



MEDIA RELEASE

UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS UNION

Friday 5 October 2018

UFU WORKING TO IMPROVE VICTORIAN FIRE SERVICES WORKPLACE CULTURE

The UFU has not seen the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) report, that is reported in the Herald Sun today.

The Court of Appeal yesterday ordered that the report not be released because it had concerns about it.

The UFU has long considered the VEOHRC review fundamentally flawed as it relied upon a poorly designed and administered survey that did not contain any security measures and could be completed by anyone (regardless of whether they had any link with the CFA or MFB), anywhere, as many times as they liked. Clearly this renders any results and any resulting report unreliable.

It is deeply disappointing that parts of this unverified report, based on a flawed survey, are now public. They appear to have been leaked by those seeking to damage the fire services.

We recognise that, like in many other workplaces, there is work to be done to improve the fire services workplace culture. The UFU's own 2017 report recognises this. We are committed to helping improve fire services workplace culture.

As set out publicly yesterday, the UFU is working collaboratively with the CFA and the MFB to address these issues. Positive actions already undertaken include:

- Improvement to complaints handling
- Establishment of a diversity committee
- Changes to recruitment processes to encourage greater diversity by making recruitment processes more accessible
- Rollout of "Road to Mental Readiness" (M2MR) resilience training
- Development of a firefighter wellness program.

Additionally, the UFU has:

- Created a position of Welfare Officer
- Hosted two national conferences on firefighter wellbeing with Fire Chiefs and Fire Services senior management from around Australia participating
- Actively driven the establishment of firefighter wellness programmes reflecting international best practice.

This is a positive start and we have more to do.

This apparent leak is particularly upsetting as we lead into the busiest time of year of the fire services. It will likely hit our staff hard and impact morale. Our people put their lives and livelihoods on the line every day and they deserve to be well supported by us, by their employers and the community.

The UFU will continue to do all it can to ensure its members are provided the support they deserve, including progressing workplace cultural improvements with the MFB and CFA.

Media contact: Sophie Mitchell 0421 863 606