

# Newsletter

Combined Newsletter of:

**APRIL 2007**



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**VFBV**

CEO Andrew Ford – 0407 681 416

## AUSTRALIAN FIRE SERVICE MEDALS

Congratulations are extended to the recipients of the Australian Fire Service Medal awarded in January's Australia Day Honours. This is the highest award available in our fire service and is well deserved recognition of outstanding contributions by these members. Our congratulations to:

- Edwin Colverson AFSM (Yarra Junction)
- John Dodemaide AFSM (Melton)
- Terrence Hedt AFSM (Little River)
- Chief Fire Officer Greg Allisey AFSM
- and, Kevin Knight OAM (Linton).

## VOLUNTEER FIRST CAMPAIGN UPDATE

The September edition of this newsletter provided a brief outline of the VFBV campaign to address concerns about the impact that some aspects of the current CFA firefighters EBA is having on CFA volunteers. This campaign has continued to be a high priority for VFBV over the past months and will continue to be a priority until there is satisfactory resolution of this matter.

The VFBV campaign is about ensuring that CFA volunteers are treated fairly and equally and to ensure that volunteers have a reasonable say in matters that affect volunteers. VFBV is not seeking to interfere in the process of career staff negotiating workplace matters with CFA and the VFBV campaign is not about interfering with the pay or conditions of CFA paid firefighters. There are clauses in the current firefighters EBA that effectively provide the union with 'power of veto' over matters that not only affect their members, but also have a significant impact on volunteers. Furthermore there are clauses in the EBA that severely restrict the CFA's ability to manage their lawful obligations. Volunteer concerns with the current CFA firefighter EBA are those clauses that give power to the United Firefighters Union to withhold agreement, regardless of the consultative process followed and regardless of the views or needs of volunteers.

VFBV believe that volunteer action has been successful to date. The EBA has not been signed and the CFA Board has reiterated it will not be signed in its current form. Minister Cameron has indicated that the Government will not interfere with EBA negotiations between CFA and UFU. The Government is aware of volunteer concerns with some clauses of the EBA.

## MEETINGS WITH KEY GOVERNMENT MEMBERS

As part of a concerted effort to strengthen the profile and positioning of CFA volunteers, VFBV Chairman Gary Lyttle and CEO Andrew Ford have met with a number key Government representatives and other influential individuals over the past three months.

Meetings have been held with Premier Steve Bracks MP, Minister for Police and Emergency Services Bob Cameron, Leader of the Opposition Ted Baillieu, Shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services Andrew McIntosh, DLP Upper House member Peter Kavanagh and Greens Upper House member Colleen Hartland. These meetings have been beneficial in raising understanding of volunteer issues and are an important step in ensuring volunteer resolve on this matter is understood.

## GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEER CHARTER

One important outcome from these meetings has been confirmation from both the Premier, Steve Bracks and Minister Bob Cameron that they remain committed to the Volunteer Charter and the spirit of mutual respect and goodwill that it represents. The Charter is a fundamental recognition of volunteer rights to have a reasonable say in matters that affect volunteers and for volunteers to be treated equally and fairly in decision making on volunteer matters, based on open, transparent and genuine consultation.

## NEW CEO HEARING YOUR VIEWS

Since the December edition of this newsletter Andrew Ford has commenced in his role as VFBV's new CEO and the first 12 weeks have seen an active and productive time for Andrew. Andrew has had the opportunity to listen and talk with many of you over the past months through attending Joint Region Council meetings of Region 17, Region 15, Region 2 and Region 9; CFA State Junior,

Rural and Urban Championships; our Joint Association Open forum and State meeting on 14th and 15th April plus a number of other informal discussions with key volunteers. Andrew will continue to give priority to attending region meetings and is scheduled to attend Region 22, Region 23 and Region 6 over the coming month.

Three VFBV working committees have been established as part of our push to develop a more proactive approach to key issues. These committees are:

\* **VFBV Strategic Directions Committee**, chaired by Quentin Turner, will develop the strategic direction for VFBV;

\* **VFBV Summer Campaign Review Working Party**, chaired by CEO Andrew Ford, and with membership comprised of representative Group Officers from across the state, will consider issues emerging from the recent campaign fires from a volunteer perspective; and

\* **VFBV Association Amalgamation Reference Group**, including President and Vice President of each Association, two VFBV Board representatives and a representative from each Association, will give focus to progressing discussion on amalgamation of the Associations.

## **APRIL JOINT OPEN FORUM AND MEETING A GREAT SUCCESS**

The first Joint Association Open Forum and Joint Association meeting were held on the weekend of 14th and 15th April. The open forum was well attended with approximately 170 people in attendance and more than 100 brigades represented. The forum demonstrated a strong alignment of key issues between rural and urban brigade delegates and provided a great opportunity for a wide range of issues to be discussed.

CEO Neil Bibby attended the Joint Meeting on Sunday 15th and outlined some of the logic underpinning his CFA Organisational Form initiative plus a broad overview of the basic concepts being pursued.

The forum provided an opportunity for delegates to question aspects of the proposal and general vision and also to discuss concerns about the vagueness of the envisaged structure and the timelines/process for discussion to occur. Neil confirmed that decisions had not yet been made by CFA Board, that no timelines had been set for implementation and that he is committed to genuine consultation and local discussion processes to explore what is required and develop options to suit different local circumstances across the State. Delegates and brigades are encouraged to engage in active discussion on this matter. It is expected that CFA will provide some further communication on this issue in the near future.

## **A UNIFIED VOICE FOR VOLUNTEERS**

VFBV Board has developed an approach and timetable to progress the discussion of the combining of the two Associations into a single, unified body representing volunteers.

The approach and timetable for progressing discussion on this important topic was outlined by VFBV CEO Andrew Ford at the April 15th Joint Meeting and supported by both Associations. A working group including President and Vice President of both

Associations, representative from VFBV Board and two Association representatives are aiming to have an initial discussion paper, providing details or options for the future model, ready for broad consideration by Regional Councils in July/August. Following feedback and any refinement of the initial discussion paper, it is hoped that a final paper proposing a way forward should be ready for discussion and decision by either December 2007 or April 2008.

Almost two thirds of Regional Councils now meet jointly and many either have or are in the process of developing Joint Regional Constitutions.

## **VFBV WEB PAGE**

A common criticism raised with new CEO, Andrew Ford has been the poor quality of the VFBV web page. This issue is being addressed and a new look web page should be ready within the next 3 months. The new page will link VFBV and the two Associations web sites to streamline communication of common information and improve our communication with you generally. The improved web page is to be one of many steps over the next year or so to improve our communication with volunteers.

## **NATIONAL FIREFIGHTER CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The CFA is sponsoring the 2007 National Firefighter Championships at Lakes Entrance from Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October to Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> October.

Each Australian State plus New Zealand can enter up to four teams in the Championships with the host State making up any final shortfall. Eleven Victorian brigades have applied to compete.

As more than four Victorian teams have expressed an interest in competing, selection trials will be held at Lakes Entrance on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2007. Teams will be ranked on their performance. The first four teams will be entered for the Championships and the remainder will be progressively entered following the closing of entries and to fill any shortfall.

Brigades competing at the selection trials in June at Lakes Entrance are: Belgrave, Dandenong, Echuca, Euroa, Hurstbridge/Yarrambat, Lakes Entrance, Maldon, Melton, Ocean Grove, Sale and Swan Hill. The Championships comprise ten events, five of which involve the use of CFA pumps.



## **VRFBA**

Executive Officer Bob MacDonald  
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## **VALE**

The Association was greatly saddened by the death of Region 20 delegate to State Council, Reg Harry of Tennyson who was first elected to the Council in 1991.

Reg was also a member of the State Championships Committee and served rural volunteers well on several CFA Joint Committees over the years he was a Councillor.

State Council observed a minutes silence at its meeting in April in memory of Mr. Harry and many attended his funeral earlier in the month.

## **STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS A WINNER**

All those who participated in the 2007 State Championships at Learmonth were most impressed with the venue. Great credit should be given to the Region 15 Host Committee who took the difficult decision to change the venue from the City Oval, Ballarat just four weeks before the event. The Championships were opened by Mr. Bob Cameron, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and marked the final official activity of Len Foster as Chairman of CFA. A special presentation was made to Len in recognition of his support for the Association in particular and volunteers in general.

For the second year in a row we had interstate teams competing. Two teams from Tasmania performed well considering they had never competed in events like ours before. Region 15 Host Committee, under the Chairmanship of Viv Barry, are to be congratulated on preparing and running a most successful Championship. Special mention should also be made of the efforts of Secretary, Marion Bennett.

## **2008 CHAMPIONSHIP TOWN DECIDED**

The 2008 Championship will be held at Wodonga in the far north east of the state whilst the 2009 event will be held in Swan Hill to recognize the 50<sup>th</sup> running of the Championships in Region 18.

## **STATE COUNCIL BUSINESS FOR APRIL**

State Council moved its March meeting to April to coincide with an open forum and joint meeting of the regional representations of the two volunteer associations.

Regional Committees submitted a range of issues for consideration by State Council and these included which it was agreed should all be actioned in some form:

- Maintenance and replacement of CSESP vehicles
- Cross notification of burn-offs between DSE, CFA & VicFire
- CFA maintenance support for forward control vehicles
- Alternative means of lodging incident reports
- Better pager holsters
- Volunteer representation on fuse removal committee
- CFA t-shirts be cotton rather than nylon mix
- Provision of wheel chocks for tankers
- Streamlining of pager observation reports
- Level of insurance and compensation of private units on fire ground
- Maintenance of strategic fire breaks

State Council also dealt with a number of other issues raised during the course of the meeting including:

- Retention of fire station sirens unless requested by brigades
- Discouraging theft by some members of Strike Teams when on Tours of Duty
- Debrief Process for Campaign fires
- The future of State Championships

## **ASSOCIATION APPOINTS NEW LIFE MEMBER**

John Kennedy, a long serving State Councillor from Loch who represented Region 9, was recently bestowed the honour of Life Member of the Association in recognition of his dedicated service to the organisation. Not only was John a long serving member of State Council but actively represented rural volunteers on many State Committees

including the Joint Equipment Review Committee and the State Championships Committee.

## **OBSERVATION REPORTS - MAPPING**

Members are urged to ensure they submit observation reports when they find discrepancies or omissions in their area in the current map books.

It is imperative we attempt to make the map books we use as accurate as possible. Given the quality of some of the data available, the input of local brigades will be paramount in improving the accuracy of future editions of the map book.

Whilst local brigades know their area well, and in most instances don't need a map book, it is important that when brigades from outside the area respond to an incident that they have access to accurate mapping information.

## **TRAFFIC CONTROL AT INCIDENTS**

The Association continues to push for the introduction of a 40kph speed limit in the area around incidents with limited success to this time.

In our view the safety of volunteers at roadside incidents is paramount and with this in mind incident controllers and crew leaders are encouraged to give consideration to blocking roads with appliances to oncoming traffic until such time police are on scene to handle the issue.

## **BRIGADE OWNED VEHICLES**

During the Dec 06 and Jan 07 fires a number of issues arose in regard to the secondment of volunteer brigade owned vehicles to parts of the state other than their own locality.

The Association is urging that the current policy be reviewed to ensure a set of principles are adopted that recognize the sensitivities surrounding brigade vehicles that have been funded by local community contributions.

## **STRIKE TEAM "SOUVENIRING"**

The Association has received reports there was a considerable amount of pilfering or souveniring by members of strike teams on tours of duty in the North East and Gippsland fires earlier this year. We do not in any way condone this practice as it is nothing more than stealing and reflects badly on the brigade members involved in particular and the whole CFA in general.

As an Association representing volunteers we are going to urge CFA that the matter be highlighted in briefings and those that are caught stealing equipment from either CFA vehicles or other emergency service vehicles be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

## **CFA BOARD POSITION**

Sitting Board member, Max Maher, indicated his intention not to seek re-election when his current term on the CFA Board expires on the 30<sup>th</sup> June this year.

The Association advertised for nominations for the vacancy and was pleased to receive applications from nine high calibre candidates. Interviews of those short listed were conducted in late April - early March and a list of four, in order of preference, forwarded to the Minister for Police & Emergency Services, Bob Cameron. Minister Cameron will make the final selection in the near future.



# VUFBA

Secretary Peter Davis – 0407 334 685

## CFA BOARD VACANCY

The Association has forwarded to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services a list of the names of four urban volunteers in a priority order, for his selection of a representative of urban volunteers on the CFA Board.

The CFA Board position becomes vacant on 1<sup>st</sup> July when the 3 year term of current Board Member, Michael Tudball expires. Michael is eligible for re-appointment and is included on the list of names.

The list of names was approved by the Association at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> April following interviews with applicants in response to an advertisement for Expressions of Interest late last year.

## DEVELOPMENT OF LIGHT PUMPER

CFA is proceeding with the development of a Light Pumper. Different combinations of cab chassis are currently being evaluated. A preliminary body design has been prepared and has been discussed by the Light Pumper Working Party. The Association is represented on this Working Party by Ex Captain Mark Jones (Stratford).

## REMOTE ACTIVATION OF STATION DOORS

Prior to the introduction of the EAS pager system, it was relatively easy for brigades to remotely activate their station doors. The EAS system complicated this arrangement. The Association raised this issue with the CFA and has now been advised that the station doors can continue to be remotely activated by the installation of an Off Air Decoder which will activate the doors when a pager alert is transmitted to the volunteers. Brigades wishing to have this facility provided should contact their Operations Manager.

## BRIGADE MANAGEMENT MANUAL

The Association raised with the CFA the need to review and update the information contained in the Brigade Management Manual. The CFA recently advised the Association that work is proceeding on a review of the Manual and it is anticipated that the review will be completed prior to June, with new Manuals issued to brigades shortly thereafter.

## STATEWIDE COMMAND CHANNEL

The Association has written to the CFA requesting a high priority be given to the introduction of a Statewide radio command channel to enable brigades to communicate directly with Country CAD by radio. The current system whereby some brigades have to advise Country CAD by telephone when they are responding is time consuming and frustrating to our volunteer brigades. Many brigades are not following this practice resulting in multiple brigades responding to the same incident.

## CHAMPIONSHIP ITEMS:

The Association has considered using Duroline hose for all Junior events and requests feedback from competing Brigades. According to feedback received, the Association may consider trialling its use at the 2008

Junior State Championship. Brigades are advised that the Association will consider a brigade entering more than 2 teams at a Junior State Championship, with each case being considered separately, however no borrowing will be allowed where more than 2 teams are entered. Rules 3(a) and Rule 7 are to be amended accordingly.

## ELEVATION AND RELEGATION

Following the 2007 State Senior Championships, the Association has approved the following elevation and relegation of brigades for the 2008 Senior Championships:

*Elevated from C Section to B Section:*

Hamilton, Cobden, Kangaroo Flat

*Elevated from B Section to A Section:*

Swan Hill, Tatura, Sunbury

*Relegated from A Section to B Section:*

Maffra, Pyramid Hill, Euroa

*Relegated from B Section to C Section:*

Colac, Kooweerup.

Whilst the above is in accordance with the accepted system of elevation and relegation, the Association will review the grading of any team when requested.

## TEAM OF THE YEAR

Following the 2007 State Senior Championships, the Association has nominated as the '**Team of the Year**': Dominic Keating (Maryvale), Shane Flowers (Maryvale), Andy Waterson (Dandenong), Tom Waterson (Dandenong), Craig Briody (Wendouree), Leigh Schintler (Bendigo), Jared Squires (Melton), Steven Myers (Drouin/Bunyip), Coach - Russell Gray (Dandenong).

## Items Raised with the CFA on Behalf of Regional Councils etc.:

- request to expedite the issue of single stage ladders to Medium Pumpers;
- payments through the Brigades Donation Trust Fund at Australia Post, if no CBA branch in a town;
- safety of lap type seat belts fitted into the rollover protection cabins of CFA tankers;
- Knox Group's request for more instructors within Region;
- status of low voltage fuse removal training within CFA;
- allowing Police to issue on the spot fines for the less serious breaches of the CFA Act in regard to Total Fire Ban days and illegal burns;
- burning of solid fuel on camp fires in forest areas in the declared period;
- location of the battery holder on the Hino 3.4 tanker;
- BA support and PPC replacement;
- family members travelling/ working on the same vehicle;
- safety procedure for the operation of CFA crews operating on slip-ons;
- dust proofing of BA lockers on tankers fitted with BA equipment;
- Creswick's fire station;
- FEM Centralised Accounting issues;
- handling of a EEO complaint;
- Juvenile Fire Awareness and Intervention Program;
- mutual aid with N.S.W.;
- Mildura's 3.4C tanker and the brigade's risk profile;
- issuing of firefighting boots;
- allocation of spare PPC to replace contaminated PPC;
- wearing of current cotton/nylon mix CFA T shirt under current structural and wildfire PPC;
- Statewide implementation of repeater channels;
- re-circulation systems for training tracks.

