VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

Address: 9/24 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East, 3151
Email: vfbv@vfbv.com.au
Telephone: 9886 1141
Chief Executive Officer: Adam Barnett

Post: PO Box 453, Mt Waverley, 3149
Website: www.vfbv.com.au
Fax: 9886 1618
State President: Samantha Collins

Brigade Allowance Survey closing

Responses to our Brigade and Group allowance survey were due by 31st August 2026. The survey was included in this year's affiliation pack sent to all Brigade/Group Secretaries to help us advocate for changes to the brigade/group allowances that have not kept pace with inflation. If your brigade or group has not yet responded, late submissions will be accepted for a very limited time.

All responses are confidential with only de-identified information to be shared with CFA. Help us help you and ensure your secretary or treasurer returns the survey ASAP.

JOINT COMMITTEE EOI

VFBV has opened its Expression of Interest process for members who wish to be involved in the 2027 CFA/VFBV Joint Committees. Interested volunteers can now complete the EOI and submit it to their District Council for an opportunity to be involved in one of the eight streams.

If you are interested in one of the joint committees and feel you have the time, network and are passionate about improving the volunteer experience then please talk to your District Council Executive, State Councillors, Support Officer or visit the VFBV Website to access a nomination form.

Nominations must be endorsed by the District Council and close 23rd November 2026.

Every year we seek volunteers from broad and diverse backgrounds to participate in our consultative structures. Young members, women and members of culturally diverse backgrounds with a passion for volunteering are encouraged to nominate. We are also looking to ensure that members from a broad range of brigade types and risk profiles are included in the committees.

If you would like more information or would like to learn more about the role of a Joint Committee delegate, please reach out to your VFBV Support Officer, State Councillor VFBV Executive Officer Mark Dryden or visit www.vfbv.com.au

PRIZE DRAW WINNERS

Congratulations to the 2025/26 VFBV Affiliation Prize Draw winners!

Thank you to all Brigades and Groups that paid their 2025/26 affiliation fees before 30 July and qualified for the early payment prize draw.

Congratulations to our winners:

1st Prize: Rheola FB (D20) - Pelican 3415 Right Angle Light

2nd Prize: Main Ridge FB (D8) - G-Force Nozzle with Quick Connect Coupling and Gated Wye with Storz Inlet and Quick Connect Outlet

3rd Prize: Lang Lang FB (D8) - Root Soaker and Bag

4th Prize: D8 HQ Brigade (D28) - TFT Break Apart Nozzle

A special thank you to GAAM Emergency Products for once again donating these great prizes.

Remember, by affiliating with VFBV, you are supporting the important work we do on behalf of all CFA volunteers.

Our advocacy, support, research and trusted advice are strengthened when volunteers work together and stand united as one.

If you are unsure whether your Brigade or Group's VFBV or Welfare Fund subscriptions are up to date, please contact your Secretary. We encourage all Brigades and Groups that have not yet affiliated to do so as soon as possible.

For any enquiries, please contact your VFBV Support Officer, State Councillor or call us at the office on 98861141.

CFA BOARD APPOINTMENTS

The CFA Act recognises that it is important that the CFA Board has strong volunteer expertise, knowledge and understanding of CFA volunteers.

To support this, four of the skills-based CFA Board members are appointed by the Minister for Emergency Services from a panel of names submitted by VFBV.

Two volunteer nominee positions will expire early next year. Both are eligible for re-appointment.

VFBV is now seeking further applications from any CFA volunteer interested in applying. CFA volunteers who believe they have the skills, experience and capacity to make a contribution to the Board of the CFA are invited to apply.

In addition to volunteer experience and knowledge, selection will have regard to any of the following: knowledge of, or experience in, commercial, technical, operational, legal or financial matters; expertise in fire or emergency management, land management; or any other field relevant to the performance of the functions of CFA.

VFBV is seeking gender and culturally diverse candidates, in additional to a diverse range of skills and experience including applicants from diverse brigade type and classifications.

The CFA Board meets on a monthly basis, usually on a Monday and also operates a committee system which could require an additional commitment of at least one day per month. Regular attendance at official functions and brigade/group events is also expected.

The appointment to the CFA Board would be for a period of up to three years.

The CFA Board Charter and Position Description are available on the VFBV website.

Applications close on 31st January 2027.

Volunteer Rebate Scheme

A reminder that the eligible volunteers rebate scheme is now open for eligible volunteers and life members to apply for a rebate on an eligible property under the Emergency Services Tax.

To check the rules and eligibility requirements, you can visit: https://www.vic.gov.au/evrs

If you are eligible and own an eligible property, head to https://www.members.cfa.vic.gov.au/ to start the process.

SEASONAL OUTLOOK

by Adam Barnett, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

As we march through spring, the mid-point is a perfect opportunity to review the seasonal bushfire outlook as we prepare for the fire season ahead. And while the warmer and longer days are a welcome break from winter - in our business there is a certain foreboding that takes shape as the fire danger period creeps closer.

This year's spring outlook gives us plenty to consider. It was Mark Twain who said "In the spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours." Given that he was referring to New England weather, who knows what he would have thought about ours.

At the end of August, AFAC published its Spring 2026 seasonal bushfire outlook. It predicts that Victoria is facing one if its warmest and driest spring outlooks in some time, with increased bushfire risk forecast for East Gippsland, the far south-west, the Surf Coast, and the area west of Geelong to the southern Wombat Forest.

While noting that across much of Victoria spring is forecast to be exceptionally warmer and drier than average, the Bureau of Meteorology continues to strengthen its advice that El Niño has become firmly established, and notes that sea surface temperatures in the Australian region are above average, and especially warm along the southeast Australian coast.

These temperatures lend themselves to an increase in atmospheric moisture and energy, raising the potential for more intense weather systems including intense rainfall and storms to go along with the usual elevated heat extremes, longer fire seasons and more dangerous fire weather days.

Overall, the outlook suggests an earlier start to Victoria's fire season and increases the potential for a significant season. Significant grass growth is expected across northern and western Victoria, with curing through spring likely to increase fire potential later in the season. The outlook specifically warns about dry and arid vegetation which may respond quickly to short periods of warm, dry and windy weather.

We need look no further than a very recent day in late September that presented with unusually high temperatures and a moderate northerly wind which resulted in a spate of fire starts from private burn offs across the State as an early warning on how quickly those top layers can dry out.

Rather than using this data to frighten or scare, it is an important reminder of the importance of CFA's shared responsibility model that is uniquely designed to engage directly with the Victorian community and help educate on positive actions that can be taken by residents to prepare their homes and properties for the increased risk of fire.

This unique volunteer and community embedded model is why community trust in the CFA remains exceptionally high. Social research consistently shows that public confidence and trust in CFA remains high, with results highlighting the local connection and credibility that CFA volunteers and their pre-existing relationships across communities playing a pivotal role in translating official warnings into actionable decisions.

Our communities rely on us to be a trusted and respected voice for their own safety. The actions they take or don't take, are directly influenced by the messages we individually and collectively send. And given the speed in which misinformation travels in today's more connected world that utilises a high amount of unmoderated content, we each carry the responsibility to protect the reputation that allows us to speak to our communities from a position of trust. As custodians of the volunteer ethos, reputation and spirit we must be deliberate in our words and our actions.

It is therefore not surprising how VFBV carefully chooses to advance its public advocacy for stronger arrangements that support CFA and CFA volunteers. There is no more unedifying spectacle of people trying to leverage our communities fear and aguish following disaster to advance their own agenda's. And while we see this across others sectors as well, we must always be cautious and vigilant about how messages can be twisted and manipulated.

This is why in the lead up to a heightened fire danger period I urge members to continue to be disciplined in our public facing messaging. Warning of Armageddon that may not arrive drives apathy and risks next time we give a warning, it may be ignored. That's not an argument against serious messaging about the heightened risks we are facing, rather a request to be mindful of hyperbole.

The facts provide enough of a case to urge stronger community action.

With this year's Fire Danger Period being bought in two weeks earlier to October 5 for the Wellington and East Gippsland Shires, it is an important reminder of the arrival of this year's fire season. Private burn offs are likely to increase as people try to get their burns finished before the FDP is declared, so brigades are encouraged to promote the Burn-off Register which is free and ensures brigades do not have to deal with unnecessary callouts. Residents can visit www.firepermits.vic.gov.au/notify or call 1800 668 511 to register their burn-off.

Brigades preparing for heightened community engagement in the lead up to this season can seek advice from their local Community Safety Managers located in CFA District/Regional offices. As well as information on core programs, including material for connecting with new residents or how to host an engaging community display. It may also be an opportunity to connect residents with a community fireguard session, home bushfire planning resources or the property advice visit service. These and other resources can all be accessed from the Community Engagement Content portal on Members Online or through your BASO or local Community Engagement Coordinator (CEC).

The CFA website also has updated materials that our Joint Community Safety delegates have been helping to update and tailor. For example, easy to read guides covering the most common scenarios for farmers and rural landholdings can be access from cfa.vic.gov.au/farms

And us usual, the CFA website has been refreshed for the season ahead, with the "Can I, Can't I" advice and FDP guidelines featured prominently on the homepage at cfa.vic.gov.au

New Chief Officer

I am pleased to reflect on the appointment of Garry Cook AFSM as CFA's new Chief Officer.

Having worked closely with Garry over many years in his role as Deputy Chief Officer of Operational Response and Coordination I have confidence that Garry brings a strong commitment to a volunteer and community-based emergency service.

Garry joined CFA in 1981 as a volunteer firefighter in northeast Victoria. Having joined at 16 years of age, Garry has quite literally grown up inside CFA. He was 21 when he joined the career ranks within CFA.

Between 2007 and 2014 Garry moved across to gain valuable experience within the health sector, where he held senior positions with Ambulance Victoria before

returning to CFA as an Assistant Chief Officer for the North East region.

In 2016, he was promoted to a Deputy Chief, including a period where he established CFA's People, Culture & Safety directorate, and has spent significant periods as Acting Chief Officer during some of our most challenging periods, including during the COVID pandemic where he was able to draw on his prior experience from the health sector.

Given his vast experience and familiarity with CFA, he is imminently qualified to hit the ground running. I have always found Garry to be highly collaborative and trustworthy. His respect for volunteers and community outcomes is unimpeachable. One of his biggest assets is his deep understanding and knowledge of how brigades operate and the plethora of differences across over one thousand Victorian communities. This will make him a powerful ally and friend within CFA's structure as we continue to pursue stronger volunteer consultation and empowerment.

Having served as a Deputy for so long, I'm sure Garry will be keen to put his own mark on CFA. Given the criticality of the close relationship between CFA's CEO and Chief Officer as a united team, I remain optimistic. Like all changes past, I am sure a new dynamic will naturally form at the executive level also as the organisation pivots to the ever changing environment we find ourselves.

I again repeat my call from last month encouraging members to reach out and make contact with Chief Officer Jason Heffernan AFSM to thank him for his service as he transitions out of CFA to his new role with St John NSW.

With a potentially challenging season ahead of us, focus should remain on our core activities including catching up on our skills maintenance and Chief Officer's minimum requirements. As usual, many hands make light work, so important messaging at brigade level is about ensuring the workload is shared around. Be mindful of not overcooking the egg and exhausting everyone too early. That precious work/life balance becomes more challenging as our operational tempo increases. Try to be flexible in what opportunities are provided to members.

With longer fire seasons on the horizon, we need to maintain flexibility that encourages as many people as possible, in all different life stages to do what they can when they can.

Keep safe.