



VOLUNTEER FIRE
BRIGADES VICTORIA

Newsletter

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STATE COUNCIL MEETING – 7 December 2008

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) held its first State Council meeting this month chaired by VFBV President Gary Lyttle. Delegates were welcomed to the first State Council meeting of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria. A minutes silence was observed for Region 23 delegate Barrie Sanders who passed away suddenly in October.

Discussion on matters affecting volunteers around the State included:

- Concern with the paging system and the distribution of pagers were some of several issues discussed during the meeting. It was reported by one Regional Council that alert paging regarding strike team deployment was creating numerous issues. After some discussion of the matter, it was agreed that VFBV recommend to CFA that it amend the business rules for EAS and provide non alerting paging in regard to strike teams.
- It was also agreed by State Councillors that more pagers be made available as there is a shortfall. Not all members with Minimum Skills have access to pagers and in most instances this is the difference in them responding or not. It was agreed to ask CFA to investigate ways of ensuring all operational volunteers have access to a paging device. In addition, it was agreed to advise CFA that in regard to observation reports, brigades are not receiving feedback. There remain black holes in the system and CFA needs to resolve these issues. The Association will ask CFA to create an EAS Paging Working Party under the Joint Communications Committee and that all the reported issues be referred to this party immediately.
- Problems with the pump cooling of a number of foam systems fitted to 3.4 and 2.4C tankers were brought to the attention of the meeting and discussed at length. Delegates agreed that an immediate approach be made to CFA requesting this issue to be rectified urgently and, at the same time, draw attention to the DSE solution. In addition the Association will request CFA investigate an engineering solution for retrofit and expressed concern of the OH&S issues this problem raises.
- VFBV will express its concern to CFA regarding the inadequate level of consultation with local authorities in relation to fire prevention along the Hume Freeway. A request will also be made to implement an assessment of the adequacy of the level of fire prevention works undertaken and planned as soon as possible.
- Discussion was held on the amount of theoretical content in the Wildfire Minimum Skills program and the inability of brigades to mentor new members while undertaking training at incidents and brigade activities during recruit training. It was agreed that VFBV initiate discussions with CFA in regard to Minimum Skills training with a view for far more practical content and to allow mentoring of recruits on the fireground.
- A report was given regarding a CFA Board decision paper in respect to Brigade and Membership classification. Information was provided to delegates regarding the content of the paper, a recent meeting with Deputy Chief Officer Geoff Conway about brigade and membership classification.
- A report outlining recommendations by the Drought Relief Strategy Committee was given together with its recommendations to CFA Board that CFA contribute a minimum of \$50,000 towards drought relief to brigades around the State whose members are under stress and that training and meetings be scaled back for the next six months to relieve some pressure. It was also reported that some of the outer metropolitan regions have again developed their own projects to assist with support.

CFA BOARD VACANCY

The Association has forwarded to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services a list of four rural volunteers in a priority order, and a list of four urban volunteers in a priority order, for he to select two members to the CFA Board, one representing rural volunteers and one representing urban volunteers.

These two CFA Board positions become vacant in April 2009 when the 3 year terms of current Board Members, David Gibbs and Peter Marke expire. Both David and Peter were eligible to re-apply; David Gibbs is included on the list of Rural members, however, Peter Marke advised he would not be re-applying.

The lists of names were approved by the VFBV Board at its meeting on 12th December following interviews with applicants in response to advertisements for Expressions of Interest.

VFBV BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Following interviews in response to Expressions of Interest to apply for two additional VFBV Board positions, one representing rural brigades and one representing urban brigades, Ian Nash (rural) and Rob Waterson (urban) have been appointed to the VFBV Board.

The two additional Board positions arose under VFBV's new Constitution following the amalgamation of the two Volunteer Associations, which increased the Board from 8 to 10 members.

The nominations of Ian Nash and Rob Waterson to the VFBV Board were ratified by the State Council at its meeting, 7th December 2008.

NEW STATE COUNCILLOR

Newly elected member for Region 23, Ex Captain Bill Polwarth, attended his first meeting as a State Councillor at the State Council meeting 7th December. Bill replaces the late Barrie Sanders, who passed away suddenly in October. Bill Polwarth has been a member of the Benalla brigade for 37 years, an officer of the brigade for 21 years, including Captain for 9 years, and the brigade's representative on the Regional Council since 1999.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

CEO Andrew Ford and a number of delegates and volunteers were privileged to represent all CFA volunteers at an announcement coinciding with International Volunteers Day on Friday 5th December on the steps of State Parliament in Melbourne.

Police and Emergency Services Minister Hon. Bob Cameron welcomed everyone to the event and Premier Hon. John Brumby thanked all the volunteers for their service to the community. Minister for Community Development Hon. Peter Batchelor announced funding to enable a range of programs in support of volunteerism and volunteer recognition.

REGIONAL VISITS

VFBV Board and Association officers have been actively travelling the State meeting with Regional Councils and volunteers since the 4th October launch of VFBV. These meetings have provided input wherever it is required to enable the Councils to move forward in a structured way and for them to understand the new arrangements.

Visits included Regional Councils 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 22. The program of Regional visits will continue through 2009, with some planning and strategy forums planned to roll out through the year.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY VOLUNTEER SUPPORT FUND – NEVSF Grant Program

The 2009 NEVSF Grant Scheme has been announced, with \$3.2M available nationally. Victoria's share will be in the order of \$500K. Grants are available for specific purposes, namely Training, Recruitment and Retention.

The following advice received from the Assistant Director EMA Kim Fitzgerald relating to applications that would be viewed favourably are:

- Equipment focused applications are not likely to be highly rated (previously laptops, projectors etc. were supported in earlier rounds).
- More "Strategic Projects" with a Regional/Statewide focus, possibly joint agency will be viewed favourably.
- High potential for success will be joint agency projects focusing on programs relating to volunteer recruitment, retention and training.

Brigades and Groups are encouraged to look at projects that demonstrate the grant funds are providing benefit to programs and services that directly impact on volunteer recruitment, retention and training and can provide a broad benefit. In the last round of grants of the 600 applications received in Victoria, 120 were successful, and this coming round has a smaller grant pool available.

QUENCHMASTER FOAM – PUMP OVERHEATING

Following representations from VFBV, CFA are investigating an engineering solution to the potential overheating issues surrounding the pump cooling on Quenchmaster foam equipped 2.4 C and 3.4C Tankers. Regional delegates have raised potential overheating of pumps as cooling lines to pumps are isolated as part of the operational sequence in activating foam operations. Possible solutions are to be investigated.

In the interim, pump operators and crews are asked to closely monitor pump casing temperatures manually while set for foam operations.

GAS PROP at CFA BANGHOLME CAMPUS

CFA has advised that the inoperable Gas Training Prop at Bangholme Campus in Carrum will be repaired / replaced and funds have been approved for this work to occur. A works specification has been developed and tenders will be called in December 2008 with an expected completion in April 2009.

JUDGE GORDON LEWIS's PPC REPORT

VFBV acknowledges the release of Judge Gordon Lewis's Report to Government on the events and impediments that surrounded the delays in reaching an agreed position for the specification and supply of structural protective clothing for CFA and MFESB firefighters.

In his report, Judge Lewis makes four recommendations to avoid similar occurrences in the future:

1. Form a Standing Technology Committee to monitor technological developments and recommend improvements to PPC for adoption by the MFB and CFA;

2. Proper project management process and procedures should be adopted for projects as complex as the joint PPC project;
3. Clause 47 of the CFA EBA should be amended to require consultation with, rather than the agreement of, the UFU as to the PPC to be provided;
4. The MFB, CFA, UFU and Volunteer organisations should immediately begin to address the underlying relationship issues preventing them from working co-operatively in the delivery of services of the MFB and CFA to the public of Victoria.

VFBV welcomes Judge Lewis's report and looks forward to robust and effective consultation going forward to ensure the firefighters from CFA and other services are not adversely affected or deprived of essential protective equipment should some parties take a non consultative approach. Such delays in the future are untenable and provide the public of Victoria with a poorer standard of fire cover than they deserve.

STRUCTURAL PPC ALLOCATION – CAREER STAFF WHO ARE VOLUNTEERS

Region 13 Council raises a pertinent point for career firefighters who are volunteers with CFA brigades, as to the allocation of the number of sets of the new structural ensemble they are entitled to.

VFBV would seek to have all volunteers treated equally, and that the number of sets of the new structural ensemble is allocated on the same rationale as for any member. VFBV will make representations to CFA to reach agreement on the entitlement prescription to be applied to our volunteers who happen to work as career firefighters.

TRAINING DELIVERY REVIEW – GARNOCK REPORT

VFBV eagerly awaits the completion and release of David Garnock's report into Training Delivery expected in early 2009. VFBV delegates have made representations to David and a number of volunteer leaders took the opportunity to meet and speak with David on his fact finding tour of the State. David has conducted a thorough research project and has taken the opportunity of providing some preliminary briefings to groups during the consolidation phase of this project. VFBV State Executive members were fortunate to receive such a briefing and congratulated David on the detail he has amassed and his ability to process the issues. With an extensive background of training experience within the armed forces, VFBV has confidence that David will provide CFA with a comprehensive report and all report that will influence training delivery changes for the better.

RADIO REPLACEMENT PROJECT

VFBV delegates report that an opportunity exists until mid January for brigades and individuals to contribute to the finalisation of specifications for the replacement of the Motorola mobile and portable radios. Feature sets are being developed to map the desirable features of any replacement radio eg. Status buttons to communicate 'on-scene, returning and in station' would reduce radio traffic. Groups, brigades and individuals are encouraged to contribute to the list of features we would prefer, prior to a full specification being developed and going to tender in 2009. Submissions can be forwarded to the VFBV office for forwarding onto our committee members.

DROUGHT RELIEF FUND

Peter Downes and Bob MacDonald representing the VFBV Drought Relief Fund Committee recently met with CFA to discuss a Drought Relief Strategy for this coming year.

The meeting was chaired by CFA Chairman Kerry Murphy and representatives of the Board, General Managers and operational staff from regions affected as well as peer group support personnel were in attendance. General Managers Pat O'Brien, Alan Davies, Paul Hills and Don Kelly briefed the meeting on how the drought conditions were affecting their areas and the impact this was having on brigades and their members.

The VFBV representatives agreed to work together with CFA to achieve the best outcome we can for brigades under stress and the Chairman agreed to take a number of recommendations to the CFA Board for their consideration and he indicated he was confident of their support.

Yarra Area has recently made a concerted effort to raise funds to support the efforts of the VFBV Drought Relief Fund Committee and we are most grateful for the significant amount of money that has been received and pledged. This money will be used to provide food hampers etc in areas of real need.

Please note that cheques should be made payable to "CFA/VFBV Drought Relief Fund".

ITEMS TO BE RAISED WITH THE CFA INCLUDE:

- the Pump Workshop be conducted in April 2009, prior to the next round of tenders;
- clarify issues in regard to wildfire helmet lights, testing procedures, suitability etc.;
- amend the business rules for EAS paging in regard to strike teams, including the non emergency paging system;
- investigate ways of ensuring that all operational volunteers have an alerting device;
- issues in regard to observation reports eg. brigades not receiving feedback;
- create an EAS Paging Working Party under the Joint Communications Committee;
- issues with the use of Mildura brigade's tanker;
- consultation and treatments to manage the future directions for Carrum Downs brigade;
- pump cooling on Quench Master Foam Systems fitted to 3.4 and 2.4C Tankers; timelines for the retrofit and impact in regard to OH & S issues;
- Options for Crew Leader / Level 1 Controller draft paper;
- current proposals/activities in regard to employer support;
- the position of rear buttons on current turn out pants impinging on the lower back area when driving for long periods and sitting in ROPS when travelling over rough terrain;
- blanket cover/exemption for all CFA brigades conducting raffles having regard to the Gaming Regulations;
- Light Pumpers being delivered fully stowed;
- a more transparent process by Areas of recommendations for CSESP applications;

- ownership of CFA Stream website; ensuring content is not detrimental to the CFA and CFA's volunteers; a chat forum within the CFA website as an alternative;
- fire prevention (slashing) on the Hume Freeway; an assessment of the adequacy of the level of fire prevention works undertaken and planned;
- Minimum Skills training and criteria; a more practical application and mentoring of new recruits on the fireground;
- out sourcing Stop/Slow BAT Training, or develop alternative training;
- structural PPC entitlements for volunteers who are also career firefighters – VFBV endorses all volunteers are treated equitably;
- deployment of private equipment and compensation and liability cover at an accident;
- exemption for need to obtain a planning permit for the removal of native vegetation;
- clarification in regard to heavy vehicle fatigue management and exemption.

VFBV MEETING DATES 2009

VFBV's approved meetings for 2009 are as follows and Regional Councils are encouraged to schedule their meetings to accord with these Meetings:

<i>VFBV State Council</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>29th March 2009</i>
<i>Open Forum</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>20th June 2009</i>
<i>VFBV State Council</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>21st June 2009</i>
<i>VFBV State Council</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>12th Sept 2009</i>
<i>VFBV State Council</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>6th Dec 2009</i>

CHANGE OF DATE – 2009 OPEN FORUM

At its meeting on 7th December, the State Council agreed to delay the 2009 Open Forum until June, to enable members' attendance if the coming fire season proves as difficult as expected.

The 2009 Open Forum will be held Saturday 20th June, at Deakin Uni, Burwood Highway, Burwood. Further details will be forwarded with the next Newsletter.

Representatives from all CFA brigades are invited to attend to raise directly any issues of interest or concern and to receive reports on issues currently being dealt with by VFBV. All brigades are encouraged to send delegates to the Open Forum to receive direct feedback on VFBV's operations and to raise and discuss items of concern or interest.

VFBV BOARD / REGION 2 MEETING

The Board of VFBV will hold its 3rd April 2009 meeting in Region 2 at the Eaglehawk Fire Station. Following the Board meeting, all Regional Council and Brigade members in the Region are invited to meet with the Board at 6.30pm.

The Region's 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 Meeting will commence at 6.30pm following a light meal at 6.00pm. For catering purposes, volunteers intending to attend should advise the Association by Friday 27th March 2009.

Separate invitations have been forwarded to the Regional Council and the Region's brigades.

NEWSLETTER & INFO VIA EMAIL

Volunteers and brigades are reminded that the VFBV Newsletter and any information mailed with the quarterly Newsletter, can be emailed in addition to the mailed copy. If members wish to receive the Newsletter etc. via email, please provide your email address to us and we will email future editions to you. Please email your email address to j.laing@vfbv.com.au

The quarterly Newsletter is also available from the VFBV webpage.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ITEMS:

2011 URBAN STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Further to advice in the last Newsletter that investigations were continuing for the venue of the 2011 Senior State Urban Championship, it has now been approved that the Championship be held at Bendigo, conducted by the Bendigo Championships Committee.

URBAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Seventy Two teams are entered to compete at the 2009 Urban Senior Championships at Warrnambool including five interstate teams from Western Australia and New South Wales. Eighty teams have entered the Junior Championships at Hamilton, including Esperence (W.A.) and Hobart (Tasmania).

CHAMPION URBAN COMPETITOR

At the 2009 State Urban Senior Championship, a trophy will be presented to the 'Champion Competitor', which was instigated and proposed by Secretary Ron Schultz, a Life Member of the former VUFBA. Ron has offered to co-ordinate the process of calculating the Champion Competitor, and is providing the trophy. The Association thanks Ron for this initiative at the State level, and hopes this award will continue in the future.

FIRST AID – STATE URBAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

First Aid at the State Urban Championships is provided by CFA volunteers. This year we have a shortage of volunteers nominating to provide this service to the competitors and others attending the Championships. We have had less male First Aiders nominate to act in this role than in previous years, and only one female First Aider has nominated. If your brigade has Level 2 First Aiders who would be prepared to attend and assist, could you please forward their names and contact details to the Association. Whilst we need both males and females, we have an urgent need for additional female First Aiders.

RURAL COMPETITION RULE BOOK

The Rule Book for Rural Competitions has now been updated, and can be viewed on VFBV website.

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



Seasons Greetings

*VFBV President Gary Lyttle and Board Members,
Vice President Rural Peter Downes, Vice President
Urban Peter White and all State Councillors,
and VFBV staff, wish you all a Merry Xmas
and a Safe and Happy New Year*