

Newsletter

Combined Newsletter of:

APRIL 2008



VFBV

VRFBA

VUFBA

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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:

- Ex Captain Ron Hooper AFSM (Echuca)
- Secretary Bill Pressey AFSM (Mortlake)
- Ex Captain Mick Sanderson AFSM (Seymour)
- DGO Bill Speirs AFSM (Nelson).

VOLUNTEER CONCERNS AND POSITIVE MEETING BETWEEN CFA AND VFBV BOARDS

Our December 2007 Newsletter outlined action being taken to encourage CFA Board, CFA management and Government to demonstrate better commitment to protecting the rights of volunteers and protecting the future of CFA as a volunteer based organisation. Since then there has been positive signs to suggest that progress is being made to address these concerns. CFA Board and VFBV Board held a joint meeting on 16th and 17th March providing an opportunity to discuss the concerns and a way forward. The meeting was a positive and successful discussion setting a foundation for the two Boards to work together to implement improvements required. The two Boards have clarified a shared aim which is to preserve and strengthen volunteerism in CFA into the future, recognising the value and fundamental importance of volunteerism in delivering quality CFA services to the people of Victoria.

1. The two Boards have committed to improving communication, engagement and consultation with volunteers at all levels within CFA.
2. The Boards have reinforced a total commitment to the Volunteer Charter. The Boards have also recognised that this requires action as well as words and as such have also committed to strengthening the processes and mechanisms required to operationalise the Volunteer Charter and monitor the effectiveness of its application.
3. The Boards have agreed to develop a shared vision for the future of CFA in relation to volunteers and volunteerism and will use this vision to ensure appropriate focus on the issues

critical to the future success of CFA's community and volunteer based foundations.

4. The two Boards have agreed to hold ongoing meetings to make sure these commitments are delivered.

VFBV has also received a letter from Premier Brumby expressing the Government's deep appreciation of the efforts of all volunteers and reaffirming his personal and the Government's commitment to the Volunteer Charter. The Premier has offered to meet with VFBV and it is our intention to have this meeting in the coming month or so.

UNIFIED REPRESENTATIVE BODY FOR ALL CFA VOLUNTEERS

Following consideration of feedback received to the discussion paper released last year, both Associations have agreed to VFBV developing and circulating a Position Paper and Draft Constitution on the proposed unified representative body. Approximately 50 formal responses were received to the discussion paper and the discussion paper generated much discussion at Regional Council level. The significant majority of responses confirmed that the change is already supported by many brigades and Regional Councils.

Feedback recognised that by bringing the VUFBA and VRFBA together into one unified body representing all 60,000 CFA volunteers, we will be better positioned to build on the combined strengths of the two existing bodies and better able to represent the interests of all volunteers. Feedback also stressed the importance of ensuring that a unified body has the focus, structures and processes required to give due regard and representation to all CFA brigades, from remote rural to busy urban brigades. A small number indicated that they did not support the proposed changes, concerned that a unified body would be no better than existing arrangements and could impact on representation of some issues affecting only parts of the Association membership.

VFBV Board is acutely aware of the need to ensure strong representation on all issues affecting volunteers whether they affect all volunteers, rural areas only or urban areas only. This is why the unified body proposal will retain both rural and urban representation in each Region, at State Council and at Board level.

Previous advice indicated that a position paper would be issued during March. Following discussion at the recent Joint Association State Council meeting some further detail needs to be included which will delay issue of the position paper by approximately one month. Once finalised, the position paper will be distributed to all Brigades, Groups and Regional Councils in order to allow reasonable time for consideration and any further feedback. A decision date is now likely to be August /September. Brigades, Groups and Regional Councils are encouraged to consider the position paper when it is circulated.

2008 JOINT OPEN FORUM

The Joint Associations Open Forum, held Saturday 29th March, was well attended with approximately 150 volunteers representing more than 100 brigades. 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.

A report of the Forum and of the issues raised by the brigades which the Associations will be following up with the CFA, has been forwarded separately to all brigades and is included on our webpage.

Operations Manager Neil Bumpstead also attended and gave a brief presentation on the structural PPC. Neil displayed samples of both the Nomex and PBI Gold ensembles.

JOINT MEETING OF ASSOCIATIONS

Following the Open Forum, the VRFBA State Council and the VUFBA Governing Body met jointly on Sunday 30th March. The meeting discussed issues raised by Regional Councils and brigades together with other items of business generated by the Associations and the CFA.

The meeting resolved to raise the following issues with the CFA on behalf of Regional Councils and brigades:

- planning for the replacement of the Motorola radio system;
- ensuring the Integrated Fire Management Planning Project is aware of the problems with mapping;
- requesting the CFA response areas included in the Melways, are included in the map book;
- CFA's position with regard to the procurement of outside equipment during the course of a fire;
- clarification of compensation/liability cover for owners and operators of private equipment when self deployed;
- a review of the draft guidelines with regard to total road closures;
- review the regulations now imposed on brigades undertaking roadside burns;
- installation by power companies of breakaway couplings on the pole end of service cables to buildings;
- flexibility in charging for attendance at false alarms;
- OH& S issues associated with the use of Class A Foam;
- provision of a forward control vehicle suitable for command, control and strike team roles for Groups;
- purchase of 25mm lay flat hose;
- the suspension of a volunteer's endorsement to drive a CFA vehicle as a result of a private vehicle accident;
- issuing of additional pagers, and pagers to be issued to volunteers with Minimum Skills training when issued with PPC;

- access to the VIPER paging system;
- issues with On-Line Paging Service eg. length of messages; restrictions on selection of recipients; appending of message originator; notification pages of emergency pages to non-emergency circuit.
- re-introduction of the formalised Vehicle Development Matrix in order to map out the process to design, develop, manufacture, commission and roll out of new vehicles (using the Heavy Pumper process as a template);
- review the travelling reimbursement rate paid to volunteers;
- BMT members be involved in the allocation of additional staff into integrated stations;
- issues raised at the 2008 Joint Open Forum.

STRUCTURAL PROTECTIVE CLOTHING

Operations Manager Neil Bumpstead has been appointed as the PPC Program Co-ordinator and will manage the project to distribute the new structural PPC to brigades. It is anticipated that this will take up to three years to complete. CFA will provide the new PPC to brigades based on their activity level. The busiest 100 brigades will be the initial brigades to receive their PPC.

Volunteers are to be offered a choice between the Nomex and PBI Gold ensembles. The Nomex ensemble will be issued in its original lime green/yellow colour. This was the ensemble ranked as the preferred ensemble by the PPC Working Party.

Volunteers will continue to wear their current PPC until the new structural gear is issued. The future use of the current turnout coat will be determined by the PPC Committee, however, the Associations have advocated the need for a suitable jacket for volunteers to wear in inclement weather.

VFBV WEBPAGE

The new VFBV webpage has been operating for some months now and the large quantity of positive feedback confirms that it is a vast improvement on the previous webpage. The site is regularly updated, has a breadth of current information and provides opportunity for comment on some key topics. A Regional page will be trialed in Region 13, 14 and 23 during May/June and if the idea proves to be useful, a Regional page will be made available for each Regional Council as a means to support improved communication and discussion of local issues. Please visit the VFBV webpage at <http://www.vfbv.com.au>. VRFBA and VUFBA information is accessible from this address.

ROAD CLOSURE GUIDELINES

Late last year Victoria Police, in conjunction with CFA and DSE, issued guidelines for the management of traffic points during wildfires. VFBV have raised concerns with CFA on behalf of many volunteers who feel these guidelines were introduced without adequate consultation and without due regard for impact on local communities.

At its meeting on 30th March the Associations had the opportunity to raise this matter personally with DCO Greg Esnouf who explained the background to the initiative and advised that the guidelines will be reviewed at the end of the fire season. DCO Esnouf has committed to ensuring VFBV and volunteers have input into this review.

BRIGADE OWNED VEHICLE WORKING PARTY UNIFORM WORKING PARTY

These two Working Parties have met over recent months. Whilst the meetings have discussed basic principles only at this stage, it is pleasing that some progress has been made in these two areas.

STATE GOVERNMENT VALUING VOLUNTEERS PROGRAM

On 1st July 2003, the State Government introduced a program in support of emergency service volunteers. The program focused on four areas of volunteerism ie. Recognition, Recruitment, Retention and Support. The four agencies involved are CFA, SES, Life Saving Victoria and Coast Guard Victoria.

The first stage of the program saw about \$3M committed to projects to assist the agencies in the areas mentioned above. The first stage ended on 30th June 2007. A further four year program has been approved with an additional \$3M committed by the State Government.

CFA projects to receive funding have been:

- Additional Relationship and Diversity Awareness Sessions
- Employer Recognition Program
- Junior Volunteer Development Program
- Volunteer Leadership Development
- Welfare Fund Feasibility Project
- Volunteer Support Services Awareness Program
- Volunteer Health and Wellbeing Program
- Focus Group for Younger Members of the Community
- Research into 25-44 year old non-volunteers
- Volunteer Recruitment Aide-Memoir
- CALD Focus Groups
- Youth Engagement Program
- Improving communications/information to Volunteers
- Delivery of CIS Peers Cert IV in Community Services.

As well as agency representatives on the Working Party, CFA volunteers have direct representation through VFBV, the VRFBA and the VUFBA.

BRIGADE ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS

The Associations have supported a proposition recommended by the CFA to encourage brigades who wish to transfer from a manual accounting system to an electronic accounting system, for the maintenance of their financial records, to adopt the Australian Taxation Office e-Record program as their approved program. e-Record is fully supported by the ATO and is updated from time to time.

The system is available free of charge for download from the ATO website or on CD ROM. Area Finance Officers have been issued with a copy of the CD and can assist brigades. Brigades using other accounting systems including manual systems, are able to continue to use the system of their choice.

WELFARE FUND FOR ALL CFA VOLUNTEERS

VFBV continues to work towards the implementation of a Welfare Fund for all CFA volunteers similar to the current Welfare Fund operated by the VUFBA. An initial capital injection will be required for the Fund to become operational and VFBV is currently looking into a prospective source for this funding.

The VUFBA Welfare Fund is financed by the urban brigades through affiliation fees. It is envisaged that a similar arrangement would be necessary for the proposed Fund to ensure its continued operation.

VUFBA SECRETARY POSITION RE-ADVERTISED

The VUFBA received a small number of applications for the position of Association Secretary. Current Secretary Peter Davis has advised the Association that he intends to retire in early July. In view of the small number of applications, the Association has re-advertised the position with a closing date of 30th May. An advertisement for the position has been forwarded to all brigades and is included in The Fireman. A position description is included in the VUFBA section of the webpage.

CHIEF OFFICER'S POSITION PAPER ON BRIGADE AND MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION

The Chief Officer has now released his Position Paper on Brigade and Membership Classification. The Position Paper has been developed following receipt of feedback to the Chief Officer's initial Discussion Paper on this subject. The Associations jointly provided feedback on the Discussion Paper along with several brigades. Brigades are encouraged to discuss the contents of the Position Paper and to provide any feedback to the Chief Officer. The Chief Officer intends to submit his final draft to the CFA Board in September.

CFA VOLUNTEER ACCESS TO NATIONAL PARKS

VFBV has been advised that the State Government is in the final stages of implementing the Free Access for Volunteers to National Parks policy. Volunteers will receive information on this initiative, including how to obtain free access to the Parks, in the near future. Further information will be provided by VFBV as soon as it comes to hand.

2008 AUXILIARY CONFERENCE, DROMANA

The 2008 Auxiliary Conference will be held at the Dromana Fire Station on Saturday 16th August. Registration 9.00am, with the Conference commencing at 10.00am; \$10 per person. Guest speakers will include DCO Steve Warrington, Commissioner for Women's Health, former Chairperson of TRAG (Teenage Road Accident Group), representative from Bendigo Bank and a presentation in regard to 'Generation Y'. Invitations will be forwarded by the Dromana organising Committee. For further inquiries, please contact Irene Pilbeam 5986 8025 or Shirley Desmond 5981 8888.

The VFBV Auxiliary Working Party, formed at the 2007 Conference, continues to meet and develop a database of Auxiliaries. Members of the Working Party have so far contacted approximately 45% of brigades to ascertain whether an Auxiliary exists, and contact details of 121 Auxiliaries have now been included on the database.

MEETING OF INTEGRATED BRIGADES

On Sunday 6th July 2008, the Associations will be holding a meeting of volunteer officers of Integrated Brigades. These meetings are held annually and give the volunteer officers of integrated brigades the opportunity to discuss common issues. The meeting will be held at CFA Headquarters, on Sunday 6th July and for catering purposes, all attending are asked to advise the VUFBA by 3rd July if attending.

VFBV BOARD REGIONAL MEETINGS

The Board of VFBV will hold its next two Board meetings at Regional locations:

Kerang Fire Station – Friday 2nd May 2008
Benalla Fire Station – Friday 30th May 2008

Following the Board meetings, volunteers are invited to meet with the Board members to raise any issues they wish to discuss and also to receive updates on current issues. The Regional meetings with volunteers will commence at 6.30pm following a light meal at 6.00pm. For catering purposes, volunteers intending to attend should advise VFBV, VRFBA or VUFBA by the Friday preceding the meeting.

In addition to the Regional meetings of VFBV Board, VFBV CEO and other representatives have continued to attend many Regional Council meetings. Since our last Newsletter, VFBV CEO has attended joint Regional Council meetings in Regions 9, 20 and 2, and VRFBA Region 10 Council meeting. Region 14 Joint Council meeting was attended by Bob MacDonald. These visits are an important part of VFBV's commitment to having close links with grass roots issues and Regional Council forums.

ASSOCIATION INVOLVEMENT IN CFA COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES ETC.

At the Joint Meeting of the Associations, reports were received of Association input on behalf of volunteers into various CFA Committees etc. over recent months.

These reports covered:

- Light Pumper Replacement
- Replacement of Aerial Appliances
- Heavy Pumper Replacement
- H & S Policy Committee
- FEM Committee
- Brigade Financial Management Project Meetings
- Joint HR/Associations Learning & Development Committee
- Community Safety Committee
- Research & Development Committee
- Mapping Committee
- Joint Communications Committee
- Equity and Diversity Committee
- CSESP
- Operational Catering Working Party
- Medium Pumper Tanker Working Party
- Web Mail Project.

CHAMPIONSHIP ITEMS:

Team of the Year

Following the Urban State Championship, the VUFBA has nominated as the **'2008 Team of the Year'**:

Murray Anderson	(Dandenong)
Craig Briody	(Wendouree)
Josh Clark	(Maffra)
Brendan Hawkes	(Wendouree)
Steven Myers	(Drouin/Bunyip)
Rick Owen	(Dandenong)
Jarrold Squires	(Melton)
Andy Waterson	(Dandenong)
Tom Waterson	(Dandenong)
Coach - Matthew MacDonald	(Whittlesea)

2009 Australasian Championship

The VUFBA has called for Expressions of Interest from brigades wishing to compete at the 2009 Australasian Championship to be held in Rotorua, New Zealand, October 2009. Expressions of Interest must be lodged with the VUFBA by 30th May 2008.

VUFBA Judges & Officials School

The Association will be holding a Judges & Officials School at Fiskville on Saturday 18th October 2008. Nomination forms have been forwarded to all urban brigades. The Association urges brigades to encourage new judges and officials who have not attended a previous Association School or Local Judges School to nominate.

VUFBA State Championships 2010 – 2012

Recently the VUFBA called for Expressions of Interest to host the Junior and Senior State Championships over the years 2010-2012. Six applications to host a Junior Championship and three applications to host a Senior Championship were received. The Association's Competition & Rules Committee will visit and meet with each brigade submitting an application over the weekend 19th & 20th July 2008. The successful venues will be announced at the Association's A.G.M. in September.

VRFBA Championship Numbers Increase

The number of teams that competed in the 2008 State Rural Championships, held at Wodonga on 5th and 6th April, showed an increase of four over the previous year. This was more significant in that Wodonga is at an extreme part of the State compared with the 2007 venue of Learmonth (near Ballarat).

All events were strongly contested but in good spirit. Each year new records are set and this year was no exception. In the Wet Hydrant & Tanker, Linton A set a new record of 26.39 secs in 11-13 years section, and Greta A a new record of 24.70 secs in the 11-15 years section. Greta A continued their good form setting a new record in the Wet Hose & Ladder (11-15 years) of 14.75 secs, and also new records in the Tanker, Priming, Pumping & Ladder and Tanker - Drawing Water from Tank events. Teams from St Pauls and Regentville in NSW competed in the junior events. Major winners of the Championships were:

SENIORS: A Division:	1 st	Yarrambat
	2 nd	Moorooduc
	3 rd	Hurstbridge
B Division:	1 st	Mt Buninyong
	2 nd	Connewarre
	3 rd	Mandurang
C Division:	1 st	Bowman's Murrumbidgee
	2 nd	Shepparton
	3 rd	Connewarre

JUNIORS: 11-13 years	1 st	Linton
	2 nd	Moyhu
	3 rd	Mossi-Tambo
11-15 years	1 st	Greta
	2 nd	Mt Buninyong
	3 rd	Connewarre

Overall - Greta

The 2009 State Championships will be held at Swan Hill on 4th and 5th April and brigades are encouraged to book their accommodation early.