



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

News Note

27th November 2018

IMPORTANT UPDATE

Whilst some of the more detailed results of the 2018 Victorian Election are yet to be confirmed, Victorians have strongly supported the election of a Labor Government led by Premier Daniel Andrews. VFBV congratulates Mr Andrews and his Labor team on what can only be described as an emphatic victory.

Since Saturday, members have asked a number of questions including what the election result means for the CFA; what are likely to be the next steps regarding previous reform proposals; if it will impact on the forthcoming summer fire season and if VFBV will continue its campaign to educate politicians on the importance of an integrated CFA and our volunteers. These are big questions and the reality is that many of the answers will evolve over coming days, weeks and months.

Although the ALP did not publish a formal policy about fire service reform as part of its election campaign, Premier Andrews did verbally respond to questions from journalists by suggesting he wanted to pursue it but hasn't yet provided details regarding his proposed timing or approach. Regardless of the path ultimately taken, VFBV's strong advice is that it would be unwise to cause disruption on the cusp of what is widely forecast to be an extreme and dangerous summer fire period.

VFBV will continue to advocate for a careful rethink about which service model is best for Victoria, seeking to ensure all politicians are fully informed about the impacts of previous proposals. VFBV has maintained the need for an evidence-based approach and as such, will continue to advocate the proven strengths of the CFA model. We know the CFA can meet growing service demands and improve performance where needed without destroying the culture and ethos of our world-class integrated system.

VFBV asserts that it is critically important a proper and transparent process of community, agency, volunteer and union engagement and consultation is part of any process in developing and considering reform policy and legislation well before any decisions are made.

Our priority will continue to be community safety and to this end, it is crucial that volunteers support each other through any anxiety or ill-feeling caused by uncertainty and focus on the season ahead.

For those of you who are already feeling that the effort is no longer worth it, please hold on and remember why we volunteer. The journey ahead might look disappointing and even daunting, but for now, focus on what we do best - serve our communities. There is no better demonstration of the

great value of the current CFA model and it is also by far the best way to change the minds of those who might still be talking down the CFA, volunteer capacity and professionalism.

Another way volunteers can help is to continue working with your local community, politicians and other leadership networks to raise awareness about the importance and strengths of the CFA model. What we have works best for Victoria and has proven to be able to evolve to meet the needs of our growing communities for many decades. This is well evidenced and recorded in previous enquiries and the 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission. For those who communicate with Members of Parliament, the most important and useful thing they can do right now is to take the CFA Pledge:

“I commit that I will not support any action that alters the existing CFA legislative arrangements unless such changes are recommended by an expert and independent review based on proper, transparent and evidence-based feasibility/cost/benefit analysis involving thorough consultation with CFA volunteers

AND

I commit that I will not support any action, policy or legislative change likely to impact on CFA volunteers until the obligations and commitments set out in the CFA Volunteer Charter have been explicitly and fully adhered to.”

VFBV has congratulated Premier Andrews on his government’s re-election and formally requested a meeting to discuss the most effective and efficient way to address important issues like these.

CFA volunteers and supporters of VFBV should be extremely proud of our extended family for the consistent and professional approach we have taken to speak up about policy proposals that will damage the ability of our excellent CFA to continue protecting Victoria into the future. We are united in our commitment to providing frank and fearless advice to all Members of Parliament and will always do so with the single goal of delivering the best possible outcomes for the whole of Victoria.

On behalf of the VFBV Board and CEO we wish to sincerely thank members for your ongoing support and hope that with a little more work and patience, we will still have a chance to change the minds of those who talk down the CFA and the amazing work you do.

Please forward this message to your networks and thank your colleagues for the incredible work they do on the ground every day to prepare and protect our community.

VFBV will continue to work hard to represent and advocate on behalf of CFA volunteers to Premier Andrews and his team and will endeavor to start work immediately with the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services as soon as the new Cabinet is announced.