighters, the Andrews government has continued with their attempts to renege on agreements reached to date. On November 11, after having come extremely close to resolving all matters only weeks earlier, as part of proceedings before the Fair Work Commission the Andrews government and the CFA presented approximately 300 items to the Commission as 'not agreed'. These matters were previously agreed or agreed in part.

To ensure that you are fully informed as a member we have made available via the ufu vic website (www.ufuvic.asn.au) a number of documents which complement this letter and demonstrate the actual state of play of bargaining. These include a copy of the latest draft agreements as worked on between the parties (version 17.1 for CFA and version 14 for MFB) and an explanatory note which outlines for the CFA bargaining, when each of the 300 disputed clauses was actually agreed to by the CFA/government. Instructions for accessing these documents will be provided by a bulletin. In addition your shop steward will have full access to these documents and a copy will also be available at your station.

Despite his comments prior to the 2014 election, clearly Daniel Andrews has *not* valued the work you do, respected the sacrifices you make, or honoured the risks you take every hour of every shift to keep every Victorian safe.

That is why, on December 8, the UFU is having a protest rally to launch our **Respect – Honour – Value Your Firefighters** campaign.



All available members need to attend, so we can send this government a strident message that: Victoria's professional firefighters/ UFU members deserve better, and are ready to fight to make sure they get it.

The rally will start at 10am at Trades Hall, on the corner of Victoria Street and Lygon Street, Melbourne. The UFU will provide a BBQ for members from 8:30am.

Please attend this important rally and contact your shop steward to confirm your attendance.

Please note the Government have said that they have awarded you a 5% pay increase, this is not true as the 5% pay increase is not enforceable.

Yours Faithfully

Peter Marshall