

FAQ about the CFA UFU proposed Enterprise Agreement:

Allegation: 60,000 CFA volunteers are angry about a union takeover of the CFA.

The Truth: As the below points show, ***there is no union takeover***. It is true that some volunteer firefighters have been upset by a misleading campaign of division that is being funded by the Liberal Party – and also used to raise Liberal campaign funds. As volunteer firefighters become better informed, they become increasingly upset at being manipulated and used as political footballs by self-interested outsiders. Volunteer and career firefighters have great respect for each other and stand shoulder to shoulder to fight fires and protect their communities.

Fair Work Commissioner Roe pointed out several times in his Final Recommendation that the Agreement **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.”

Allegation: The firefighters’ union is getting it all their own way.

The Truth: The union has made over 120 additional concessions as part of the bargaining process since November 2015. Prior to November 2015 the CFA had agreed to most of the clauses in the proposed Agreement.

Allegation: There must be 7 career firefighters at every 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 are within their current response area. Whoever arrives first, volunteer or career, will immediately begin the firefight and can determine if additional resources are required or not.

Allegation: The Agreement will give the Union a veto over CFA decisions.

The Truth: The UFU will be allowed **consultation** regarding specific matters. Past failures in consultation allowed the CFA to cover up the Fiskville tragedy where career and volunteer firefighters continued to be exposed to chemicals that cause cancer and birth defects. Other examples include CFA buying trucks that were not fit for purpose or building stations where the trucks cannot fit in the station. The Fair Work Act requires all enterprise agreements to have both consultation and dispute resolution processes. Workplace disagreements regarding consultation between the CFA and its employees can be sent to the Dispute Resolution Officer and then onto Fair Work if it is still not resolved.

Allegation: A UFU veto over clothing.

The Truth: The CFA and UFU will consult about the firefighters clothing, including protective clothing. The CFA and UFU currently consult about firefighters clothing and equipment. In the past, prior to meaningful and genuine consultation, firefighters were burned due to the poor standard of the clothing. The firefighters are the experts on the necessary standards of clothing, including structural Personal Protective Clothing, and it is in the interests of all firefighters that those standards are identified and maintained. The CFA determines what clothing it will issue to volunteers.

Allegation: No new appliances or equipment without UFU approval.

The Truth: As is the case currently, the CFA and the UFU will consult about new equipment or appliances that are used by career firefighters. It does not have any involvement in the appliances or equipment issued to volunteers. It is hoped that this will help to prevent poor procurement decisions that we have seen in the past including dangerous vehicles, faulty radios and trucks that don't fit in the stations.

Allegation: Paid staff only to report to paid staff.

The Truth: As is the case currently, Volunteers can continue to be incident controllers as occurs at present. The agreement clearly allows career firefighters to report to incident controllers who are volunteers.

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

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

Allegation: The CFA are saying they can't sign the Enterprise Agreement because it is unlawful.

The Truth: The CFA said that about the 2010 enterprise agreement from 2012. In 2015 and 2016 the CFA proposed to roll over that 2010 agreement including the clauses they had claimed were unlawful. The legal advice CFA is now referring to is advice based on an outdated working version of the agreement from last year, had many limitations and the advice has been kept secret from firefighters until released in the media in June 2016. It is up to the Fair Work Commission to decide if an agreement is legal and Commissioner Roe's Final Recommendation addresses all issues.

Allegation: The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission says the Enterprise Agreement is discriminatory.

The Truth: Last year, the CFA asked the VEOHRC to investigate potential issues of discrimination in a secret, outdated CFA draft of the Enterprise Agreement. The VEOHRC advice, which was not legal advice, was also kept secret until last week. The report raised potential concerns that the draft Agreement's rostering provisions may be strict for people with family caring responsibilities. The correct version of the proposed agreement including the Commission's Final Recommendation provides for more flexibility than the 2010 Agreement and the 2010 Agreement is the CFA's proposed offer to employees.

The Final Recommendation of Fair Work Commissioner Roe, which has been agreed to by the UFU, includes the following diversity clause as an Enterprise Agreement objective:

“In implementing this Agreement the parties will act consistently with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation.”