

MAKE IBAC ACCOUNTABLE

Eight years. Two investigations. No finding of corrupt conduct.

IBAC investigated UFU for years. It found no corrupt conduct.

Two investigations. Phones intercepted. Offices raided. Officials compelled to answer questions in secret, with threat of imprisonment. And at the end of it: no finding of corrupt conduct against UFU or any of its officials.

OPERATION TURTON · OPERATION RICHMOND



OPERATION TURTON — NO CORRUPT CONDUCT FOUND ♦ OPERATION RICHMOND — NO CORRUPT CONDUCT FOUND

THE RECORD

Two investigations. Eight years. No finding of corrupt conduct.

2

IBAC investigations into
Victoria's fire services

8

Years of investigations funded
by tax-payers' dollars

0

Findings of corrupt conduct
against the union or its officials

\$8m+

Public money, on the union's
estimate, across both operations

Eight years and more than eight million dollars of public money, and not one finding of corrupt conduct. The union says plainly what that was: a pursuit in search of a case that never existed.

THE CASE EXPLAINED

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

Victoria's anti-corruption commission, IBAC, spent years investigating the United Firefighters Union and its officials. Here are the four things you need to know, in plain terms.

01

Investigation

IBAC investigated UFU for years, using powers to tap phones, search homes and offices, and compel answers under threat of jail, and still found no corrupt conduct.

02

Natural justice

IBAC argued it didn't have to show people the evidence behind its findings, and the High Court unanimously ruled it wrong.

03

The Operational Staff agreement

Operation Richmond examined the negotiation of an enterprise agreement between the union and the Victorian Government, and the reforms that created Fire Rescue Victoria. No corrupt conduct was found.

04

The reform

Victoria's fire services were restructured on the back of eight independent government inquiries and recommendations made across almost a decade, not on the say-so of any one union.

OUR RESPONSE

WHAT WAS PUT TO US, AND WHAT WE SAID

The union responded to IBAC's draft report in February 2026, filed a further response, and provided a schedule of 46 corrections. See below the following three rows:

PROPOSITION

THE UNION'S ANSWER

That the union exercised improper influence over government decision-making on fire services reform.

“Improper influence” is not a species of corrupt conduct under the Act. Advocacy by a registered organisation to a government, including strong advocacy, is lawful and is what members pay their union to do. No finding of corrupt conduct has been made.

That the terms sought by the union in bargaining amounted to a capture of public policy.

The terms in question were health and safety protections, and their retention has been tested and upheld in the Fair Work Commission. IBAC - A body with no industrial jurisdiction is not the forum in which to re-litigate firefighters’ safety conditions.

That adverse inferences may be drawn from evidence given in private examinations.

That evidence was untested, not cross-examined, and in some instances given by people with their own interests in the outcome. The High Court decision, AB v IBAC, establishes what fairness requires before such material can ground adverse comment.

TESTED IN THE FAIR WORK COMMISSION

FIREFIGHTERS' PROTECTIONS TESTED IN THE ONE FORUM THAT COULD DECIDE IT - FWC.

Some of the union's most disputed conditions of employment have already been put to the test — not by IBAC, but by the independent umpire Parliament actually set up to decide questions like this - the industrial tribunal, the Fair Work Commission..

The clauses at the centre of this dispute aren't perks. They require the employer to consult firefighters, and reach agreement with them, before changing the way firefighters are sent into danger — crewing levels, breathing apparatus, rescue procedures, and the protective clothing worn into a fire.

In 2014, an employer asked the Fair Work Commission to strip these clauses out of the agreement altogether.

Fair Work Commissioner Wilson refused the application and dismissed it, finding that removing the clauses would hurt firefighters and their union far more than it would help the employer — because "disputes that have a genuine connection with occupational health and safety will no longer be required to be the subject of consultation and a requirement to reach agreement and will not be able to progressed through the dispute resolution procedure."

17

**DAYS OF
HEARING**

37

**WITNESSES
CALLED**

51

**FURTHER
FIREFIGHTER
STATEMENTS**

CHANGE

IBAC INVESTIGATES, BUT WHO INVESTIGATES IBAC?

Victoria needs an effective anti-corruption commission. This union has never said otherwise. What it says is that a body holding powers of this magnitude cannot be the only institution in the State that is never required to answer for how it uses them.

PATHWAY A

Abolition

Return these functions to bodies subject to ordinary judicial supervision, on the view that a standing commission with coercive powers and a publication function cannot be made safe.

PATHWAY B

Restructure

Keep IBAC, but separate investigation from publication; require a finding of corrupt conduct before adverse commentary may be published; and give the Victorian Inspectorate real enforcement power.

PATHWAY C

Parliamentary inquiry

A full inquiry into IBAC's conduct of these operations: the use of intercepted material, the handling of confidential information, the treatment of witnesses, and the cost.