

26 November 2014

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF VICTORIA

A message from the Board of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria.

On Tuesday 18th November, the Labor Party announced a policy that we believe will have grave and disastrous consequences for CFA.

As CFA volunteer firefighters with an average of over 40 years' service each and as the elected board of the body established in Victorian law to be the voice of CFA volunteers, we feel the need to take this unprecedented action of activating all Victorians to help us stop a policy that has the potential to destroy CFA.

Our concern with the recently announced Labor policy is that it establishes external industrial interference with the CFA Chief Officer's power to decide where and when and how he uses CFA firefighters.

We are also concerned that Labor's policy will reduce CFA's volunteer firefighting force by thousands of volunteers, pushing volunteers out of CFA stations and hundreds of CFA trucks off the road when we need them for major fires such as Black Saturday.

Labor has grossly underestimated the cost and impact of its policy. Labor's promise of \$150M and an additional 350 paid firefighters actually only provides 70 additional paid firefighters on the ground at any one time under current paid firefighter rostering arrangements, and it will come at the expense of thousands of highly trained and professional volunteer firefighters.

We support and welcome additional paid support and resources for CFA, provided these resources are required and provided that the CFA determines the need, not a union. Don't be fooled, the plan announced by Labor is not about improving community safety in Victoria, the detail included in their announcement is about giving the control of CFA to a union.

Labor's policy announcement includes specific provisions to surrender CFA operational decisions to an external industrial relations panel. (see over...)



Instead of Labor's policy, we need a plan that will recruit and train more CFA volunteer firefighters, provide trucks and equipment to combat fires and other incidents, investment in a modern firefighting fleet, give CFA the flexibility to deploy resources when and where they are needed and remove industrial control over how CFA uses its workforce.

Victoria is one of the most fire prone areas in the world and there are predictions of longer, hotter and more severe fire seasons ahead. If Labor's policy is allowed to push trained and experienced CFA volunteers out of fire stations across greater metropolitan Melbourne, Victoria will not have the fire fighting force it needs for day to day incidents and certainly will not have the force to deal with major incidents when they occur, such as Black Saturday.

When you vote on Saturday 29th understand one thing, as some of Victoria's most senior volunteer firefighters, we believe Labor's policy for CFA is not good for CFA volunteers, is not good for Victoria and is not good for the future of CFA.

Signed & authorised by



Hans van Hamond AFSM
48 years' volunteer service
State President, Ex Captain Wendouree Fire Brigade



Nevyn Jones AFSM
45 years' volunteer service
State Vice President, Captain Moorooduc Fire Brigade



Bruce Pickett AFSM
44 years' volunteer service
Ex Captain Geelong West Fire Brigade



Tom Brodie AFSM
51 years' volunteer service
Ex Captain Longwood Fire Brigade



Andy Cusack AFSM
37 years' volunteer service
Captain Mumbannar Fire Brigade



Gary Lyttle AFSM
50 years' volunteer service
Former President VFBV, Cardigan Fire Brigade



Gerry Neyenhuis
48 years' service
Ex Captain Wallington Fire Brigade



Graeme Jilbert
45 years' service
Swan Hill Fire Brigade



Bill Maltby
37 years' volunteer service
Ex Captain Castlemaine Fire Brigade



Mick Nunweek JP
34 years' service
Ex Captain Stawell Fire Brigade