



United Firefighters Union

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Joe Buffone
Chief Officer
Country Fire Authority
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via email: j.buffone@cfa.vic.gov.au

22 April 2016

Dear Mr. Buffone,

RE: VFBV Protest

It has been widely reported in the media that the VFBV is continuing its attempts to undermine a settlement of the MFB and CFA /UFU Operational Staff Agreements. As a part of their attempts it is reported that the VFBV are calling their members to attend a rally through the streets of Melbourne tomorrow, Saturday 23 April.

Information has been widely distributed by the VFBV today advising their intention for CFA Appliances to be used to form a "*motorcade of fire vehicles*" at the rally. The VFBV information itself is currently being displayed on both the CFA's internet and intranet pages.

The conduct of CFA Brigades and use of Appliances are subject to the authority of you as the Chief Officer, as specified in the CFA Act 1958 and set out below:

S27: "Subject to the general powers and directions of the Authority every brigade or group of brigades and all officers and members of brigades or group of brigades shall be under the order and control of the Chief Officer."

S29 (c): The Chief Officer "shall at all times have the charge and control of all apparatus and other property of the Authority and shall cause the same to be kept in a fit state at all times for efficient service."

The purpose of tomorrow's rally is to protest and express the VFBV's political views. Use of CFA Appliances for purposes other than community safety is something that would require your authorisation. Attending VFBV members likewise would require your approval to wear CFA uniforms or PPC items to the rally.

Instructions from the CFA to CFA Operational Staff previously and including during our current industrial campaign has consistently been that they are not authorised to wear CFA uniforms or PPC items when undertaking political campaigning. CFA has provided explicit direction in the past that professional

firefighters are not to wear any CFA Uniform or PPC items including Brigade uniform items such as t-shirts or to portray that they are CFA members and that the uniform is to be worn only for the purpose for which it is intended. Additionally directions have been issued to professional firefighters by the CFA prohibiting the use of appliances for the purposes of political campaigning and highlighting that this does not constitute an appropriate or authorised use of CFA appliances or equipment. These directives would clearly be in stark contrast to the CFA's authorisation of CFA volunteers to engage in political action using CFA appliances and identifying themselves as representatives of the CFA publicly when doing so.

The UFU and its members hold considerable concern for community safety if CFA appliances which are community and government funded resources, are to be withdrawn from the communities they serve for the purpose of political campaigning. We seek your urgent confirmation that the use of CFA appliances and uniforms has not been approved by you for tomorrow's VFBV rally. Irrespective of your advice, having brought these matters to your attention we reserve our right take any subsequent actions arising from any consequences of CFA volunteers and CFA appliances being used in tomorrow's rally. This includes any action or submissions to Coronial Inquests that may result from incidents impacted by the attendance of CFA appliances and CFA volunteers at tomorrow's rally.

If VFBV members have been authorised to use CFA appliances at the VFBV rally we request provision of the details of the risk assessments that have been undertaken to identify the resulting service delivery gaps, and advice as to how those gaps are to be managed. We specifically seek advice as to if you have made arrangements with the MFB to assist in the management of services to communities that will be left without protection as a result of the use of CFA appliances at a political rally. We further seek advice as to how the affected communities have been advised of your decision regarding use of CFA resources.

We request your response as a matter of urgency due to the potential impact this matter may have on CFA Operational Staff and we advise that we have also raised this matter with the Minister for Emergency Services Jane Garrett.

Yours sincerely



Peter Marshall
Branch Secretary

cc: The Hon. Jane Garrett MP
Minister for Emergency Services