

BULLETIN
Bulletin No: **015A** | 19 January 2024
TO: ALL UFU FRV MEMBERS

Please refer to UFU Bulletin #015A instead of UFU Bulletin #015.

An open letter to Fire Rescue Commissioner Gavin Freeman

In the context of Commissioner Freeman's latest communique to select FRV employees/UFU members, one could only see such communique as a poor attempt at humour. However, just to be sure, we have included the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hkcZiKChI>

On a more serious note, Commissioner Freeman's communique should be disregarded for the following reasons:

A position of authority does not inherently deserve respect.

Respect is earned.

This is especially so in a quasi-military-based structure whereby subordinates/employees undertake dangerous work – often life-threatening work.

Respect does not come with a position. At the very least, people need to have the confidence that a person in a position of leadership is doing the right thing and leads by example. Examples of doing the right thing include, for example, providing employees/members with the equipment necessary to operate safely, without the risk of equipment failure.

Commissioner Freeman, how can you purport to espouse FRV's Values of Integrity, Respect, Accountability, Teamwork and Community? We have great difficulty reconciling these values with yours and your organisation's actions towards employees/members, which include:

- Reneging on *at least* \$117million in Efficiencies?
- Participating in 76 face-to-face bargaining meetings, over 16 appearances before the Fair Work Commission, and informing the Fair Work Commission on no less than two occasions – in February 2023 that all matters are agreed other than for 10 items and in June 2023 informing the Fair Work Commission that all matters were now resolved other than the increase to wages and monetary-based allowance – yet subsequently stating in your legal submissions that NO condition of employment – either current existing or negotiated in this round of bargaining, is agreed?
- Issuing thinly veiled threats to members prior to Union rallies?

- Downplaying serious health & safety concerns about the truck faults coming in every day, fire trucks BREAKING DOWN at critical times during a firefighter, fire trucks BREAKING DOWN at station so they can't even respond to jobs?
- Issuing Gag Orders in an attempt to silence them from speaking out publicly about firefighter and community safety/industrial issues?

And the list goes on.

In addition to not following in a real and tangible way the FRV Values in the context of action taken by your organisation, today you sent an email that was sent to select FRV employees regarding “**Commissioner’s Intent**” and attaching documents.

In the Executive Leaders document sent today, you purport to share a “personal insight” to organisational leaders, which include Assistant Chief Fire Officers, that no one has a “right” to the job they hold.

That is not correct. If you understood and respected your employees’ entitlements, you would know that members *do* have a right to the job they hold. Our members’ job security is enshrined in their Enterprise Agreement. Your thinly veiled threat is a breach of that Agreement.

It may be the case that you, Commissioner Freeman, do not have job security as you are on a performance-based individual contract that can be unilaterally terminated.

In the All Other Staff document also included in the communique, you call for members to exhibit a “values-based ethical approach”, accountability, honesty, and more. Commissioner Freeman, your attacks on your workforce and their conditions of employment cannot be reconciled with your motherhood statements today.

Your communique today is hypocritical and a significant error of judgement in our view.

Commissioner Freeman, your behaviour doesn’t engender respect. In fact, it undermines the very thing that you are seeking.

Advice to members

Members are advised that the Union has today lodged a grievance on your behalf directly with Commissioner Freeman as follows:

Dear Commissioner Freeman,

*The UFU hereby notifies you of a dispute in accordance with clause 21, Division A and clause 26, Division B of the FRV Operational Employees Interim Enterprise Agreement 2020 (**the Agreement**).*

The dispute pertains to the email “Message from the Fire Rescue Commissioner: Commissioner’s Intent” and the links contained within, that were provided to UFU members today. We understand a further communique/email is scheduled for next week.

These documents, which set out your expectations and objectives for FRV staff/UFU members, have not been consulted.

Additionally, these documents contain statements and information (including for example “None of us have a “right” to the job we hold now”) which is contrary to members’ rights not limited to rights under both the relevant Enterprise Agreement and the Fair Work Act. In fact, statements such as no member having a right to their job is contrary to job security provisions in the Enterprise Agreement and potentially amount to a threat. We perceive such statements as threatening, bullying and/or intimidating behaviour towards members. UFU members are entitled to a safe workplace.

The UFU seeks an urgent dispute meeting with yourself regarding this documentation. The UFU can make itself available on Tuesday 23 January. If you are unavailable on this date, please nominate a date/time that works for your schedule.

Please note that in accordance with the Dispute Resolution procedure(s), the status quo applies. For the avoidance of doubt, the status quo is that these policy documents have no status. In particular, UFU members do have a right to the job they hold in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement. We request that you withdraw your email and these documents.

The UFU will be communicating with members regarding this matter shortly.

The Union has requested that Commissioner Freeman withdraw his email and documents. If he does not, members are advised to **ignore** the documentation and disregard the communique in its entirety.

The UFU will continue to keep members informed.

Strength in Unity

READ OUT AT MUSTER AND PIN ON NOTICE BOARD

Authorised by Peter Marshall, Branch Secretary

“If you do not wish to receive these emails please reply to this bulletin with “UNSUBSCRIPTION” in the description”