

Opening Statement

General

Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) is a modern fire and rescue service established in 2020 that operates 85 stations across Victoria, protecting metropolitan Melbourne and major regional centres. FRV was formed off the back of the fire services reform and is made up of all former MFB firefighters, and all previous career CFA firefighters. We have approximately 3800 firefighters and 700 corporate staff that keep organisation running.

I have been a career firefighter for over 40 years and the Commissioner of Fire Rescue Victoria since May 2023 and in my role, I have the statutory responsibility for leading FRV and discharging all of FRV's legal obligations. I report directly to the Minister for Emergency Services in the Victorian Government, the Honourable Vicki Ward MP.

FRV firefighters are trained in firefighting, complex rescues (road crashes, high-angle), medical emergencies (often acting as first responders for Ambulance Victoria), and hazardous chemical (Hazmat) incidents. We work with CFA and Forest Fire Management Victoria every day, and more so in summer, including during the recent bushfire season. We also work alongside the State Emergency Service and Victoria Police. We strive to provide a complimentary service for the Victorian Community.

FRV working with CFA

Additionally, as part of the fire services reform, FRV provide career staff to CFA through a secondment agreement arrangement. This secondment model has had some hurdles along the way, but we have made improvements and are working hard to fill as many positions as we can to ensure CFA have the support they need.

Summer 2026 Bushfires

Our written submissions summarise FRV's contribution to the recent summer of 2026 bushfires so I won't repeat that all here, it did include strike teams, Incident Management, Aviation, RPAS, and Impact assessment to name a few...but importantly – it was the first fire season of that scale since FRV was formed and therefore the first time opportunity we have to really test our operating models and procedures. While we can always do better – Our processes and more importantly our people performed very well.

The total number of FRV staff contributing to deployments was about 557. Many of these people deployed on multiple days, so that the total number of deployed person-days was in the order of 1,800 (approximately). On the busiest day, 9 January 2026, 152 FRV staff were deployed across operational, IMT, and support roles. This number relates specifically to the bushfire emergency and was in addition to FRV maintaining business as usual.

Emergency Services by nature are learning and forward focussed organisations always working on what we can improve on for next time. At FRV, we are currently conducting after action reviews related to the 2026 Summer bushfire season and we are keen to see the learnings that come from those reviews so we can implement any learnings to ensure our future response is even better.

Other notes:

General UFU criticism of FRV response

While I have heard some criticism and negativity coming from other stakeholders/UFU about our capacity to respond to the recent bushfire season being we are in a protracted industrial campaign, it is to be expected that some would take this opportunity to level criticism at FRV and our leadership.

The politicising of disasters is always concerning as there is a real possibility that messages can be misinterpreted or not entirely accurate, which can undermine community confidence. Worse still, demands linked to political point scoring can have the potential to impact response.

Vote of No Confidence (Message from the Commissioner - 8 July 2025)

- Our total workforce is approximately 4,741 employees.
- UFU reported links were sent to 3,697 members (over 1000 less than our workforce).
- The UFU then reported 78.3% of members who received a link voted with the outcome 90.85% being a vote of no confidence.
- The vote was conducted on survey monkey and I do not know how the vote scrutineered or by who, but simply put – those numbers do not equate to 90.85% of the workforce.
- Despite this - any votes of no confidence against me and my leadership team are of course concerning etc

Fleet

- Aging fleet is not a new issue
- As part of the 2025-26 State Budget, a funding package for FRV, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Victorian State Emergency Service (VICSES) was announced,

which will provide \$110 million to establish a rolling fleet replacement program for FRV, CFA and SES.

- Of these funds, the Victorian Government committed \$40 million to Fire Rescue Victoria over 4 years to establish a partial fleet replacement program.
- Significant resources and planning have gone into the allocation of the above committed funds to secure procurement contracts for critical fleet replacement vehicles.
- By April 2026, FRV will have successfully allocated \$35 million of the \$40 million rolling fleet replacement program to the procurement of nineteen (19) new fire appliances by 2030, including 15 Series 1 Heavy Pumpers and 4 ladder Platforms.
- It is anticipated that the final \$5 million in funding will be allocated by August 2026 once due diligence checks are completed. This will increase FRV's ability to produce new appliances should additional funding be provided by Government.

How is the Secondment Program performing?

- The Secondment Management Department has delivered significant progress over the past 8 months.
- This is reflected in a significant uplift in vacancy coverage, rising from 72% previously to a steady 92% placement rate in the last three months, with peaks of 96% during the critical fire season - supporting the statewide deployment of 294 secondees, including 50 ACFOs and 107 Commanders.
- This fantastic result has been made possible through the design and implementation of the Draft Secondment Strategic Roadmap with 12, 24 month and five-year horizons, and strong collaboration with our people to better understand workforce needs.

It's also been supported by several effective strategic initiatives including:

- the establishment of 26 and 53-week long-term appointments which have helped to stabilise leadership capacity within CFA
- communication and engagement with seconded ACFOs and Commanders through statewide forums and in-person sessions such as Secondment Management Team Roadshows
- and the creation of lateral entry and structured development pathways such as the Station Officer to Commander pathway.
- I'd like to thank the Secondment Management Team for some excellent work that has greatly contributed to strengthened leadership pipelines and improved continuity which

are essential to building a strong connection between our volunteer and career firefighters and the success of Victoria's complementary fire service model.

SUMMARY of fleet

Fleet Size & Condition

- FRV operates 250 firefighting appliances across 85 stations.
- 212 road appliances in service (including EVIE).
- Age profile pressure point:
- 57% of primary appliances,
- 72% of aerial appliances, and
- 55% of specialist appliances are over 15 years old.

Maintenance, Safety & Continuity

- 15 years is a target replacement age, not a safety expiry threshold.
- Appliances are retained in service based on condition, usage and assessment.
- FRV uses service exchange pools to maintain station capability during maintenance.
- Appliances are not returned to service unless fully safe and operational.

- 29 appliances delivered between May 2020 – April 2026.
- Recent deployments include:
- Heavy Rescue: Dandenong (FS87) – April 2026
- Series 1 Heavy Pumpers: Deployed to multiple stations in late 2025
- Pumper Platforms: Mildura, Warrnambool, Shepparton (late 2024–early 2025)
- Under current funding, FRV expects to deliver a further 39 appliances and support vehicles by June 2030.

- Audit Remains in draft as we are validating and reviewing both the data in the report and possible management actions.

- As you can understand a fire appliance is one of the most complex pieces of emergency equipment, and maintenance is inherently challenging.
- A fire appliance isn't just a vehicle — it combines:
 - Heavy diesel engine and drivetrain
 - Pump systems (high-pressure water/foam delivery)
 - Hydraulics (ladders, rescue tools)
 - Electrical systems (lighting, communications, control panels)
- Each system requires different technical expertise and maintenance routines.
- High operational stress
- Operates under extreme conditions (heat, smoke, debris)
- Frequent stop–start driving and rapid acceleration
- Long idle periods followed by sudden heavy use

**PPQ 3.11 – Appliance Management

Key Points for Commissioner**

Funding & Budget Commitments

- 2024–25 Budget: \$15.4m committed for 5 new Pumper Platform appliances.
- 2025–26 Budget: \$110m statewide rolling fleet program for FRV, CFA and VICSES.
- FRV allocation: \$40m over 4 years for a partial fleet replacement program.
- As at April 2026, \$35m allocated to procure 19 new fire appliances by 2030.
- Final \$5m expected to be allocated by August 2026, subject to due diligence.

Appliance Delivery & Forward Program

- vehicles by June 2030.
- 14 appliances scheduled for delivery in 2026; 25 units forecast 2027–2030.
- 25 appliances are already contracted for replacement under current programs.

Governance, Assurance & Reviews

- Independent KPMG audit underway (since late 2024) reviewing fleet commissioning, maintenance and decommissioning.
- Early findings indicate significant improvements required in fleet management processes.
- Additional fleet servicing facility opened January 2026.
- VAGO audit of Victoria's firefighting fleet commenced August 2025; due August 2026.

Industrial & Media Context

- Fleet age and reliability remain high-profile industrial and media issues.
- FRV strongly contests claims that appliances are unsafe after 15 years.
- Clear OHS escalation, fault reporting and right-to-refuse processes

IM Prove:

- ① Ensure we have an achievable & robust pathway to maintain appropriate skills & experience -
- ② Lack of agility in moving resources for operational purposes due to application of the existing Enterprise agreement.
- ③ defer to colleagues as they have lead agency responsibility.

E.g. for Pt. 2, Vfu Sec writing to SAC on one of the extreme days asking for S/T to be returned to Str. - subsequently deployed.

Here the same number is missing
out of stations.

Having said that we clearly do need
continued investment into our fleet

it has been aging for quite a
number of years & will take time to
catch up - older trucks require
more maintenance.

well tested & practiced plans for
moving trucks to cover gaps as they
happen.

Because it is totally
unrealistic to think that all
stations have trucks in
them

all the time as they are
there to respond to incidents
& move about in the
community

From: org1
Sent: Friday, 9 January 2026 2:45 PM
To: MORGAN, Michael
Cc: [REDACTED]; MARSHALL, Peter (UFU Office)
Subject: UFU Correspondence to SAC re: Strike Team staging at Burnley Complex

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Caution: This email came from outside FRV. Do not open attachments or click on links if you do not recognize the sender.

Dear DC Morgan,

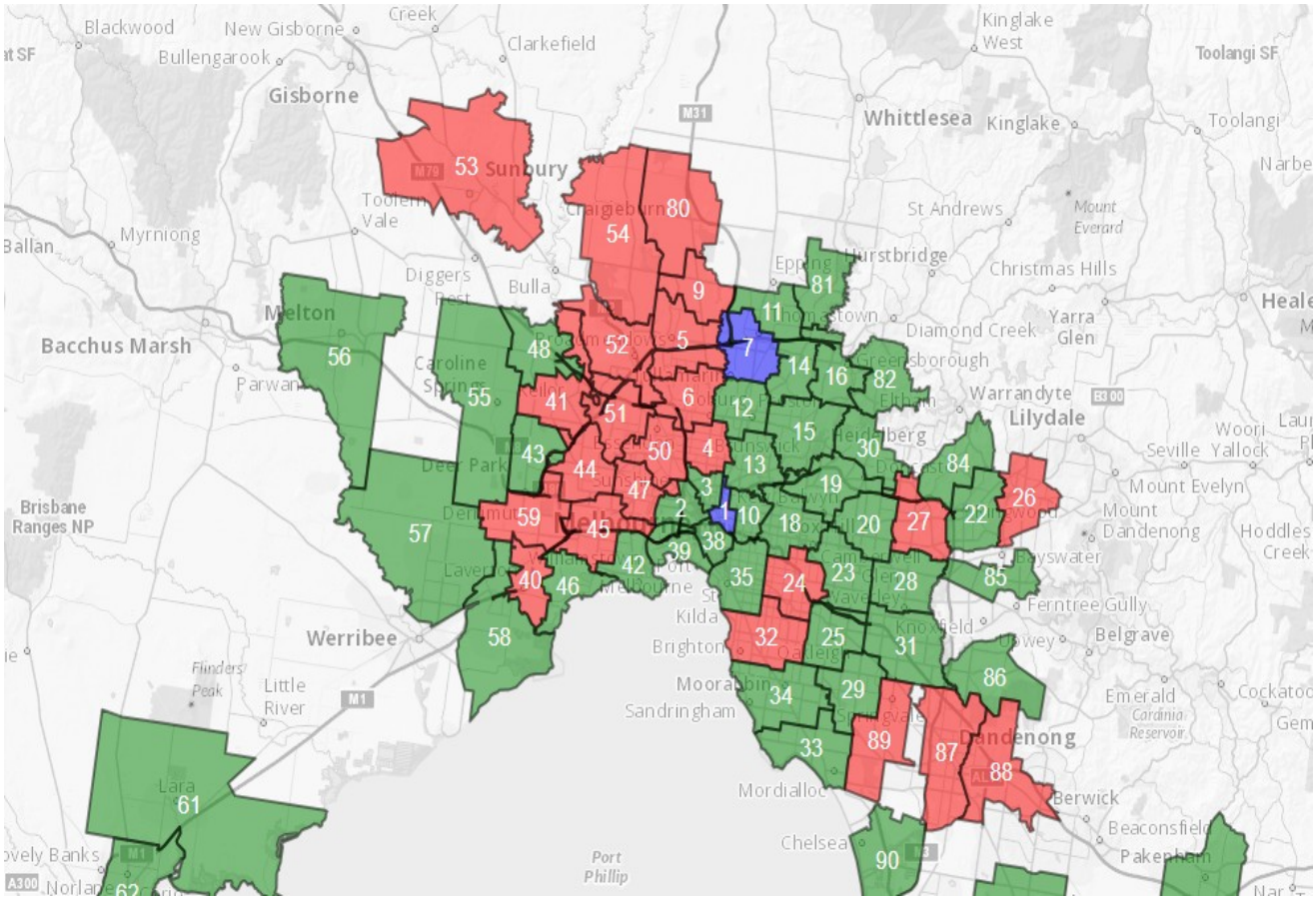
I write to you on behalf of Branch Secretary Peter Marshall and in your capacity as State Agency Commander (**SAC**).

We provide the following suggestion in a respectful manner and in the context of your role as SAC, as we understand that the role of SAC requires one to ensure to the best of their ability, they allocate firefighting resources to protect Fire Rescue Victoria's Fire District.

The UFU understands and supports the need to provide resources to the State on days of catastrophic fire danger, however, this should not be done at the detriment of FRV's own legislative requirements.

Since 07:46 today, you have had a Strike Team staging at the Burnley Complex - effectively taking 5 Pumper Tankers out of stations and available to respond in their maintenance areas. If this Strike Team is not required to be utilised for deployment, the UFU respectfully suggests that you allow the Strike Team to return to their respective stations. **At this time, there are 23 stations without an available appliance, and some stations have had no appliance or move up available for excessive amounts of time resulting in no emergency response coverage in those areas inclusive of Emergency Medical Response.** All of these response requirements are time-critical and lack of coverage can/will result in a delay.

In that regard, we provide the following details to you:



We await your response.

Peter Marshall
Branch Secretary

Regards,



Sent on behalf of Branch Secretary Peter Marshall
United Firefighters Union

Victorian Branch
408-410 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy 3065
Victoria Australia

| W www.ufuvic.asn.au

