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Circular: 2024HOC0337MW

Date: **20/08/2024**

To: **All Members**

Dear Brother/Sister,

Media coverage; Grenfell Tower and 'Stay Put'

Recent media coverage around the Grenfell Tower fire has once again focussed on the issue of the 'Stay Put' policy. A BBC report has quoted comments from LFB Commissioner Andy Roe that residents were advised for too long to 'Stay Put.'

This coverage is problematic in several ways which the FBU has addressed previously and which we have presented in evidence to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI). As reported, the comments seem to imply criticism of others who attended the fire and this is unfair in various obvious ways.

1. It implies that the major problem at Grenfell Tower was the policy or tactics adopted by the fire and rescue service. This is obviously wrong and diverts attention from the fundamental problem. The main cause of the scale of the disaster was that fact that the building was wrapped in deadly, flammable cladding and that virtually every other aspect of fire safety provision in the building was inadequate or failed.
2. It implies that long standing policies or procedure can be easily adjusted in the midst of a major incident; they cannot.
3. It ignores the fact that there had been concerns raised about 'Stay Put' for years. The FBU called for such a review after the fire at Harrow Court, Stevenage in 2007. These calls and these warning were ignored at the highest level.
4. It ignores the fact that warnings were made about the risk of fires involving flammable cladding. The FBU issued such a warning after the fire at Garnock Court, Irvine in 1999. The

warning from our union was made in Parliament. Again, it was ignored by politicians, fire policy makers and Chief Fire Officers.

5. It ignores the fact that seven years after the fire, government has still failed to produce sensible or useful guidance on the evacuation of buildings in such circumstances, despite a recommendation from the GTI that it should do so. After four years, a report was issued which was of little or no use to firefighters, residents or building owners. In March, we set out our concerns in a letter to the Home Secretary, which is attached.

As we approach the publication of the final report of the public inquiry, such debates are likely to be a feature of media coverage. The FBU will seek to ensure that such debates are informed by evidence of what happened before Grenfell, the warnings which were deliberately ignored and the fundamental issues which still need to be addressed.

Yours in unity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wrack', written in a cursive style.

Matt Wrack
General Secretary