



## IN BRIEF



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### ILO ignored

Australia's new national workplace laws breach International Labour Organisation conventions. "Restrictions on industrial action and bargaining remain because key elements of the Howard government's WorkChoices laws remain," says Peter Marshall. "These do not comply with international law."



### Work safety

The states have agreed to national OH&S laws. "Harmonisation is the name of the game," says Peter Marshall. "The UFUA is working with the ACTU to incorporate the best from each state system, not the lowest common denominator."



### Get on track

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The Australian Firefighter Global NewsTrack is a regular roundup of links to key firefighter news stories, reports and online comment from around the world. Go to <http://ufua.asn.au>, subscribe and we'll drop each update into your email in-tray.

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The Union is where the strength is, particularly when an industrial agreement needs to be sorted  
 pic: rob psaila

# Act now

In Victoria, bureaucratic infighting and stubborn politicians threaten a UFUA initiative to protect communities from fire

Despite the devastating Black Saturday bushfires, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) is wilting under pressure and delaying the implementation of a plan to boost firefighter numbers in key areas across Victoria.

"The bushfire season will be with us again in no time," says UFUA Victorian secretary Peter Marshall. "So the Union has written to Premier Brumby requesting he intervene to ensure rapid deployment of additional professional firefighters to a number of communities."

In April, a joint CFA/UFUA panel found that, to ensure acceptable response times, more

firefighters are needed at 24 CFA stations. "But since then, the leadership of the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) has lobbied to deny vulnerable communities these extra firefighting resources," says Peter.

This campaign of obstruction has created dramas within the CFA bureaucracy and to date, the state government has refused to act. "CFA management has failed to stand up, show resolve and implement the plan," says Peter Marshall. "So it's time for the government to get off the fence and ensure Victorians are better protected this summer."

## RISKY BUSINESS

With negotiations underway for a new MFB Operational Staff Agreement, MFB management is targeting crewing numbers. "The Union is very concerned that fewer firefighters and appliances will be available and ready to respond if management gets its way," says Peter Marshall. "Response times would also increase."

The MFB wants 'risk management' principles applied to crewing. "This is HR speak for

scrapping minimum crew numbers," says Peter Marshall. "But we've got a rapidly growing – and ageing – population in Melbourne, climate change is increasing the likelihood of fire and other emergencies, while new technology is making the job ever more demanding. It makes no sense to plan for fewer firefighters on shift. The people at the top of MFB management are really out of touch." Further negotiations have been scheduled.