



MEDIA STATEMENT

Divisive and Incompetent – Shadow Emergency Services Minister Danny O'Brien should resign

8 JULY 2026 – United Firefighters Union Secretary Peter Marshall has responded to comments by Shadow Emergency Services Minister Danny O'Brien regarding CFA staffing and secondment arrangements.

Peter Marshall said:

"Danny O'Brien continues to make claims about the secondment model without producing any data to support his claims.

Instead, he is choosing to be deliberately divisive at a time when firefighters and communities deserve facts, not political point-scoring.

Mr O'Brien has repeatedly claimed there were not enough Fire Rescue Victoria personnel available during the 2025-26 fire season. That claim is simply not supported by the factual evidence presented to the Parliamentary Inquiry.

The United Firefighters Union tabled operational data from Fire Rescue Victoria's secondment unit showing that between December 2025 and April 2026, staffing levels for seconded positions consistently ranged between 84 and 95 per cent.

The evidence also shows that the experienced leadership supporting the CFA overwhelmingly comes from former CFA personnel. The data presented to the Inquiry demonstrates that:

- 66.2 per cent of command staff are former CFA employees;
- 84.4 per cent of Assistant Chief Fire Officer positions are filled by former CFA employees;
- 87.5 per cent of Regional Controllers are former CFA employees;
- 100 per cent of Community Safety Manager positions are filled by former CFA employees; and
- 50 per cent of Commander positions are held by former CFA employees.

These are the official figures provided from Fire Rescue Victoria's secondment unit.

The legislation is equally clear. The CFA Chief Officer requests the personnel required and retains command and control of every seconded member. The formal Secondment Arrangements Agreement expressly states that all secondees operate under the direction of the CFA Chief Officer.

The Inquiry also heard evidence identifying an area for improvement. Data showed that requests from CFA to FRV were outside the agreed timeframes to allow for proper planning. CFA's requests for seconded personnel were frequently made with between 26 and 32 days' notice, despite the agreement providing for 42 days' notice. Adhering to the agreed process between the CFA Chief Officer and the FRV Fire Rescue Commissioner would alleviate concerns – if any – regarding the availability of FRV personnel for secondment to CFA.



MEDIA RELEASE

This is a continuing attempt by Mr O'Brien to use the Parliamentary Inquiry to attack Fire Rescue Victoria firefighters. Even after the factual evidence was put before the Committee, he has continued to repeat claims that are contradicted by the official data held by the fire agencies themselves.

To be clear, this data is shared between CFA and FRV at high-level meetings on a regular basis. So, clearly this brings into question the validity of Danny O'Brien's continuing attempt, which is clearly designed to undermine the secondment model and denigrate the role of FRV firefighters in the Victorian fire service.

Danny O'Brien is either being deliberately divisive or demonstrating a concerning lack of understanding of the evidence through his ill-informed and incorrect remarks. Either explanation is deeply concerning.

Under Danny O'Brien, The Nationals are facing an existential crisis. Rather than focusing on the real issues confronting emergency services, he appears determined to divide firefighters who stood together in calling for this Bushfire Inquiry after repeatedly warning, before the bushfire season, that Victoria's fire services were underfunded and ill-equipped.

Firefighters—career and volunteer alike—wanted this Inquiry so the lessons from the 2025-26 bushfire season could be properly examined. Mr O'Brien is instead attempting to turn it into a political attack on Fire Rescue Victoria firefighters.

Mr O'Brien's continued refusal to acknowledge the evidence is deeply concerning to career firefighters and should be concerning to the Victorian community that firefighters serve and protect. If Mr O'Brien cannot accurately represent the facts or responsibly discharge the duties expected of someone in that role, he should resign as Shadow Emergency Services Minister.

Victorians deserve a debate based on facts and data. The real challenge facing our emergency services is the lack of investment in frontline capability, ageing fire trucks and the resources firefighters need to keep communities safe—that was the purpose of the Fire Inquiry. It is not facilitated to provide a forum for Danny O'Brien to seek relevance in attacking the firefighters who put themselves in harm's way to protect our communities."

KEY LINKS

A link to the full UFU, CFAV and AVA Submission is [here](#) (Submission 449 and 449.1).

A link to the Documents tabled by UFU, containing factual information & data on secondment, is [here](#) (under 'United Firefighters Union').