



EXTRACT FROM
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HANSARD



***Ms SHEED
Shepparton***

ADJOURNMENT

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Wednesday, 27 April 2016

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Emergency Services. The action that I seek from the minister is that she visit my electorate and meet with some of our local Country Fire Authority (CFA) rural fire brigades to hear their concerns. These volunteer services are located throughout the Shepparton electorate and have a proud volunteering heritage. They strive to operate to the highest possible standards. They have active members who have been involved in all aspects of emergency management and community life throughout a long history in the region.

During the course of the past week I received numerous letters from representatives of CFAs expressing their dismay regarding the current reported negotiations between the Premier and Peter Marshall of the United Firefighters Union. It is apparent that the CFA members strongly support their paid colleagues receiving a fair and equitable enterprise bargaining agreement and pay arrangements, but they are adamant that they should retain their current autonomy and structure.

Those of us who live in rural areas know only too well the importance of our CFA volunteers. Not only are they readily available to attend small incidents but when major disasters such as the Black Saturday fires occur they provide a surge capacity that allows the deployment of thousands of personnel. Volunteers also have that local on-the-ground knowledge which can be invaluable in such circumstances. Not only do CFA volunteers fight fires but they also attend numerous other emergency situations, including motor vehicle accidents. They are sometimes first on the scene and will often know the victims who require their attendance.

The CFA has a proud history going back to regional volunteer fire brigades of the 1850s and 1860s. Generational involvement is common. One correspondent stated in his letter to me:

I am a proud volunteer firefighter with almost 40 years experience with the CFA. My father died an honorary life member of the CFA after serving 55 years. My wife is a brigade member and assists in operations ... My daughter has almost finished her junior involvement ...

Members of this house will recognise this as being a common feature of so many brigades throughout the state.

Over the years the CFAs have become embedded in our local communities. Not only do they provide the obvious services of volunteer firefighting but they represent one of the major organisations for men and women to participate in as volunteers in a very meaningful way. We know that volunteers are essential to the functioning of our society and that volunteering is a major contributor to general community wellbeing.

Again I urge the minister to join me in meeting with some of my local rural fire brigades. They are excellent examples of the volunteer organisations that are so important to our local communities.