

# Newsletter

Combined Newsletter of:

**JULY 2007**



**VFBV**



**VRFBA**



**VUFBA**

CEO Andrew Ford - 0407 681 416  
PO Box 453, Mt Waverley Vic 3149  
Tel: 03 9886 1141 Fax: 03 9886 1618  
E-mail: [vfbv@vfbv.com.au](mailto:vfbv@vfbv.com.au)  
Web: [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au)

Executive Officer Bob MacDonald  
- 0418 322 680  
5 Hamilton Street, Gisborne Vic 3437  
Tel: 03 5428 4005 Fax: 03 5428 4406  
E-mail: [vrfba@vfbv.com.au](mailto:vrfba@vfbv.com.au)  
Web: [www.vicnet.net.au/~vrfba/](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~vrfba/)

Secretary Peter Davis - 0407 334 685  
PO Box 91, Patterson Lakes Vic 3197  
Tel: 03 9775 0117 Fax: 03 9775 0096  
E-mail: [vufba@vfbv.com.au](mailto:vufba@vfbv.com.au)  
Web: [www.vicnet.net.au/~vufba/](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~vufba/)

## AUSTRALIAN FIRE SERVICE MEDALS

Congratulations are extended to the recipients of the Australian Fire Service Medal awarded in June's Queens Birthday 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:

- Edward Alan Clay AFSM (Tooradin)
- Maxwell John McLean AFSM (Moyston)
- Brian James Neal AFSM (Upwey)
- Leon Williams AFSM (Mooroopna).

## VACANCIES ON VFBV BOARD

The terms of office of Board Members Peter Downes (VRFBA) and Quentin Turner (VUFBA), are to expire at the next Annual Meeting of VFBV. Both members are eligible for re-appointment, however, any member of a financial brigade of their Association, is eligible to apply to fill the vacancies. An advertisement included in The Fireman newspaper, carries details of the vacancies, or details can be obtained from your respective Association.

## CONTINUING TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS

As well as representing volunteers at numerous meetings and working parties within CFA and with Government, VFBV places a high priority on hearing first hand the views and ideas of our constituents and many field visits were made during the past three months. CEO Andrew Ford attended Regional Council meetings at Region 22 (rural), Region 23 (joint), Region 24 (rural), Region 11 (rural), Region 10 (urban). VFBV representatives also attended meetings at Region 15 (joint), 22 (rural), 23 (joint), 2E, Region 6 (joint), Region 12 (joint) and fire station openings at Skipton and Malmsbury. These meetings provide a solid opportunity for VFBV representatives to hear first hand the issues of importance and provide a useful insight into the issues we are dealing with at State level. The majority of Regional Councils now meet jointly to some extent and seven either have, or are finalising, joint Constitutions.

## JUNE STATE JOINT ASSOCIATIONS MEETING

A successful Joint Associations Meeting was held on the weekend of 16/17<sup>th</sup> June with a number of key issues being discussed and progressed. Three of the key issues considered at the meeting were:

## 1. Unified Volunteer Representative Body

The VFBV Amalgamation Working Group has developed a set of principles and options for a future unified structure. The principles and options were discussed in detail at the June meeting and will form the basis of a discussion paper which will be distributed shortly. Delegates at the June meeting agreed to the principles and gave general support for the following core elements of a future model:

- A single representative body
- One Board
- A single unified State Council
- Unified Regional Councils as the preferred approach
- Regional Executive and ideally an Area Executive Single representative voice to all decision making forums and stakeholders etc.
- Single unified decision making process
- Issues common to all brigades dealt with by State Council, shared working parties/committees, VFBV secretariat or VFBV Board as appropriate
- Common committee structure for common issues
- Brigade classification changes would be applied to determine future 'urban' and 'rural' representation
- Current levels of urban and rural representation to be retained at State Council with consideration to be given to establishing equal representation for urban and rural delegates. Some modification to brigades in the categories of rural and urban better suit the Chief Officer's risk classification of brigades
- The need to empower Regions to deal with local issues.

It is accepted that issues common to both rural and urban brigades should be dealt with via a common process and that there must be one unified decision making process at all levels of the new body. There are different views as to how this might operate in detail and this issue requires further discussion – which will occur as part of the discussion paper process.

Urban Association delegates expressed a strong desire for an urban branch/stream and a rural branch/stream feeding into a combined State Council to enable due

consideration of those issues unique to the needs of urban and rural brigades. Options for a sub committee structure to be used to ensure adequate focus on specific issues or issues that do not impact on all brigades were also discussed.

## **2. VFBV Strategic Plan 2007 – 2010**

A draft VFBV Strategic Plan was presented to delegates. The strategic plan builds on previous planning discussions to set out a way forward to strengthen a proactive and strategic voice for all CFA volunteers. Success of the strategic direction relies on achievement of a single, unified representative body for CFA volunteers. Acknowledging that work is still underway to achieving a unified representative body, Association delegates agreed to adopt this plan as a shared direction and framework for future planning for VFBV, VUFBA and VRFBA.

The overall emphasis of the plan builds on the principles of the Volunteer Charter and places strong emphasis on strengthening representation of grass roots volunteer needs at all levels of decision making. The plan seeks to position VFBV as a high profile, proactive and respected influence on strategic direction and decisions impacting on volunteers. The plan seeks to position VFBV and volunteers as key partners in any processes that influence decision making on volunteer matters. The plan identifies the need to work with CFA to continuously improve CFA culture, structure, policy and processes to ensure volunteers are involved in decision making on volunteer matters as a key result area. The plan identifies nine Key Result Areas that will drive the focus of VFBV efforts. These are:

1. A unified voice for all CFA volunteers.
2. Excellent communication, representation and links between grass roots and state level;
3. A legislated mandate recognising VFBV as the unified voice for all CFA volunteers;
4. VFBV structure, systems and resources required to deliver our role effectively and efficiently;
5. CFA culture, structure, policy and processes that ensures volunteers are involved in decision making on volunteer matters and delivers the commitments made in the Volunteer Charter;
6. Prominent leadership profile, based on well informed representation and robust position on key strategic issues;
7. Formal and informal positioning to enable influence at key decision making forums and arenas;
8. Strategic relationships and high profile both internally within CFA and externally with key stakeholders;
9. The value of volunteers within CFA and the value of volunteering is understood and recognised as a critical service resource and core community asset.

Specific actions and targets to achieve results against these nine key result areas were discussed at the Joint meeting and will be detailed in a final plan to be completed in August/September. Copies of the draft plan have been distributed to all Association State delegates for further discussion at Regional Council level and the full plan will be posted on the VFBV web sites. Regional Councils and brigades are encouraged to consider the thrust of the VFBV strategic plan as a basis for strengthening their own local discussion and input to CFA local level management and decision making and also as an invitation to provide grass roots input to the strategic issues requiring attention by VFBV and the Associations.

## **3. Inquiry into the Impact of Public Land Management Practices on Bushfires**

VFBV Summer Campaign Review Working Party has been heavily involved putting together a VFBV submission to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee Inquiry into the Impact of Public Land Management Practices on Bushfires. Details of this submission are available on the VFBV website, and a summary has been forwarded to all brigades, groups and Regional Councils.

VFBV has also undertaken a review of issues raised in submissions by other parties, particularly from a perspective of possible future implications for CFA volunteers. VFBV is currently involved with a regional hearing process being conducted as part of the inquiry process and will also pursue issues of interest to volunteers with CFA management or other stakeholders as required.

### **STATEWIDE INCIDENT COMMAND CHANNEL**

VFBV has written to the Minister supporting CFA's bid for funding for a Statewide Incident Command Channel to enable all brigades to communicate directly with VicFire. This matter was also discussed at a meeting between VFBV and the Minister on 12<sup>th</sup> July.

### **ISSUES RAISED AT OPEN FORUM**

VFBV has received responses from the CFA in regard to six issues raised at the Open Forum in April. Copies of the responses have been retained at VFBV and are available to brigades upon request. These responses will be reported on at the 2008 Open Forum and are in respect of:

- Timetable for implementation of SMS system on some volunteer mobile phones;
- Removal of CDMA network;
- Provision of Water Tanks at Stations;
- Improved communication system to advise volunteers of recognition functions;
- Distribution of CFA diaries;
- FEM Centralised Accounting System/Reports.

### **CFA OPERATIONAL CATERING FACILITIES REVIEW**

The review has now been going for 12 months and has made significant progress in that time.

The data from the survey circulated to all brigades is currently being analysed and information will be published in the next copy of "The Fireman".

Self heating meals have been identified as a possible solution to some of the catering deficiencies that have occurred in the field and samples are being obtained for trialling in two regions. The project team is working with DSE to achieve standardisation in the supplies of water and staminade in the future.

### **VFBV BOARD MEETING WITH CFA BOARD**

VFBV Board met with CFA Board on 25<sup>th</sup> June and I am pleased to report on a productive meeting and an important step in continuing a strong relationship with CFA Board. The meeting provided an opportunity for VFBV Board to suggest ways in which application of the principles of the Volunteer Charter could be strengthened and how engagement of volunteers in CFA planning and decision making could be improved generally. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss volunteer concerns about the CFA Organisational Form initiative; EBA matters as they impact on volunteers; VFBV views about the overall relationship between volunteers and

CFA; our desire for volunteers to be treated as a partner at all levels of CFA leadership and decision making rather than being seen as just another 'key stakeholder'. The CFA Board reaffirmed CFA's commitment to the Volunteer Charter and also confirmed their resolve not to sign an EBA in its current form.

### **CFA ROADSIDE FIRE MANAGEMENT WORKS GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES**

As part of the Road and Rail Fire Management Project the CFA Board in February this year approved a position on roadside fire management works that describes what is required of all CFA personnel involved in fire management works on roadsides. To support the implementation of *CFA Position on Roadside Fire Management Works*, CFA recently finalised **CFA Roadside Fire Management Works Guidelines and Procedures**. This document aims to provide clear guidance to all CFA personnel involved with roadside fire management works and includes the agreed CFA and VicRoads Roadside Fire Management Process. For more information on the Road and Rail Fire Management Project, visit CFA Intranet or Brigades Online or contact Project Manager Anthony Stasiak (03) 9262 8402.

### **VUFBA AFFILIATIONS**

The VUFBA has retained Brigade, Auxiliary and Junior affiliation fees at the current level. Affiliation forms are currently being forwarded to all urban brigades. Due to a large increase in the number of applications for Welfare Fund assistance, it has been necessary to increase the affiliation fee for the VUFBA Welfare Fund by \$50.00.

### **VUFBA WELFARE FUND**

The Welfare Fund was created in 1913. In the 2006/07 financial year the Fund paid out a record amount in welfare grants to urban volunteers who found themselves in serious financial difficulties. The Fund is unique amongst Australia's volunteer emergency service organisations and the foresight of those members of the VUFBA who created the Fund back in 1913 must be applauded. It is indeed rewarding for the Association to be in a position to be able to provide some tangible financial assistance to those urban volunteers who have found it necessary to seek assistance from the Fund from time to time. For the Fund to continue to be in a position to assist our volunteers, an increase in affiliation fees as mentioned above has been necessary.

### **REPLACEMENT PPC**

Since the start of the year, VUFBA has received items from 3 brigades in different Regions expressing their concerns and frustration at the difficulties being encountered in obtaining replacement PPC when issued PPC has become contaminated at an incident. The Association has requested CFA to ensure that that procedures are in place in all Regions to enable replacement PPC to be readily available for volunteers when the need arises.

### **MEETING WITH INTEGRATED BRIGADES**

On Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> July, members of the VUFBA met with volunteer officers of Integrated Brigades. Officers from 18 Integrated Brigades attended. This meeting provided an opportunity for the Integrated Brigades to raise issues with the Association which are more relevant to these brigades and also for the brigades to discuss issues with and learn from the experiences of similar brigades. Amongst the

issues discussed were Brigade Management Teams, Captains at Integrated Brigades, PPC, Organisational Form, Brigade Financial Management Project and brigade ABN's, EBA, the retention of volunteers at Integrated Brigades, amalgamation of the two Associations, the process for forming future Integrated Brigades (a small Working Party is to be formed to address this matter).

### **LIGHT PUMPER**

Design work is continuing within CFA on the development of a Light Pumper. Both Associations are represented on a Working Party involved in the design of this appliance. Recently the VUFBA raised its concerns with the CFA in regard to the adequacy of the proposed cab chassis. The CFA is of the view that the cab chassis is more than adequate for the purpose, however, the Association has requested further input into the selection process. The CFA has recently advised the Association that it will be fully involved in the process.

### **HYDRATION BACKPACKS**

VUFBA has requested CFA to evaluate the suitability of the use of hydration backpacks by CFA volunteers. It was observed during the December/January fires that DSE firefighters were using these backpacks.

### **CFA BOARD APPOINTMENT**

Max Maher, who represented rural brigades on the CFA Board, indicated his intention not to seek re-appointment when his current term expired on 30 June, 2007. As a consequence, the VRFBA advertised for nominations to replace Max on the Board and was most gratified to receive such a high calibre of candidates from various parts of the State.

An extensive interview process has been undertaken and a list of four highly suitable people has been forwarded to Bob Cameron, Minister of Police and Emergency Services, as he has the final say on who will represent rural brigades on the Board for the next three years.

VRFBA places on record its thanks to Max Maher for his dedication to the task of representing rural brigades on the CFA Board for the past nine years and of course to his wife Margaret who supported him so ably over that time.

### **VRFBA STATE PRESIDENT DIES**

Members of the VRFBA were shocked and saddened by the sudden death of State President Bernie Pearson on Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> May. Bernie was admitted to hospital on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, suffered a massive heart attack on the night of 24<sup>th</sup> May and did not recover. The VRFBA will miss his leadership, vision, humour and forthrightness.

A great number of members of State Council attended the funeral at Lancefield and were part of a huge crowd of mourners from many walks of life. The funeral service was a fitting tribute to the man and the position he held in the world of volunteer firefighters.

Bernie was known for putting his opinion in a forthright manner and vigorously and tirelessly canvassed his point of view at every opportunity. Whilst a strenuous debater he was never personal in his verbal stoushes with those who held an opposing view. It is already evident that at the meetings, VRFBA members have attended since Bernie's death his presence is sadly missed.

## **ACTING VRFBA STATE PRESIDENT**

Vice President Peter Downes of Mandurang in Region 2 is Acting State President until the VRFBA Annual Meeting in August. David Gibbs has taken Mr. Pearson's place on the Operational Catering Working Party, John Kennedy fills the vacancy on the Brigade Owned Tanker Review Group and Bruce Vine will sit on the VFBV Board until the Annual Meeting of that body.

## **FEM IDENTIFICATION CARDS**

The VUFBA raised with the CFA the need to ensure that FEM Identification Cards are regularly updated. The CFA has advised that current FEM Identification Cards have been prepared and are soon to be forwarded to brigades.

## **BRIGADE CLASSIFICATION**

Chief Officer Russell Rees has recently circulated to all brigades a discussion paper on Brigade and Membership Classification. VFBV encourages Brigade management teams to give serious consideration to the Paper as it will have far reaching consequences going forward and it is important that we come to the right decision.

Obviously sustaining volunteerism and supporting volunteers are of vital importance to VFBV. The discussion paper is also available on the CFA website.

## **VRFBA STATE COUNCIL MEETING OUTCOMES**

At its most recent meetings, VRFBA State Council considered a number of interesting issues and are listed below for information:

- Strike team souveniring
- Removal of station sirens without consultation
- Development and maintenance of strategic fire break
- Cessation of rehabilitation of strategic fire breaks until public enquiry completed
- Debrief process following campaign fires
- Executive to look at process of amalgamation
- Future of State Championships
- Maintenance of rail corridors.
- CFA Organisational Form Project
- Possible structures for VFBV
- Map Book issues
- CFA Act amendments
- Charging for false alarms
- Submission to Fire Management on Public Land Enquiry
- Structural PPE
- State Budget outcomes for CFA

## **VUFBA Items Raised with the CFA:**

- the function of SMS Gateway;
- spare PPE be held at each Region to replace contaminated brigade PPE;
- CFA radios be issued to certain NSW brigades;
- radio contact with other emergency agencies;
- an increase in the allowance for brigade owned vehicles;
- clarification whether wildfire helmet lights is an approved item and the supply to brigades;
- a differing identification system for drums of A Class foam and B Class foam;
- the timing of the volunteer recruitment campaign and targeting of operational members;
- CFA's funding policy for satellite stations;
- Championship items: conducting joint safety inspections; guidelines for the supply of the corporate

tents; funding for re-circulation systems; Junior competition TV campaign; timing equipment for junior competitions.

## **VRFBA ANNUAL MEETING APPROACHES**

VRFBA State Council will hold its Annual Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> August at Fiskville. Regional Secretaries are reminded that agenda items for the meeting close on Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> August.

## **NEW DELEGATE FOR REGION 23**

Mary-Ann Egan has been elected to represent Region 23 on VRFBA State Council replacing Alan Fox, who did not seek re-election. Mary-Ann is the first woman ever elected to State Council and is also the VRFBA secretary for the region. It is anticipated Mary-Anne will represent the female members of our rural brigades most effectively at State Council and will be a strong advocate for the issues that are of greatest concern to female firefighters.

## **CHAMPIONSHIP ITEMS:**

### **VRFBA CHAMPIONSHIPS VENUE CHOSEN**

The 2008 VRFBA State Championships will be held on the Wodonga showgrounds on the weekend of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> April. The Association is delighted Region 24 volunteered to host the Championships which were last held in Wodonga in 1967. The 2009 VRFBA State Championships will be held in Swan Hill on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> April at the Swan Hill Showgrounds.

### **VRFBA STATE COMPETITION COMMITTEE MAKES CHANGES**

At its meeting in May, the VRFBA State Competition Committee made a number of significant changes to the programme for next year.

In junior ladder events, competitors will not be permitted to have their feet above the 8<sup>th</sup> rung (previously it was 6<sup>th</sup> rung). There will only be one disqualification official on the track conveying this information to the recorders and timekeepers.

Juniors may run in senior teams provided they do not do any ladder work. There has been some confusion over this policy in the past. Previously teams would be disqualified for having two streams of water appearing at nozzles at any one time, this has been changed to two valves open at one time.

The order of events has also been changed to the following:

1. Low Down Pump & Ladder
2. Tanker Hose Reel & Ladder
3. Hydrant & Tanker
4. Wet Hose & Ladder
5. Tanker - Priming, Pumping & Ladder
6. Tanker - Drawing Water from Tank

### **VUFBA RULE CHANGES**

The following VUFBA Rules have been re-worded or amended:

- Rule 71. Pumper & Ladder Event.
- Rule 70. Hose, Hydrant & Pumper Event.
- Rules 3 & 7. Eligibility to Compete – Junior Brigades.
- Rule 37(c). Judge at Hydrant.

An explanation of the Rule changes have been forwarded to Urban Brigades and the changes are highlighted in the Rules included on the VUFBA webpage.