



VOLUNTEER FIRE
BRIGADES VICTORIA

Newsletter

April 2009

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MAGNIFICENT EFFORT – VFBV PRESIDENT REPORTS

President Gary Lyttle AFSM, in his report to VFBV State Council meeting last month, made special mention of the magnificent effort by all CFA members in combating the recent fire emergencies. Gary spoke of the selfless deeds of all members whether on the fireground, back in their own patches protecting their communities, or providing that special support that makes this volunteer based CFA the unique and effective organisation that it is. In mentioning the special support that allows volunteers to do what they do, Gary indicated that without the support of family and employers, our volunteers could not function. Our self employed volunteers give plenty, well above what may be considered normal, and for this we owe them a debt of thanks.

Gary asked that we all look out for each other as we move to the recovery phase of this long summer campaign and take the time to spend with family and friends, to ensure the recovery also includes us.

MINISTER CONFIRMS VOLUNTEER NOMINATIONS TO CFA BOARD

The term for CFA Board member Peter Marke, one of our volunteer representatives since May 2004, is about to expire and the VFBV Board and our membership wishes to congratulate Peter on his hard work and advocacy for volunteers during his service to the Board. With Peter deciding not to re-nominate for a further term, his service concludes on 14 April 2009.

As a result of advice from the Governor in Council, two volunteer representatives have now had their appointments to the CFA Board announced. Following re-appointment, **David Gibbs** returns for a second term and **Tunde Meikle**, Region 15 joins the Board, replacing Peter Marke. Tunde joins David, **Michael Tudball** and **Kevin Erwin** as our four volunteer representatives on the CFA Board.

Congratulations to both new appointees.

PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE OF THANKS

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd contacted VFBV CEO Andrew Ford to personally convey his appreciation and recognition of the tremendous work undertaken by CFA volunteers during the recent bushfires, and asked that his best wishes and thanks be conveyed to all CFA volunteers. The Association has received terrific support from the Victorian State Government at all levels, and similar messages of appreciation have also been conveyed by Premier, John Brumby; Minister for Police & Emergency Services, Bob Cameron, CFA Chairman, Kerry Murphy and other senior officials.

The Prime Minister and CEO Andrew Ford discussed at length the enormous contribution made by CFA volunteers to the community, and also the contribution of volunteers and paid personnel from the many agencies who work as a team to deal with such emergencies and everyday service demands across Victoria. The Prime Minister advised that he was committed to working with VFBV on behalf of CFA volunteers to talk about what works; what we need; what more can be done to maintain and build an even more effective volunteer based CFA. As part of discussions, a number of initiatives have been identified that may in the future be practical and tangible responses to support and recognise volunteers and volunteerism.

Some areas covered include:

- Initiatives to support employers and our self employed volunteers who support volunteer contributions.
- Promoting the value and importance of volunteerism to the community.
- Opportunities to review the tax system in ways that encourage and support volunteerism.
- Recognition of the professionalism and value of the work performed by volunteers.
- Address communications infrastructure, coverage and reliability concerns.

UFU/CFA STAFFING STRATEGY

The Board of VFBV is extremely concerned about the decision of the UFU/CFA Board of Reference/Disputes Board on brigade staffing published by its chairman, former Industrial Relations Commissioner, Bob Merriman on 7 April 2009.

The Board of Reference/Disputes Board was established under the UFU's enterprise agreement and empowered by a common law deed signed by the CFA with the UFU last year.

The decision, if imposed on CFA, sets career staffing levels at 25 brigades and establishes manning levels for appliances at a number of these brigades – overriding the powers of the Chief Officer and the Authority under the CFA Act.

The Disputes Board even determined that the “... CFA must develop a Volunteer Development Program in consultation with the UFU and the Volunteer Association..”!

VFBV supports the CFA as a volunteer and community based fire and emergency service. We support the current integrated model of paid career staff working with and in support of volunteers at key locations as determined necessary by the Chief Officer in consultation with volunteers, staff and the community. We do not support industrial agreements, deals and fixes that override the statutory role of the Chief Officer and the Authority to determine operational staffing and resource deployment.

Extremely concerned by this process (including its precedent for the future) VFBV wrote to the Chairman and CEO of CFA, the Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on 9 April requesting further action on this matter be suspended and the matter be reviewed in accord with the Volunteer Charter and the associated common law deed between CFA and VFBV. At the time of publication we are awaiting replies.

VFBV BLACK SATURDAY VOLUNTEER RECOVERY FUND

Donations for the Black Saturday Volunteer Recovery Fund continue to accumulate with some very generous corporate donations being received, as well as smaller individually made donations directly into the Bendigo Bank. Details of losses experienced by our volunteers are still being amassed, however we can report some known details that show 89 homes lost or damaged and 38 notified other losses.

VFBV officers in co-operation with CFA Regional Office staff, are in the process of documenting the extent of loss or damage for every affected volunteer so that the Fund Trustees can make equitable decisions on the distribution of grants.

AUSTRALIAN FIRE SERVICE MEDALS

Tom Brodie, a founding VFBV Board member has been awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal in the Australia Day Honours List in recognition of his contribution to the fire service in Victoria. Tom is well known throughout CFA and has travelled all over Victoria on behalf of volunteers not only in his time as State President of the VRFBA but in his current role of VFBV Board member.

Well known for his capacity to consult widely on many matters Tom has always put the volunteer view forcefully and is highly respected for his efforts in seeking change where he sees it appropriate.

Other CFA members in DCO Greg Esnouf and Barwon Corangamite Operations Manager Bob Barry were also recipients of AFSM's in the Australia Day Honours List and we extend our congratulations to them.

Other volunteers who received awards included Tom Ford from Miners Rest and Alice Knight from Linton who both received OAM's for their service to their communities and Mack Stagg from Tambo Crossing who received an Ambulance Service Award.

BUSHFIRE ROYAL COMMISSION

VFBV will be making a submission to the Bushfire Royal Commission on behalf of CFA volunteers. The VFBV Board made this decision at its March meeting. VFBV has been granted leave to appear before the Commission to present its case and also to provide any assistance to the Commission wherever possible in any matters relating to volunteerism; the CFA community, volunteer based service model; and in general maintaining and building an even more effective volunteer based CFA. A small project team has been put together to prepare VFBV's submission. Initial work on gathering relevant information and developing the submission has commenced.

2009 FIRES TASK FORCE

CFA has established the 2009 Fires Task Force. DCO Greg Esnouf is acting in the role of Task Force Co-ordinator until an appointment to this position is made. Two supporting teams have also been established: the Community Safety Team lead by Alan Rhodes and the Emergency Management Team lead by Greg Esnouf. Legal, communications, management support and welfare has also been provided.

Key work for this task force is to co-ordinate and prepare CFA's response to the many matters arising from the summer fires and facilitate the preparations for CFA's submissions to inquiries and the Teague Royal Commission.

VFBV STATE COUNCIL MEETS – 29 MARCH

A very successful meeting of VFBV State Council was held at the Burwood Campus of Deakin University on Sunday 29 March. Forty seven delegates from across the State heard reports from CFA Board members, the VFBV President and CEO, and DCO Greg Esnouf AFSM who was invited to brief those present on the status and preparations by CFA for the Teague Royal Commission and the overall recovery effort, of which CFA is heavily involved.

In preparing a VFBV response to briefings and commission hearings, many of the issues associated with preparation, prevention, response and recovery were workshopped with delegates.

Delegates have been active attending and contributing to debrief processes around the State, and this VFBV State Council meeting provided the opportunity to consolidate the key issues and prioritise the matters that VFBV will take forward.

ITEMS TO BE RAISED WITH THE CFA INCLUDE:

- Advice to Brigades when orders can be placed for the new long service awards;
- Melton Brigade's submission to New Fire Station Working Party;
- CO's Standing Orders and SOP's included on CFA Intranet and Brigades-Online;

- Including the names of deceased firefighters on a National Memorial;
- Streamline/improve the records process of members transferring to another brigade, and in retaining equipment etc.;
- Appropriate training or admin support for brigades in completing the new police record check forms;
- Update in regard to driver fatigue exemptions;
- Working Party investigating email provision for CFA volunteers;
- Clarification of the role of BASO's;
- Service concerns with Halmatro;
- Dual RAR response in the Toolern Vale area;
- Regions having the opportunity to view the new Light Tanker;
- Greater consideration for volunteers who have requisite competencies for Structural Instructor positions;
- Including residents' names in the Map Books;
- Power to undertake roadside burning if seen as a hazard;
- On-going funding and expanding the role of road and rail co-ordinators;
- CFA's policy in regard to Centrelink making payments available to volunteers involved in the February Bushfires.

ITEMS TO BE REFERRED TO JOINT COMMITTEES:

Issues raised at State Council by Regional Councils and Brigades which are to be directly referred to Joint CFA/Association Committees including Equipment Review, Radio Replacement User Reference Panel, FEM Advisory, Finance Review, Communications, Community Safety, Operations and Training, include:

- Inappropriate voltage converters installed in Tankers;
- Effectiveness of vehicle protection sprays in high wind;
- Brigades likely to receive the new Light Pumper, viewing the prototypes or involvement in discussions;
- Retrofit the rear cabin doors of 3.4C Tankers, as they are unsafe in a burn out situation, and have no rails or seating available on the back;
- CFA's response to issue raised of appropriate tyres on vehicles;
- Comments from Clunes and Longwood Brigades in regard to the Radio Replacement Project;
- Hydrostatic testing of fire extinguishers;
- CFA Donations Account;
- Supply of Pagers and the upgrading of the SMS facility;
- Extra workload placed on Brigades in regard to risk reduction/mopping up;
- Issues in regard to roadblocks raised by the Grampians Group.

VFBV OPEN FORUM RESCHEDULED

A decision to reschedule the VFBV Open Forum was made by the VFBV Board well before the events of 7 February and wisely, the consensus view that our members were engaged in a difficult fire danger period proved to be prophetic.

The VFBV OPEN FORUM will now be held at Deakin University's Burwood Campus on Saturday 20th June 2009 commencing 1.00pm, with Lunch available from 12.30pm, and all Brigades are encouraged to send representatives.

For catering purposes, it is important Brigades advise VFBV of numbers attending **by Friday 12th June**.

VFBV BOARD / REGION 2 MEETING

The VFBV Board and Regional Meeting at Eaglehawk Fire Station originally to be held 3rd April, has been re-scheduled to Friday 1st May.

The Regional Council and all Brigades in Region 2 have been advised of the change of date, and are invited to send their representatives to meet with the Board on 1st May.

The meeting will allow the Region's volunteers to raise any issues they wish to discuss and also to receive updates on current issues. The Region meeting will commence at 6.30pm following a light meal at 6.00pm.

2009 AUXILIARY CONFERENCE, FISKVILLE

The 2009 Auxiliary Conference will be held at the CFA Training College, Fiskville on Saturday 15th August, from 10.00am to 5.00pm, with Registration at 9.30am.

Following confirmation of Guest Speakers, the Auxiliary Working Party will be forwarding invitations to all Auxiliaries late May.

Dinner and accommodation at Fiskville has been tentatively booked, and will depend on responses received. Due to the limited accommodation available at Fiskville, Auxiliaries are requested to confirm their attendance early, to ensure finalisation of bookings.

VICTORIA RACING CLUB – RACE DAY 7th March

Over 450 CFA members enjoyed a great day at Flemington hosted by the Victorian Racing Club on Saturday 7 March. As guests of the VRC, members enjoyed a free day at the races, partaking in the hospitality of the hosts and their affiliates.

A special race, renamed in honour of all CFA, was run and won by a horse and rider bearing the CFA chequerboard red and white colours, a very fitting tribute indeed.

As an initiative of the VRC, this race day and the renamed race may become a permanent fixture for this race meeting each year. VRC and its affiliates most generously donated proceeds from the race day to the VFBV, a total nearing \$350K.

DISPLAY OF CONCEPT UNIFORM

The Joint CFA/VFBV Uniform Working Party has been meeting through the latter part of 2008 to establish the business rules, eligibility principles and design options for the provision of one CFA uniform for all members.

Concept designs for a uniform jacket have been obtained and a period of display and consultation has commenced, with these firstly displayed at the recent State Championships at Warrnambool and Swan Hill.

A broad brimmed hat to replace the peak cap is also on display.

Feedback is being sought to allow the Working Party to arrive at a final recommendation later this year.

State Council delegates viewed the uniforms at the March State Council meeting and they will again be displayed and feedback sought at the VFBV Open Forum in June.

VFBV WELFARE FUND

- FINANCIAL COUNSELLING

The Committee of Management advises that the current financial situation is putting increased pressure on members and their families in managing financial affairs and basic household budgeting.

An increasing number of applications seeking Welfare Fund assistance have clearly indicated that some guidance for applicants in budgeting and planning would be very beneficial and most welcome.

Limited free financial advice and counselling is available to CFA members and can be initiated in the first instance by contacting the newly appointed Area HR Managers.

STRUCTURAL PPC UPDATE

CFA has advised that the selected manufacturer of the fabric for the structural ensemble has been heavily impacted by the global economic downturn. Administrators have been appointed and negotiations are in progress with prospective buyers with the goal to allow the company to continue to trade.

During the period of administration, the fabric manufacturer continues to produce fabric, which is then processed by Stewart and Heaton into the 2 versions of the Structural ensemble.

These problems are delaying the roll out of the PPC program and VFBV is monitoring the situation closely to ensure CFA does what it can to resolve the current situation.

INTEGRATED BRIGADES FORUM

A meeting held at Craigieburn Fire Station on 18 January was attended by the Chief Officer Russell Rees AFMS and volunteer representatives from many integrated brigades across the State.

Among the items discussed was the tabling of discussion papers from 2 Working Parties:

- The Role of the Senior Volunteer in Integrated Brigades, and
- Station Design – Integrated Brigades.

The meeting resolved to further the consultation process with all integrated brigades and to establish regional forums that will allow greater participation and feedback to both working parties.

These forums are planned for mid 2009.

INTERSTATE SUPPORT FOR CFA VOLUNTEERS

Many of our interstate colleagues have dug deep and fundraised very hard to pitch into the recovery effort for our members who have suffered loss as a result of this summer's devastating fires.

Cheques have been received from interstate teams competing at our recent Championships and significant donations have been forwarded from the New South Wales and Western Australian Associations.

Many thanks to all these groups, their contributions are greatly appreciated.

2009 Urban Judges School & Coaches Meeting

The Association will be conducting an Urban Judges & Officials School on Saturday 3rd October, and a meeting of Urban Coaches on Sunday 4th October, both to be held at Fiskville.

Nomination forms have been forwarded to all competing Urban brigades. Interested members from non-competing Brigades, can download the nomination form from:

http://www.vfbv.com.au/ch_judges.php

VFBV STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

With the support of CFA, the VFBV State Championships continued as planned with some scaling back of some functions to accommodate the continued operational and recovery commitment by CFA staff and volunteers.

The **Junior Urban Championship** were held at Hamilton over the weekend of 21-22 February. Opened by Hon Bob Cameron MP Minister for Police and Emergency Services and well attended by teams, supporters and families, our congratulations go to Hamilton Brigade and the Championship Committee for the preparations and hosting of this event.

The **Senior Urban Championship** held at Warrnambool were opened by the Premier, the Hon John Brumby MP and also attended by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon Bob Cameron MP. The Warrnambool Brigade and the Championship Committee are to be congratulated on an outstanding effort.

The **Senior and Junior Rural Championship** held at Swan Hill were opened by the Victorian Governor David DeKretser AC on the weekend of 4th and 5th April. Also in attendance to officiate at the opening, were the Premier Hon John Brumby MP and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services Hon Bob Cameron MP. Held at the Swan Hill Showgrounds the weather and the well grassed running surface combined to make conditions ideal for the event.

Each of the Championships received great feedback from competitors and spectators alike, the brigades and Championships' Committees are to be congratulated.

VFBV Championship Key Results

Congratulations to all competitors on their efforts over all the Championships, full details of results for all *Championships have been posted on the VFBV website.*

Urban Junior overall winning team **Maffra** with 57 points
Urban Senior Grand Aggregate winning brigade **Maryvale**

Rural Senior Aggregate Winners

A Section: **Hurstbridge A**
B Section: **Connewarre B**
C Section: **Dunrobin/Nangeela B**

Champion Rural Junior Brigade: **Dunrobin/Nangeela**

Urban "2009 Team of the Year"

Following the Urban State Championship, the Association has nominated as the **'2009 Team of the Year'**:

Shane Flowers, Coach (Maryvale)
Craig Briody (Wendouree)
Josh Clark (Maffra)
John Dewsbury (Trafalgar/Moe)
Dominic Keating (Maryvale)
Anthony Schultz (Belgrave)
Andy Waterson (Dandenong)
Tom Waterson (Dandenong)

The Association advises that the 2009 Team of the Year will not necessarily be the Victorian team for the 2010 WA/Victoria Challenge event. The Victorian team for the Challenge event at the 2010 State Urban Championship will be selected by members of the Urban Competition & Rules Committee and a panel of Coaches.