



SIGNAL SEVEN

6 June 2016

Welcome to this edition of Signal 7.

UFU Issues in Victoria a Cause for National Concern

In recent weeks, UFU members would have heard much of the dispute in Victoria concerning the proposed enterprise agreement with the Country Fire Authority. The UFU has been negotiating and campaigning for an enterprise agreement for over 15 months.

Most alarmingly, the Federal Government have weighed into the dispute this weekend, indicating that they would pass legislation which would directly interfere in any bargaining which involves the UFU, particularly where it is claimed that bargaining might affect volunteers.

**THERE IS NO BASIS FOR CHANGES TO BE MADE TO THE FAIR WORK ACT ABOUT
BARGAINING IN THE FIRE SERVICES.**

If any UFU member was looking for a reason to take sides in the Federal Election, look no further than the statements made by the Prime Minister and the Employment Minister over the weekend.

This morning's Canberra Times reports:

Mr Turnbull flagged the overhaul of the federal Fair Work Act on Sunday at a rally attended by hundreds of volunteers furious over a looming industrial deal with the United Firefighters Union.

"I give you this pledge: if we are returned to government on the 2nd of July, we will ensure the law is changed to protect you from this takeover," Mr Turnbull told hundreds of CFA volunteers.

and

Employment Minister Michaelia Cash, who also attended the rally, earlier said the controversial agreement between Premier Daniel Andrews and the United Firefighters Union would "compromise" the ability of tens thousands of volunteer fighters to do their job.

"When you look at how you respond to fires across Victoria, the actual paid firefighter brigade is about 850 to 1000 people versus the volunteers," Senator Cash told Sky News.

"You require a lot of volunteers at every single fire.

"What the EBA says is basically that the union firefighters will no longer have to take instruction from volunteer firefighters. You're talking men and women who have 30 years' experience fighting fires."

Senator Cash said the federal government was working through all possible options, including overhauling the Fair Work Act to protect "the ability of emergency services to undertake their role in an efficient manner".

"I am not going to stand by, as a member of a government, and allow the lives of Victorians ... to be put at risk because the unions are in a power play in a particular state."

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/federal-politics/federal-election-2016/canberra-considering-fair-work-overhaul-to-protect-volunteer-firefighters-20160605-gpbwxk.html>

The factual position surrounding this dispute is that the CFA Board, under intense pressure over a Parliamentary Inquiry concerning the CFA's cover up of chemical exposure of firefighters (both volunteer and professional), has encouraged outrage from volunteer firefighters over the proposed enterprise agreement. A body funded by the CFA, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), has spread misleading information about the proposed agreement and mobilised opposition to the enterprise agreement. Meanwhile, VFBV has been silent about the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Fiskville which was released on May 24th: a report which found that there had been a cover up of chemical exposures and disease including cancer affecting firefighters.

There is an old expression: "don't bite the hand that feeds you".

Attached is a national bulletin which sets out the key findings and recommendations of the Fiskville Inquiry. The whole report can be found here, and every UFU member should read it:

http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/enrc/Fiskville_training_college/Final_report/ENRRDC_58-03_Text_WEB.pdf

UFU members who advocated for this Inquiry have been subject to intimidation, threats and victimisation. They have been vindicated by the damning findings against the CFA. Turnbull and Cash have said nothing about the damning findings against the CFA, and have instead weighed in to oppose the UFU protecting the safety of our members.

Authorised by Greg McConville, Secretary, UFU, A.C.T. Branch.

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