

MEDIA RELEASE

CFA Volunteer Firefighters double crossed by Victorian Government

North East CFA volunteer firefighters are alarmed, angry & frustrated that the State government is deliberately nobbling the newly structured CFA.

“A few short months ago, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) was being hailed for its efforts in protecting our communities; now we are being betrayed by the State government.”

“The pathway to the Government’s Fire Services Reform is lined with broken promises regarding genuine consultation with CFA leadership and the volunteers affected by the changes wrought.”

This is the view of local CFA Volunteer leaders, speaking on behalf of District 23 Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), part of the association representing the state’s 54,000 CFA Volunteers.

“CFA’s Chief Officer is being forced to fill his senior management from a different agency, the recently created Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV)” said Mary-Anne Egan, spokesperson for District 23 VFBV Council encompassing Benalla, Mansfield, Moyhu & Wangaratta areas.

“These seconded FRV members may be wearing FRV uniforms and not those of CFA causing confusion for the public. This is contrary to previous commitments made that all seconded employees would wear CFA uniforms.

“CFA Volunteers fear that this also leaves us in danger of dysfunctional reporting lines, fatal in any emergency situation.”

“CFA Volunteer representatives, as well as CFA management, have been sidelined by the State Government in what was supposed to be a genuinely consultative process to implement the new structure.”

What was labelled as reform is increasingly turning into a return to the old division between the CFA and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). CFA’s unpaid volunteers will effectively once again be subject to the paid firefighters’ enterprise agreement and Union interference over the CFA Chief Officer. “We don’t want the Chief Officer to have his two hands tied behind his back again.” Ms. Egan said.

“We have been very patient with the Government in waiting for advice on the impacts of Fire Services Reform.”

“Now at the eleventh hour the Government is revealing terrible decisions, ignoring their commitment and legal responsibility to effectively consult with CFA Volunteers & Staff. The people most affected are being ignored again- they deserve to be heard!”

“The Government appears to be overlooking the people they appointed to manage the creation and implementation of reform, such as the CFA Chief Officer and our highly qualified Volunteer Firefighters who also provide critical local knowledge needed in emergencies.”

“We call on the Minister for Emergency Services to listen to our CFA leadership, and CFA Volunteers and our Volunteer Association to get the best possible outcomes for our communities as we rebuild the State’s crucial firefighting services”

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