



Media Release

UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION – QLD

Friday 25th May, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Firefighter Training and Recruitment Suspended

The United Firefighters' Union of Queensland is outraged over the scrapping of Firefighter training and recruitment as part of the Queensland Governments' cost cutting drive.

The Government scrapped the next recruit training course and put further recruitment on hold.

United Firefighters Union Secretary Mr John Oliver said that the cutbacks were "a real threat to the safety of the Queensland community and to Queensland firefighters".

Mr Oliver stated that Firefighter training is a long term process and it is crucial that recruit training continues at the Training facility at Whyte Island.

Like many other professions in Australia, firefighting is facing a skills crisis. The Union believes that the projected exit of large numbers of highly skilled and experienced personnel will hit hard as the Baby Boomers leave the ranks.

Firefighting is a dangerous profession that requires extensive training, mentoring and experience.

"We are worried that our training facility does not produce sufficient numbers of appropriately trained people to maintain crew safety as it is" Mr Oliver said.

"Scrapping training now is short sighted and is an unacceptable threat to our member's safety."

Mr Oliver also expressed concern about staffing levels in some areas of Queensland.

"We have been warning for a while about risks in some areas due to inadequate crewing to meet risks in booming regional areas." Gladstone and similar areas are a concern.

Industry and population growth has increased the risk by a huge margin but the Government has failed to provide sufficient professional Firefighters to ensure community safety. It is absolutely unbelievable that this Government is prepared to risk the safety of those communities to achieve its cost cutting agenda.

Concerns were also raised about the manner in which the latest course cancellation was handled.

"Our office has received numerous calls from job applicants who have participated in extensive assessment at their own cost, were shortlisted and interviewed for the August recruit course.

Applicants only received a brief letter stating that recruiting is suspended until further notice, it is an absolute disgrace the way these people have been treated " Mr Oliver said.

"The vast majority of our operational staff are involved in roles such as enforcing fire standards and monitoring compliance at facilities like nursing homes, budget accommodation and licensed premises. Officers also conduct fire investigations and provide ongoing skills training to our workforce. Any job cuts will place some element of our community or workforce at risk"

Mr Oliver said "just like Police, you can't get much more frontline than Firefighters".

"The Government is suddenly making reductions in Firefighter numbers across the State by attrition.

"When a 000 call is received and we are asked to deploy our Swift Water Rescue Teams to floods, send crews to search for families trapped in collapsed buildings during a cyclone or respond to fires threatening lives and property, you would pray that we have sufficient numbers. We need this LNP Government to keep its promise and increase the number of professional Firefighters."

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