



VOLUNTEER FIRE  
BRIGADES VICTORIA

## Newsletter

### May 2011

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#### VOLUNTEER RIGHTS BACKED BY LAW

The CFA Amendment (Volunteer Charter) Bill 2011 has been passed by both houses of State Parliament, received royal assent and become law.

The legislation is a great step forward for CFA Volunteers, it recognises in law that CFA is volunteer-based, and that CFA volunteers are the backbone of the State's emergency management capacity. At a practical level it embeds volunteers in decision making at all levels of CFA, considering their needs and making good use of their expertise and front line experience.

Significantly, in recognising the CFA's volunteer base, the Bill makes it the Authority's obligation and duty to develop policy and organisational arrangements that encourage, maintain and strengthen the capacity of volunteer officers and members to provide its services.

The Bill requires that every employee, every decision and every action of CFA begins with the premise that the organisation wants to strengthen its volunteer base, not erode it. That commitment to building volunteer numbers and capabilities, is an investment in the safety of Victorians for generations to come.

The passage of the Bill, with the support of the major parties, is a clear signal that CFA volunteers enjoy support from across the political spectrum for the professional job they do. Built into the culture of CFA, this will add greatly to service effectiveness and efficiency.

#### JONES INQUIRY COMPLETES REGIONAL VISITS

The Jones Inquiry into CFA arrangements and their effects on volunteers has completed its series of meetings with volunteers in regional areas, with submissions set to close on 23 May.

The VFBV executive and State and district representatives have put considerable work into VFBV's submissions, and ensuring that brigades and individual volunteers get their chance to speak up, either in writing or at the volunteer consultation sessions.

The Inquiry website [www.cfavolunteersinquiry.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfavolunteersinquiry.vic.gov.au) has been accepting submissions from Brigades and individual volunteers, and all are urged to send a copy to VFBV at [2011cfainquiry@vfbv.com.au](mailto:2011cfainquiry@vfbv.com.au).

The Jones Inquiry has provided an opportunity not just to air old grievances but to solve problems, raise ideas and offer the direction for a better, more effective volunteer-based CFA.

Issues being raised by volunteers and their VFBV representatives show common themes that will be familiar to brigades everywhere in Victoria, but also include ideas and proposals designed to introduce better ways of protecting the community.

See VFBV's website, talk to officials in your district, and most of all make yourself familiar with the great opportunity this Inquiry presents.

More than one experienced volunteer has described the Inquiry as the opportunity of a lifetime to contribute to a better CFA. If you have missed the 23 May deadline but have important information to impart, contact the VFBV office to discuss your situation.

**ALSO IN THIS EDITION** - Judge Jones to speak at the Open Forum \* Honours and Awards \* Board vacancies \* Important Welfare Fund Change \* Championships \* Open Forum \* State Council issues

## **CFA HONOURS & AWARDS REVIEW CONSULTATION BEGINS**

During 2010 a CFA Board Review Committee chaired by Board Member David Gibbs AFSM began a review of the awards and honours that CFA administers on behalf of all members.

The review is the first substantial look at the CFA system in more than 10 years and looks at the type and criteria for a suite of honours and awards that recognise bravery, valour and distinguished service. VFBV Executive Officer Allan Monti represents VFBV on the Review Committee, which is now beginning consultation on the proposed improvements to the honours and awards system.

The review has created a proposed hierarchy of awards under each of the three headings and has defined the standing of CFA Awards (current and proposed) in relation to the Australian Honours System, lining it up with comparable emergency services locally, interstate and internationally.

New awards and enhancements that may be introduced include;

- insignia to complement commendations and unit citations for courage,
- a medal set for outstanding service,
- and a scroll for special recognition to brigades.

Included in the terms of reference for the review committee has been a recommendation to establish an Honours and Awards Review Panel.

The 3 month consultation period will provide brigades, groups and volunteers an opportunity to provide the Review Committee with quality feedback, and the Committee expects most volunteers will welcome an enhanced and expanded system that has clear explanations, definitions and criteria that will clarify the nomination process and assist all involved in recognising achievement at the most appropriate level.

## **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:

- Adrian Hem AFSM, Diamond Creek
- Robert Ipsen AFSM, Bowenvale
- Lex de Mann AFSM, Mernda
- Robert Rankin AFSM, Executive Manager Fleet Services.

## **BOARD VACANCIES –**

### **(i) CFA BOARD vacancies:**

The terms of Tunde Meikle and David Gibbs expire on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011, creating vacancies on the CFA Board for One Urban representative and One Rural representative. The retiring members are eligible for re-appointment, however any registered CFA volunteer wishing to represent Urban and Rural Brigades are invited to apply.

### **(ii) VFBV BOARD vacancies:**

The terms of VFBV Board Members Tom Brodie and Gary Lyttle (Rural) and Hans van Hamond and Mick Taylor (Urban) are to expire on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011. Mick Taylor will retire on the expiration of his term on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011; all other members are eligible for re-appointment.

CFA and VFBV Board Role Statements can be obtained from the VFBV office or [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au). **Applications for all Board vacancies close 1<sup>st</sup> August 2011.** send applications to VFBV, PO Box 453, Mt Waverley 3149.

## **VFBV STATE COUNCIL MEETS – 18<sup>th</sup> APRIL**

CEO Andrew Ford's opening address of "*What Next & How We Prepare*" included discussion of some key challenges and opportunities impacting on VFBV, volunteers and our volunteer based CFA. Andrew reported on the Judge Jones' Inquiry and the meeting also included reports and discussion of issues with volunteer CFA Board members David Gibbs, Tunde Meikle and Michael Tudball.

Issues to be directly referred to Joint CFA/VFBV Committees including Community Safety and the OH&S Policy Review Committee include:

- District 13's application for adequate funding to employ part time/casual presenters to deliver the broad range of community focused training programs such as Fire Safe Kids and Home Fire Safety, the employment structure to be managed in a similar way to Fire Ready Victoria;
- previously raised issue of reflective tape on the Junior uniforms of dark blue overalls;
- introduction of Minimum Skills training into late secondary school curriculums eg. some form of bushfire minimum skills education to better prepare young adults for the consequences of living in the most fire prone region of the world to ensure a better educated and aware population.

Issues to be raised with the CFA include:

- changes to the Junior Leader guidelines;
- having regard to new OH&S legislation in force as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012, applying the same principles for all CFA members in future fire station designs, and including VFBV representation when any discussions are taking place or plans are being made for new or refurbished fire stations;
- the failure to use trained volunteers in key leadership roles in strike teams within the Geelong Group;
- re-evaluating the ability of brigades to conduct minimum skills training of new recruits followed by an independent assessment rather than wait the lengthy period of time to organise a district course;
- pre-requisites for the Respond to Urban Fire Course; recommending it be available to brigade members who do not have BA qualifications, as particularly relevant for officers and pump operators who need to have an appreciation of urban firefighting for these roles;
- CFA's position with future provision of First Aid Training to members, having regard to the obligations applying under the 2012 OH&S National Legislation;
- requirement that ESTA adequately staff the Country CAD Centre to ensure radio channels are monitored and all requests for additional assistance are responded to and acted upon in a timely manner.

## RETIREMENTS & APPOINTMENTS

The State Council meeting acknowledged the service of retiring State Councillor Dave Ackland's 7 years (District 12). Similarly, retiring District 17 State Councillor Shane O'Callaghan's service of 14 years was acknowledged at the Bendigo Urban State Championship prior to his moving to Darwin. VFBV thanks both members for their commitment and input in representing CFA volunteers.

Welcomed to their first meeting were newly elected State Councillors Greg Murphy (District 12) and John Davies (District 17) replacing the above retired members.

## AFFILIATION FEES FIXED

State Council delegates have supported a proposal to leave VFBV Affiliation Fees for brigades unchanged for 2011/12.

Affiliation with VFBV has been very strong over the past year and with current challenges, including the Jones Inquiry into arrangements impacting on CFA volunteers, will require a continued special effort. The VFBV Board is encouraged by the strong support for VFBV's work in representing CFA volunteers.

Brigades will notice that affiliation fees have been 'rounded down' from past years. Despite VFBV's workload and value being provided to members increasing, the VFBV Board is very committed to reducing the cost of affiliation.

Brigades can expect to receive their annual VFBV Affiliation and Welfare Fund membership invoices in the mail before the end of May. All brigades should aim to pay their contributions within the next few months to ensure their members are covered.

## WELFARE FUND RULES TIGHTENED

Application rules for the VFBV Volunteer Welfare Fund have been tightened, with eligibility now strictly aligned to your brigade's financial membership of the fund.

The Fund provides small financial grants on a confidential basis to members facing significant financial hardship – applications are handled by the member's brigade.

The Fund is a capital based scheme, using earnings from invested funds and membership subscriptions to finance the grants and maintain its value for future generations. It's very much like insurance, and just like insurance if your premiums are unpaid – you are not covered.

VFBV is receiving an increasing number of requests from brigades seeking Welfare Fund support for a member, only to find the brigade is not a subscriber. The annual subscription currently only costs \$85 per brigade.

Brigades will soon receive the 2011/12 VFBV affiliation invoice, with a separate invoice for Welfare Fund Subscription. VFBV pays the Fund's administration costs, so brigades must be affiliated with VFBV in order to become Welfare Fund subscribers. Every cent of subscriptions to the Welfare Fund goes to helping volunteers in need.

It is important for Brigade Secretaries to bring the invoice to the attention of the brigade for decision before the due date – non-financial brigades must wait until the next financial year before any application can be considered.

The Fund's Committee of Management – all long serving volunteers – has tightened eligibility as a measure to ensure the Fund remains viable for generations to come and make it fair for the vast majority of brigades who pay their subscription on time.

To subscribe to the VFBV Welfare Fund brigades must pay both their VFBV affiliation and Welfare Fund subscription invoices by 31 December 2011.

## NATURAL DISASTER FUND WORK CONTINUES

The VFBV Natural Disaster Fund is continuing to provide support to volunteers and their families affected by this year's floods. The fund has now provided over \$15,000 worth of food and white goods vouchers to families directly affected to assist them getting back on their feet.

The fund is currently pursuing two important initiatives aimed at targeted relief. The first is an initiative being led by District 13 who are gearing themselves up to source appropriate food items to be made up into hampers and will be distributed direct into volunteer families' homes as well as the community, as the local town situation requires. The second initiative is to source legal and insurance advocacy and advice for CFA families who are having difficulty with their insurance company, which is causing much anxiety and frustration for many families.

The fund would be interested in speaking with any volunteers who have direct experience in the insurance industry who may be able to provide some advice. If you or someone you know is able to provide either legal or insurance advice, please contact Executive Officer Adam Barnett on (03) 9886 1141 or via email [a.barnett@vfbv.com.au](mailto:a.barnett@vfbv.com.au)

Similarly, brigades and individuals can continue to support the fund via a donation. Details are on the VFBV website.

## 2011 VFBV OPEN FORUM

Judge David Jones, head of the Jones Inquiry, will be the opening speaker at the VFBV Open Forum. The Forum will be at Deakin University's Burwood Campus on Saturday 25 June, starting at 1.00 pm, with lunch available from 12.30 pm.

Past Open Forums have been highly successful and all Brigades are encouraged to send representatives to discuss current issues and raise concerns.

VFBV recommends that issues to be raised at the Forum be forwarded to the VFBV office prior to the Forum to facilitate proceedings for the meeting. Agenda items can be forwarded prior to the Forum to Fax 9886 1618 or email to [j.laing@vfbv.com.au](mailto:j.laing@vfbv.com.au)

For catering purposes, it is important to RSVP **by Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June**. Members can register at [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au), on (03) 9886 1141 or via email to [j.laing@vfbv.com.au](mailto:j.laing@vfbv.com.au)

## AUSTRALASIAN FIREFIGHTER CHAMPIONSHIPS

Port Macquarie Fire Brigade is hosting teams from Australia and New Zealand for the two day Australasian Firefighter Championships at Port Macquarie NSW on 14 to 16 October.

Organisers expect at least 30 teams and 500 competitors, support personnel and family members.

Six Victorian teams will vie for State representative places and Victorian officials are preparing to finalise the State Teams.

VFBV will coordinate the attendance of officials and special guests - members interested in attending should call (03) 9886 1141.

Responsibility for booking rests with each team/member but VFBV can advise on accommodation and travel for teams, officials and supporters.

## LAURIE LAVELLE AWARD – APPLY NOW

The *Laurie Lavelle Award* recognises individuals who contribute significantly to the knowledge or skills, operations, performance or public profile of emergency services in Australasia. Nominations close on 2 August – see the VFBV website [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au)

## VFBV CHAMPIONSHIP 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 Grand Aggregate: **Pyramid Hill** - 48 points

Urban Senior Grand Aggregate: **Maryvale** - 66 points

Rural Senior Aggregate Winners:

A Section: **Napoleon-Enfield A** – 58 points

B Section: **Mannerim B** – 22 points

C Section: **Mt Buninyong B** – 37 points

Champion Rural Junior Brigade: **Greta** – 75 points

All State Championships received great feedback from competitors and spectators alike and VFBV congratulates the relevant hosting Brigades and Championship Committees for their commitment and support for our competitions.

## EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

### Rural State Championships:

The State Championship Committee (Rural) is seeking Expressions of Interest from Districts or Catchments for the hosting of State Championships (Rural) for 2012, 2013 or 2014. Applicants should consider capacity to form a Host Committee to co-ordinate all local arrangements, suitable venue and infrastructure, potential for sponsorship, suitable accommodation for competitors, officials, guests and CFA employees, and your capacity to solicit support from your municipal council and CFA District Office. Expressions of interest should outline how you could meet the above needs. Expressions of Interest should reach VFBV Executive Officer Adam Barnett no later than Friday 17th June 2011 at PO Box 453, Mount Waverly, VIC 3149 fax (03) 9886 1618 or [a.barnett@vfbv.com.au](mailto:a.barnett@vfbv.com.au)

### Urban State Championships 2013 - 2015:

The Urban Competition & Rules Committee are seeking Committees/Brigades interested in hosting a State Urban Championship for the years 2013, 2014 or 2015.

### 2011 URBAN TEAM OF THE YEAR

Following the Urban State Championship, the Association has nominated as the **2011 Team of the Year**:

Danny Campbell – Maryvale

Jackson Dargaville – Kangaroo Flat

Shane Every – Wendouree

Shane Flowers – Maryvale

Russell Gray – Dandenong

Dominic Keating – Maryvale

Joshua Pyke – Mildura

Chris Sellens – Mildura

Coach & Competitor: Craig Briody – Wendouree

## URBAN ELEVATION AND RELEGATION

Following the 2011 VFBV State Urban Championships, the Association has approved the following elevation and relegation for the 2012 State Urban Championships:

*Elevated from C Class to B Class:*

Kooweerup, Stanhope, Geelong West

*Elevated from B Class to A Class:*

Kangaroo Flat, Tatura, Trafalgar/Moe

*Relegated from A Class to B Class:*

Bairnsdale/Lakes Entrance, Belgrave

*Relegated from B Class to C Class:*

Patterson River, Benalla, Whittlesea.

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

The Geelong West Brigade has since requested it remain in C Section for the 2012 State Championship, which has been approved by the Association.

## URBAN COMPETING BRIGADES:

Separate advice has been forwarded to all competing

Urban Brigades in regard to:

- 2011 Junior Judges School to be held at Bendigo Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August;
- in future State Junior Championships, the Wet Hose Striking One Disc Twice Four Competitors will be conducted in pairs and a final;
- in view of the future use of Duraline hose, conducting the West Hose Striking First and Second Disc Four Competitors and the Wet Hose Striking Second Disc Four Competitors in pairs and a final be trialed at local competitions with a view to introducing into the 2013 Junior State Championship if successful;
- That pump operators must stay at the pump or within an operational distance of the pump in all Pumper events;
- Brigades who purchased a new ladder harness in recent months, are requested to contact VFBV re necessary modifications;
- concern that no Brigade/Committee has applied to conduct an Urban State Championship for the years 2013, 2014 or 2015.

## THE FUTURE OF THIS NEWSLETTER

In the interests of bringing more news, more regularly to CFA volunteers everywhere, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria is considering changes in the way this newsletter is delivered.

Regular readers of *The Fireman* will have noticed that VFBV's column has become a VFBV page, concentrating on a steady flow of useful, practical information for brigades and volunteers.

That more frequent, monthly format is now backed by an email version of the page, sent to volunteers and brigades who ask to be included on the email list.

The changes are aimed at providing more useful information more quickly, and will work in tandem with VFBV's website [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au)

If you would like to comment on the changes, make a request or indicate how you would prefer to receive information from VFBV, email [p.beaton@vfbv.com.au](mailto:p.beaton@vfbv.com.au) or call the office on (03) 9886 1141.