

UNITED FIREFIGHTERS' UNION OF AUSTRALIA VICTORIAN BRANCH SUBMISSION

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE DANGEROUS GOODS ACT 1985 AND ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The United Firefighters Union of Australia Victorian Branch (UFU) represents the interests of some 3200 firefighters employed by Fire Rescue Victoria.

FRV is a new organisation that was launched by the Victorian Government on 1 July 2020 bringing together all Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) and career Country Fire Authority (CFA) firefighters. FRV serves metropolitan Melbourne and major regional centres throughout Victoria - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. FRV operates 85 stations across the state.

Our members respond to the emergency incidents involving dangerous chemicals. Recently, there has been an increase in the illegal activity in the waste market for dangerous chemicals. The major chemical fires at a warehouse in West Footscray in August 2018 and at a waste facility in Campbellfield in April 2019 highlight non-compliance and illegal activity involving dangerous goods. The discovery of many more sites in Melbourne's northern suburbs that were being used to store dangerous chemicals is further indicative of the changes and trends in the dangerous goods industry.

These fires have had a significant impact on our members. Many firefighters suffered detrimental health effects as a result of the West Footscray fire. Some firefighters are still suffering significant health issues post the West Footscray fire.

The UFU is well qualified to comment on the extent to which the Dangerous Goods Act (DG Act) and associated regulations promotes the safety persons and on the effectiveness of the DG Act and associated regulations in deterring non-compliance and illegal activity in the management of dangerous goods.

SUBMISSION

UFU submissions are contained in the attached document titled, "Independent Review of the Dangerous Goods Act 1985 and associated regulations Consultation Paper questions".

CONCLUSION

The UFU would like to thank the Independent Reviewer, Andrew Palmer QC for the opportunity to meet with the UFU and its members in relation to the Review of the dangerous goods laws and to contribute formally to this Review.

November 2020