



## United Firefighters Union Victorian Branch

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## BULLETIN

Bulletin No: 231

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To ALL UFU MEMBERS

# EXTREMELY IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ MFB CENSORING UFU BULLETINS

Today the MFB CEO Nick Easy released an update to employees regarding UFU Bulletins.

In this update the CEO makes certain points regarding our legitimate union communication with members that we believe are misleading and inaccurate.

### We would like to set the record straight.

1. Nick Easy states that, the “MFB **allows** the Union access to our email system to send bulletins” (emphasis added)- **CORRECTION**- the UFU has a **right** to use the email system to distribute bulletins as per the Operational Staff Agreement 2010.
2. Nick Easy states that bulletins need only be distributed once the “content has been reviewed to ensure it complies with the MFB Workplace Behaviour Policy and is related to an MFB work purpose”- **CORRECTION**- the clause in the EBA which gives the UFU this right to distribute our bulletins does not state that the MFB can censor UFU bulletins and there is no reference to policies.
3. Nick Easy states that union knows of these requirements and the need to allow sufficient time for review- **CORRECTION**- the UFU is not aware of any such requirements in the EBA and has not agreed to any extra requirements. In fact, as the MFB is aware, the UFU has been disputing these so called “requirements” with the MFB for some time.

4. Nick Easy claims that “the MFB found it necessary to put this vetting process in place because the privilege has been abused in the past” - **CORRECTION-** this is not a *privilege*, it a **right!** Further, the UFU does not abuse the system but sends out communications to employees which are relevant to their interests. Occasionally our bulletins might be critical of certain MFB processes or the actions of others such as Government, however given we are a Union it is entirely legitimate for us to distribute material of that nature to employees and it should come as no surprise to the MFB that we do so.

**The UFU sees these actions by the MFB as nothing more than censorship.**

**Employees should have a right to be informed about issues in their workplace, issues in the broader firefighter and emergency services industry both in Australia and across the world, political issues, and union matters.**

We wonder why the MFB would be so frightened of having a workforce that is aware of these matters.

Just a small example of bulletins that have been censored and blocked by the MFB this month alone include:

- Bulletin #229 *Naphthine Government Votes down the Introduction of Occupational Cancer Bill*  
**BLOCKED:** The MFB blocked this bulletin stating that the reason was because it contained the words “disgust” and “disgraceful”.
- Bulletin #228 *Firefighters Boycott Parliament Protesting the Naphthine Government’s Avoidance of Occupational Cancer.*  
**BLOCKED:** The MFB blocked this bulletin stating it was because it contained the words “disgusted” “disgust” “disrespectful” and “insulting”.
- Bulletin #224 *Asbestos Exposure Update: Health and Safety Reps to Monitor Clean Up*  
**BLOCKED:** The MFB claim they blocked this because it named the MFB senior management personnel who were involved in the clean up (in fact- the MFB in their own communications on this matter also named relevant persons involved in this).
- Bulletin #225 *Airwatch Technology Grievance Escalated*  
**BLOCKED:** The MFB blocked this bulletin claiming it was because we named the members of MFB senior management who are handling the grievance at the MFB
- • Bulletin #221 *Airwatch Technology Grievance in Place: Status Quo Applies*  
**BLOCKED:** Blocked by the MFB because it made reference by name to a MFB senior management member who is the person at the MFB who the UFU had sent the grievance to.

- Bulletin #217 *Liberal MP Spends over 40 Minutes Defending Himself but will not act to Defend Firefighters*

**BLOCKED:** This bulletin regarding presumptive legislation was blocked with the MFB claiming it was because it contained remarks which the MFB deemed to be against their Workplace Behaviour Policy.

- Bulletin #215 *MFB Corp and Tech EBA Update: Conciliation, Bargaining Orders and Protected Industrial Action*

**BLOCKED:** This bulletin was initially blocked because the MFB claimed it was against their Workplace Behaviour Policy. Following this the UFU sent a letter demanding its release. The MFB did eventually release it some 8 days after the UFU initially sent it and some 3 days after the industrial action we were informing members about had commenced.

In his update Nick Easy also states that the MFB's "review" (censoring) of UFU bulletins can be usually completed by the end of the business day after the proposed bulletin has been received by the MFB's mail management system but can take longer where the material is "contentious".

In regards to this the UFU would like to make two points:

1. The MFB is a 24 -7 emergency service. Often bulletins regarding important issues need to be sent to members ASAP including outside of business hours. Delaying our bulletins by over 24 hours in order to censor them is simply unacceptable.
2. This "review" and delay of UFU bulletins is more than it seems. It is not, for instance, a coincidence that the UFU sent out a bulletin on the anniversary of 9/11 in the US in remembrance of those fallen at 11:23 AEST and that this bulletin was not in fact distributed by the MFB until 5:10PM; this was only after Mr, Youssef conveniently had time to distribute his own communication on the very same issue to all staff and, only after the actual anniversary had passed in the US.

This is an issue that is of high significance to the firefighting and emergency services community worldwide and should not have been seen as contentious.

The UFU has been and will continue to raise these issues with the MFB in the appropriate forum.

### **Strength in Unity**

### **READ OUT AT MUSTER AND PIN ON NOTICE BOARD**

Authorised by Peter Marshall, Branch Secretary