



# Newsletter

## September 2009

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## BUSHFIRES ROYAL COMMISSION

The Commission handed down its Interim Report on the 17<sup>th</sup> August 2009. The Report included 51 recommendations all of which have been accepted by the Government. Prior to the release of the Report, the Premier had announced a number of initiatives aimed at addressing many of the matters that were anticipated to arise from the Report. These initiatives now form the basis of actions to address the Report's recommendations.

The overall program of new initiatives is known within CFA as the Bushfire Preparedness Program within which there are 48 projects. 28 of these are being managed by CFA, 7 by the OESC, 6 by DSE, 5 by Victoria Police, and 1 each by the Department of Justice and the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA).

VFBV has been working with the CFA to emphasise the role of volunteers in the on-going implementation of many of the new initiatives and has sought representation on the Working Parties associated with each issue. This has proved somewhat difficult as the majority of the projects involve extremely short time frames from inception to implementation, with only minimal opportunity for consultation. Notwithstanding the urgency to introduce many of the initiatives for this fire season, VFBV is continuing to express concern at the lack of consultation and will press to ensure that the provision of detailed information and briefings for Brigades is a key component of any implementation program.

The Commission resumed the second block of hearings following the release of the Interim Report. The initial focus of these hearings was devoted to matters associated with building standards and construction materials that will be applied to new buildings being constructed in bushfire prone areas.

Following the completion of this evidence, the focus has moved to regional sittings of the Commission along with closed hearings related to a number of the deaths that occurred. The Commission has completed hearing evidence related to the Beechworth (Mudgegonga) fire and the fires that occurred in the west of the State, including Horsham and Coleraine. The Commission will hold further regional hearings in Gippsland to deal with the Delburn and Churchill fires at a later date.

One issue that has caused volunteers a significant amount of concern, particularly in the west of the State, has been the operation of Traffic Management Points. CFA and Victoria Police have been working on a revised protocol that should see at least some of the concerns related to access to the fireground by emergency service personnel and other people having a critical role in supporting firefighters and the community being less restrictive. Whilst there will still be controls in place, a broader range of levels of access is being considered, subject to authorisation by the Incident Controller.

VFBV's interim submission to the Commission in July called for amended arrangements to be implemented in Victoria to place any bushfire that threatens, or has the potential to threaten CFA area and lives within our communities, under the control of CFA's Chief Officer regardless of whether it is burning on public or private land. Following further endorsement of this proposal by VFBV's State Council on the 13<sup>th</sup> September, it is intended to place greater emphasis on this proposal over the next few months and to pursue this change with Government and other key stakeholders. VFBV will provide further detail to State Councillors and Brigades over the next few weeks.

It is evident that the events of this fire season have established a new benchmark against which the operational performance of CFA must be judged. VFBV considers that there has been compelling evidence placed before the Commission that warrants some adjustment to the current operational management structures in place that is aimed at improving cross regional operational command, coordination and coherency. Further discussion with the CFA on this important matter is planned and any steps to address the present gaps in operational command will be strongly supported.

VFBV acknowledges that the current rate of change taking place within the organisation as a result of the Royal Commission is creating some concern amongst volunteers. VFBV has established a number of forums with CFA that are providing an opportunity to highlight the need for on-going consultation on the inevitable program of change that is occurring, whilst at the same time ensuring that CFA continues to recognise the finite nature of the contribution that volunteers make.

### **IMPENDING VACANCY – CFA BOARD**

The term of Kevin Erwin as a volunteer representative of Rural Brigades on the CFA Board is due to expire on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010. Kevin is eligible for re-appointment, however any registered CFA volunteer wishing to represent Rural Brigades are invited to apply.

Closing date for applications to be lodged with VFBV is **20<sup>th</sup> November 2009**. A Role Statement can be obtained from the VFBV office or VFBV website.

### **CFA BOARD NOMINATIONS**

The Association has agreed on a panel of four names in a priority order to be submitted to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services from which an appointment to the CFA Board is to be made. Ex Captain Michael Tudball, one of the current representatives of urban volunteers on the Board and whose term expires 30<sup>th</sup> December, is included on the list.

### **VFBV BOARD VACANCY**

Following the retirement of Rural Vice President Peter Downes, Board member Bruce Vine has been elected as the Rural Vice President and now becomes a Board member in this role. As a consequence a casual vacancy now arises for a Board member to represent Rural Brigades.

The term of appointment will be for the remainder of Bruce Vine's term eg. to 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010. Applications are invited from interested rural volunteers to be considered for this vacancy.

Closing date for applications to be lodged with VFBV is **20<sup>th</sup> November 2009**. A Board Member role statement including the key selection criteria is available from VFBV or from the VFBV website [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au).

### **RE-APPOINTED TO VFBV BOARD**

Brigades were advised of impending vacancies on the VFBV Board due to the terms of Gary Lyttle and Mick Taylor expiring in September 2009.

The only applications received were from Gary and Mick, and the Association at its State Council Meeting 12<sup>th</sup> September, resolved to re-appoint Gary and Mick for a term of two years.

### **AGM & STATE COUNCIL 12 & 13 SEPTEMBER**

Saturday's VFBV Annual General Meeting was attended by over 80, including Board members, State Councillors, guests and members of various Brigades, Groups and Regions. Chief Officer Russell Rees AFSM addressed attendees and officially opened the meeting. Reports included a report by CFA Board member Michael Tudball and addresses by newly appointed CFA Board members Tunde Meikle and Sandie Jeffcoate.

At the Association's AGM, Gary Lyttle AFSM was re-elected President and Hans van Hamond AFSM was elected Vice President – both appointments for the year 2009/2010. Outgoing Vice President Mick Taylor AFSM was thanked for his outstanding input and contribution to the Association as Vice President since 2006.

Sunday's State Council meeting received an update on VFBV's Royal Commission project by Trevor Roche and Operations Manager Mark Reid made a presentation on the Fiji Fire Service.

### **RURAL & URBAN VICE PRESIDENTS**

For the year 2009/2010 Bruce Vine was appointed Rural Vice President and Captain Peter White AFSM was re-appointed Urban Vice President.

### **RETIREMENTS & APPOINTMENTS**

Retiring members acknowledged at the State Council meeting 13<sup>th</sup> September were State Councillors Bob Horner AFSM (Region 13) and Ian Thomson (Region 14), and Board Member Peter Downes (Region 2). Also acknowledged are retiring Region 2 State Councillors John Shay and Kevin Murley AFSM.

All five members are thanked for their support and contribution to the Association. Newly elected members welcomed to their first State Council meeting were Gary Parly (Region 2) and Allan Roberts (Region 13).

### **LIFE MEMBERSHIP**

At the Association's State Council meeting Tom Brodie AFSM (19 years), Bob Horner AFSM (19 years), Owen O'Keefe (15 years), Peter Downes (10 years) and Ian Thomson (10 years) were awarded VFBV Life Membership.

### **VFBV MEETING DATES 2009/10**

VFBV have agreed to the following meeting dates for 2010 and Regional Councils are encouraged to schedule their meetings to accord with these Meetings:

<i>State Council</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>6 Dec 2009</i>
<i>State Council</i>	<i>Sat / Sun</i>	<i>10/11 April 2010</i>
<i>Open Forum</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>26 June 2010</i>
<i>State Council</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>27 June 2010</i>
<i>AGM &amp; State Council</i>	<i>Sat / Sun</i>	<i>18/19 Sept 2010</i>
<i>State Council</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>5 Dec 2010</i>

### **HAVE YOUR SAY –VFBV WEB OPINION POLLS**

Have you visited the VFBV webpage lately? Over the coming months a series of opinion polls will seek your input and feedback on some of the big issues confronting CFA, Brigades, members and the wider community in regard to the Bushfires Royal Commission and more broadly, community safety and fire service delivery.

## **ISSUES RAISED AT STATE COUNCIL**

Issues raised at State Council by Regional Councils which are to be raised with the CFA, or directly referred to Joint CFA/Association Committees include:

- a system that provides easy and ready access to information on rural house property locations
- issues and concerns with Loch Brigade's 3.4C Tanker
- request that the CFA forward the Driver Training Consultation Paper to all Brigades for feedback
- issuing Media with PPE in a colour other than yellow, or at the very least have some type of identification on the overtrousers as well as the jacket; also viewed as a safety issue
- clarification of issuing cotton T-shirts to BA qualified members only
- a clear policy, guidelines and training in place for firefighters tasked with search and location of deceased persons
- providing reflective tape on Junior Fire Brigade blue overalls as a safety issue
- a briefing on the allocation of funding to upgrade the pager systems
- a risk management plan should be developed for operations conducted with other agencies (eg. SES incident at Mildura)
- internet access and maintenance for Fire Stations
- pursuing with VicRoads issues with wire barriers on freeways in regard to accessing fires and water points
- assessors currently holding BSZ training and assessing qualifications required to upgrade to the new TAA qualifications
- issues with trucks running on liquefied natural gas
- issuing of the new CFA long service award to all eligible members.

## **BLACK SATURDAY VOLUNTEER RECOVERY FUND**

The trustees have distributed over \$800,000 to volunteers and their families who suffered significant loss during the February fires. An amount of money has been set aside for use in the event there are volunteers who suffered and we are not aware of at this time.

VFBV has received many notes and letters of appreciation from the recipients of the funds and we have been pleased to provide this tangible support by way of administering the Fund.

## **DROUGHT RELIEF FUND**

This Fund went on the backburner to some extent whilst we were dealing with the events of Black Saturday, however Regions have been recently contacted encouraging them to put forward proposals for the trustees to consider.

Bob MacDonald is meeting with representatives of the North West Area on 30<sup>th</sup> September to look at opportunities for them to seek support from the Fund.

Region 13 brigades and groups continue to provide support to the Fund and are developing relationships with Brigades and their members in Region 17.

## **VFBV CONSTITUTION UNDER REVIEW**

With almost 12 months since the unification of the Urban and Rural Associations, a process has commenced to conduct a review of the VFBV Constitution, in order to fine tune the document and propose any changes that are necessary to capture the details that will inevitably arise since the initial drafting of such a complex document.

VFBV State Council has endorsed a process for the VFBV Amalgamation Implementation Committee to conduct the review and Brigades and members are encouraged to submit their thoughts via their respective Regional Councils. We expect the review to be completed by mid 2010.

## **FLASH HOODS TO BE WIDELY DISTRIBUTED**

CFA have completed evaluation trials with volunteers and staff, selecting a hood that will provide superior comfort for wearers and enhanced protection.

CFA have advised that following the establishment of operational testing, the Chief Officer will issue a directive for the wearing of the flash hood in conjunction with structural PPE for structural firefighting operations.

Distribution will be targeting all members with Structural Firefighting and Breathing Apparatus competencies and will not be limited to the recipients of the new structural ensemble, with full deployment expected within 12 months.

## **VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION PROGRAM**

VFBV has been heavily involved in the development of this program which was officially launched at Whittlesea on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September.

The program includes a media campaign in Metropolitan and regional press, which features newspaper advertisements and TV commercials. There will be two documentaries to complement the Government sponsored promotion and a range of other activities over the coming few months. The slogan for the project is:

*"Volunteers – Vital, Valued, Victorians"*

## **NUMBER PLATE PLACCARDING - ALTERNATE FUELS**

A question arose at VFBV State Council meeting regarding the type and style of identification that is mandatory to affix to number plates on vehicles fitted with alternate fuel sources ie. LPG LNG CNG.

Australian Standard 2739 8.4.1.3 details that for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) powered vehicles, a metal circular plate of not less than 35mm diameter of reflective green in colour, bearing the letters LNG must be riveted to front and rear number plates.

Under the same standard, for Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) powered vehicles, a similar treatment with a red reflective circle bearing the letters CNG be riveted.

The common red reflective triangular plate with the letters LPG is riveted to vehicle number plates for vehicles powered by Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). This regulation is covered by a different Australian Standard.

NOTE: The presence of 2 plates in any circumstance indicates 2 cylinders fitted.

## **FIRE SERVICE LEVY (Fire Service Funding)**

VFBV seeks submissions from Brigades and individuals who have something to say about the Fire Service Funding and particularly the Fire Service Levy.

A VFBV Working Party is to be formed to research and develop a discussion paper for wide distribution prior to forming a position that will contribute to our submissions to the Bushfires Royal Commission.

## **NEW RADIO TENDER RELEASED**

Following a great deal of preparation, CFA have released the much anticipated Request for Tender for the replacement for the Motorola Mobile and Portable radios that are near the end of their serviceable life.

CFA's radio replacement project will introduce new vehicle mounted (mobile), hand held (portable) and special configuration radios into service throughout CFA. Funding for this initiative, to be spent over four years, was approved by the Victorian Government in the May 2008 budget.

The next ten years will see major changes in technology. The new radios will be chosen to include digital operation, however we won't know the features until the radio has been chosen. CFA has the following mix of radios in operation at present:

- Base Radios – 1,200
- Mobiles – 7,000
- Portables – 3,000

## **REGIONAL FUTURE FOCUS WORKSHOPS**

The Regional Council Planning Workshops Project is well underway, with 7 Regions having now booked in their Future Focus Workshops. Regional Councils are inviting all Brigade Delegates and/or other interested persons along to discuss issues affecting volunteers and how the Regional Council model can be strengthened and improved to continue to be the peak forum for Brigades to effectively and efficiently raise and resolve matters affecting volunteers, and the capacity of volunteerism into the future.

Several Regions have recently completed their Workshops and the feedback from attendees has been extremely positive, with the majority finding the process of value, and Regional Council Executives are commenting positively on the opportunity it presents to refresh and reinvigorate their relationships and connections with their member Brigades. Contact your Regional Council to find out when your Workshop is being planned for.

## **WEBMAIL FOR VOLUNTEERS**

We are happy to announce that the WebMail for Volunteers Project has a launch date planned for 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2009. VFBV has been working alongside the CFA Project Team to bring WebMail access to all volunteers, along with ample storage and retrieval methods.

Shared Calendaring, Outlook Web Access and 20gig storage capacity accounts will no doubt excite many. Testing is currently underway, and we will be releasing more details over the coming weeks.

Stay tuned for upcoming announcements via Brigades Online and the VFBV website regarding this exciting initiative.

## **2009 AUXILIARY CONFERENCE**

The Auxiliary Conference held Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2009 at Fiskville was highly successful with just over 100 Auxiliary members from 32 Brigades attending. Feedback received is that those attending found the presentations informative and a number of issues were raised and discussed. Speakers at the Conference included: DCO Steven Warrington, Acting Director HR Paul Garvey, Peter Langridge CFA HR Department and Pat Bingham, former CIS State Co-ordinator.

VFBV thanks the Auxiliary Working Party members for their work in conducting and facilitating the Conference. Minutes of the meeting have been mailed to all Auxiliaries and are available on the VFBV webpage. CFA have again offered the use of Fiskville's facilities for the 2010 Auxiliary Conference and the proposed date for the Conference is Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2010. Invitations to the 2010 Conference will be forwarded to all Auxiliaries next year.

## **ITEM OF INTEREST:**

### **The 'Kyneton Chronicle' – 1876**

"We are sorry to hear that some circumstances seem likely to impede the promotion of a Fire Brigade. It seems hardly conceivable that any persons should wish to hinder such a movement, but we are assured that such is the fact. The friends of the movement, however, are determined not to give up the enterprise and the idea is now being entertained of quietly enlisting some twenty good men and true, who really mean business, without any public display and then, when the brigade is on a service footing, to invite recruits. We trust the promoters of the movement will succeed in their laudable endeavours."

## **VFBV CHAMPIONSHIP ITEMS**

### **SAFETY HELMETS FOR USE AT URBAN CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The Association has resolved that safety helmets be used in all urban ladder events. The Association has applied for a grant through a Government small equipments grant to purchase a quantity for use by all Brigades at the State Championships, and subject to the grant being approved, the use of the helmets will be compulsory at the 2010 State Championships for the following events and positions:

- Ladder Race competitor;
- Ladder 5 - ladder competitor & ladder assist competitor;
- Ladder 8 – ladder competitor, ladder assist and the 2 throwers;
- Ladder Y – ladder competitor & ladder assist competitor;
- Pumper & Ladder – ladder competitor & ladder assist competitor.

Subject to a grant being approved, safety helmets will be provided for competitors at the Urban State Championships, but the Association will be encouraging Brigades to purchase their own where possible. Specified models to be approved by the Association for use, are yet to be identified, however Brigades will be advised of specified models for use once approved.

The Association will provide safety helmets to competition associations also and will be recommending the associations enforce the use of the helmets at their competitions for the above events/positions.