

SUMMER CAMPAIGN FIRES

2006/2007

Submission to the Country Fire Authority
on issues of concern to CFA volunteers

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria

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INTRODUCTION

The 2006/07 fire season in Victoria will probably go down as one of the busiest on record and one during which CFA volunteer firefighters were asked to respond across Victoria in numbers that have probably not been previously equalled.

In an early indication of the likely severity of the season, CFA volunteers were engaged in fire suppression activity dealing with significant fires in Victoria as far back as August 2006 (Lake Connewarre) and had provided resources to assist NSW RFS in December 2006.

On December 1 2006, a severe lightning storm resulted in reports of 83 ignitions with 70 eventually being confirmed as actual fires.

Fire suppression activity continued well into 2007, with what became known as the Great Divide fire demanding resources for almost 10 weeks.

Over the period of this summer season, several thousand volunteers contributed their time and experience to support fire suppression on public and private land without hesitation or consideration of jurisdictional boundaries or agency responsibility.

Accordingly it is not surprising given the extensive nature and duration of the fires, volunteers encountered many and varied circumstances that tested their experience, training and operational procedures under which they are required to work as they fought to gain the upper hand.

It is also not surprising that resulting from this extensive level of involvement, CFA volunteers identified many issues that if resolved, would result in improvements to the effectiveness and efficiency of future operations, contribute to improved safety and welfare on the fireground and assist in sustaining volunteerism as a viable organisational imperative in CFA's structure and service delivery arrangements.

VFBV acknowledges that the CFA and other agencies and NGO's involved in fire suppression, community engagement and the raft of other functions that were necessary to form a cohesive and co-ordinated response to the emergency will all have conducted various reviews and post incident analyses of their involvement. These largely internal reviews will no doubt identify many areas for attention associated with their agency or particular sphere of interest or responsibility as they impact on or support emergency management arrangements in this State.

The State Government is also conducting an "*Inquiry into Public Land Management and Bushfires in Victoria*" under the auspices of the Parliamentary Environment and Natural Resources Committee. VFBV is contributing to this Inquiry through the submission of a written response to the terms of reference and expects to make verbal submissions at a later date.

Things considered to have worked well

Issue No: 1 (WP 3)	Priority: Amber	Staging Areas (See also Issue No. 15)		
Safety: High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There were both good and poor examples of the establishment and support provided by Staging Areas. 2. SES contribution was generally considered to be positive. 3. Some observations that DSE not using established Staging Areas or participating in IAP briefings conducted at Staging Areas. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a joint agency (CFA, DSE & SES) Project Team to review the performance of Staging Areas. 2. Establish "best practice" from 2006/07 experiences. 3. Review training and resource requirements to incorporate lessons learned. 4. Ensure Staging Areas meet "whole of incident" needs and are inclusive of all agencies deployed to the incident. 				

Issue No:2 (WP 5)	Priority: Amber	Incident Action Plans		
Safety: High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As campaign continued, IAP's were simplified to exclude unnecessary detail. 2. As campaign continued, timeliness improved. 3. The provision of coloured maps accompanying IAP's was seen as a positive as these were able to be read and interpreted in the field. (In many cases black and white copies were next to useless). 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to refine process and content. 2. Review IAP's issued to establish "best practice" and "best content". 3. Link to IFMP 4. Ensure focus of the Plan is on objectives/IC's intent and that tactics are left to fire ground commanders to determine and implement. 5. Identify "blockers" or barriers preventing the timely development of IAP's. Implement actions to minimise the impact of these "blockers" or barriers. 6. During ICS training (particularly in Planning courses), emphasise brevity, consistency and timeliness as critical performance indicators in the preparation of an IAP. 7. Ensure future agency training programs and personnel briefings incorporate "best practice" findings. 8. Emphasise key role of IC is to ensure adequacy and timeliness of shift IAP's. 9. Ensure adequate facilities exist at pre-planned ICC's to deliver timely, quality plans and associated documentation in sufficient quantity to support briefings down to Crew Leader level. 10. Increase the relevance and currency of IAP's by ensuring that procedures to gain input into the development of the Plan from Sector and Division Commanders are robust and adhered to. 				

Issue No. 3 (WP 6)	Priority: Red	Division and Sector Commander and Strike Team Leader Training.		
Safety: High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training conducted to date has resulted in noticeable performance improvement. 2. Still inconsistencies in individual performances. 3. Some additional role clarity is required. 4. Many CFA Trainers lack higher level wildfire command and control skills and knowledge. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish consistency across CFA with training delivery, availability of courses and course outcomes. 2. Increase number of higher level IMT Courses with joint agency (CFA/DSE) participation as a priority. 3. Establish alternative training delivery modes that are more tailored toward volunteer's time and availability. 4. Use experienced personnel to conduct higher level command and control courses across the State to ensure consistency. 5. Increase knowledge in fire behaviour e.g. Fire Behaviour & Suppression 3, HR management & Prescribed Burning particularly for Division Commanders. 6. Ensure consistent application of RPL process state wide. 7. Clarify role and expectations of Division Commanders and Sector Commanders. 8. Need to define role and application i.e. static, mobile, functions, reporting lines, terminology etc. 9. Review current practice or reinforce existing procedures to ensure adequate information flow between ICC and Div. Comm. and opportunities for input into IAP. 10. Establish what resources are required to support the role of a Division Commander. 11. Need for regular competency maintenance programs to revise skills and provide new information e.g. lessons learned outcomes, new practices and procedures. 				

Issue No. 4 (WP 7)	Priority: Green	Volunteer participation in Regional planning teleconferences.		
Safety: Low	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive feedback received regarding the involvement of key volunteer commanders e.g. Group Officers' in teleconferences convened to discuss current situation and future planning requirements. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Procedure should be adopted in all Regions. 2. Develop state wide protocols and procedures relating to the conduct of teleconferences involving key volunteers to keep personnel up to date on emerging operations and determine resource strategies and deployments. 				

Issue No. 5 (WP 9)	Priority: Green	Provision of Meals		
Safety: Low/Medium	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Timeliness and content generally well accepted. 2. Some issues with mid shift meals. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need to recognise the nature of the "devil". Whilst the benefit of healthy meals high in nutritional value is recognised, traditional meals i.e. bacon and eggs for breakfast is a more desirable alternative to many. In this context, a careful balance is needed. 2. Planning for meals should be based on a 2/3 hour lead time. 3. Catering needs to recognise and implement processes to deal with the "on and off" timing associated with swing shift duty periods. 				

Issues requiring improvement

Issue No. 6 (WP 6)	Priority: Red	Inadequacy of fireground resource management systems and process		
Safety: High	Sustainability: V High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor resource management systems for equipment and personnel. 2. Incompatibility between CFA and DSE systems and processes. 3. CFA internal systems inadequate and lack flexibility and access at Group level so as to facilitate efficient manpower management. 4. Still using "T" Cards when other solutions may be more efficient. 5. Unnecessary duplication. IFACC directly involved in resource acquisition and deployment effectively bypassing the ICC. 6. Loss of resource requests between various Centres when IFACC unmanned after hours. 7. IFACC's non operational for some overnight periods. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure a consistent approach to resource acquisition and management across agencies and EM functional areas. (ICC, IFACC, RECC, MECC, SECC etc). 2. Investigate technological options to improve resource tracking (equipment and personnel) e.g. status of CFA bar code project. 3. Develop and implement consistent and effective systems to track resource requests particularly between various control and co-ordination Centre's. 4. Clearly articulate arrangements for resource acquisition when IFACC is in place but not functioning e.g. after hours. 5. Clearly articulate the role & responsibilities of IFACC's & relationship with ICC's 				

Issue No: 7 (WP 7)	Priority: Red	Utilization of volunteer personnel - human resource planning and management		
Safety: High	Sustainability: V High	Welfare: V High	Efficiency: V High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of identification of trained and competent CFA volunteers available to fill roles from IC down to crew level. 2. Lack of understanding of the dimension of the pool of personnel required to ensure the sustainability of campaign operations. Global view required rather than just at Regional level. 3. Competency of volunteers not recognised by those responsible for determining assignments. 4. Outer metro Regions pressured to provide resources when other Regions may have been able to meet the request. 5. Ad-hoc systems used to determine availability of personnel at either and/or Brigade, Group and Region levels 6. Training courses aligned to training additional personnel to perform roles rather than to ensuring those trained and available maintain and regularly update their skills i.e. over trained, under utilised. 7. Annual and incident deployment records inadequate and unable to be utilised to establish equity of deployments and utilisation i.e. no on-going indication of drawdown of personnel related to specific incidents or summer seasons. 8. Organisational capacity and capability unknown at any given time. 9. Provision for opportunities for mentoring and skills maintenance for volunteers appears limited. 10. Key staff (i.e. O/O's and O/M's) assigned to fire. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement process and systems to register volunteer availability/assignments - when and for what role. System capable of revision daily or as notified by individual. 2. Develop HR plans for Brigade, Group, Region, Area and State with connecting overlays that indicate progressive drawdown of resources. Each Group and Region to specify operating limits in order to maintain local security. 				

3. Establish systems and process to initiate opportunities for skills maintenance and mentoring. System application to support equitable deployment of volunteers in key roles and positions.
4. Recognise volunteer competency.
5. Retain sufficient local regional staff (O/M and O/O's) in the RECC to execute the primary role of managing the Region including oversight of the allocation of competent personnel to IMT and field command roles.
6. Implement increased HR forward planning horizons when incidents are forecast to escalate e.g. 3/4 rotations out.

Issue No: 8 (WP 3)	Priority: Red	CFA/DSE culture		
Safety: High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CFA and DSE have a different interpretation of the role of Division Commander i.e DSE tend to manage Division as a “large” Sector. 2. DSE appear to mistrust volunteer competence when assigning roles and tasks and in supervision. 3. DSE tend to drift toward daily customs e.g. use of first names in lieu of call signs, no tabards in the field, use of trunking communications in lieu of specified Communications Plan etc. 4. CFA often work from the rear of the Tanker (albeit inefficiently) and are more used to using water to extinguish a fire edge. 5. Insufficient consultation on control options and preferred objectives with local volunteers and communities. Therefore local personnel are more inclined to work independent of the agreed IAP or Division/Sector tactical plan. 6. DSE often appear locked in to dry fire fighting techniques and indirect attack without a thorough options and risk analysis. 7. Some view that DSE have a “let it burn” approach while CFA adopt a more “put it out and get home” philosophy. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish joint working parties to recommend ways in which cultural differences can be minimised and cross agency understanding and familiarisation enhanced. 2. Clarify role and responsibilities of Division Commanders and Operations Officers and insist both agencies adopt the outcome. 3. Alignment of competencies and training material across agencies and associated recognition of competencies between agencies. 4. Develop joint task oriented training and implement joint agency training opportunities. 5. Consider cross or joint crewing of Tankers and SOU's for training and operational deployments. 6. Allocate pagers to DSE personnel for activation by DSE or VicFire to improve joint agency communication and timely response by DSE resources to fires on public land. 7. Increase training for CFA volunteers in dry fire fighting techniques. 8. Improve understanding of the application of alternative tactics and strategies to agency norms e.g. wet and dry fire fighting, extended hose lays. 				

Issue No: 9 (WP 14)	Priority: Red	Strike Team Leader Competency and Proficiency		
Safety: V High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: V High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Too many volunteers have completed the training but lack experience in the role. 2. Lack of people management skills. 3. Some commanders who have undertaken the appropriate training but who lack practical experience do not have the confidence to exercise initiative. 4. STL empowerment to exercise discretion and initiative in adopting flexible tactics and strategies to meet IAP objectives has decreased in association with more prescriptive IAP's. 5. Inability to produce effective and consistent Situation Reports. 6. Reluctance to accept the totality of the role and associated responsibilities. 				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. RPL process not applied effectively. 8. Refresher courses and opportunities to benefit from lessons learned are inadequate. 9. Skills maintenance opportunities few and far between. 10. Many CFA Trainers lack higher level command and control skills and knowledge.
<p>Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revise training programs to include segments aimed at leadership, human resource management and problem solving. (See also Issue No. 3). 2. Implement alternative and additional operational training opportunities to give Strike Team Leaders confidence to manage their allocated tasks and resources. 3. Use experienced personnel to conduct higher level command and control courses across the State to ensure consistency. 4. Use competent volunteer Strike Team Leaders to train new Leaders and participate in skills maintenance programs. 5. Conduct regular refresher courses inclusive of lessons learned segments. i.e. concentrate on raising the skills of what you've got rather than training more. 6. Establish appropriate course selection criteria to establish priorities for attendance rather than taking candidates just to fill Courses. 7. Establish additional mentor programs inclusive of interstate and overseas opportunities.

Issue No: 10 (WP 17)	Priority: Amber	Lessons learned process including incident debriefing and pre-summer briefings		
Safety: V High	Sustainability: Med/High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: V High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pre-summer briefings held too late to be fully effective. 2. Issues of importance included in pre-summer briefings not disseminated to grass roots. Briefing material not designed for or aimed at grass roots. 3. CFA and DSE do not cover the same issues. 4. Issues captured during incident debriefs not translated into changes or amendments to practices and procedures. 5. Incident debriefing process too structured resulting in limitations to the scope of the sessions and issues extracted. 6. Some inappropriate practices and decisions appear to be repeated from year to year and fire to fire e.g. Over prescriptive IAP's; role of IFACC – RECC – SECC – ICC; communications failures; inadequate resource management of vehicles and volunteers. 7. No measurement of the passage of information, adoption of amended practices, procedures, training or the subsequent impact on performance. 8. Failure to identify & disseminate urgent lessons, e.g. entrapment of NZ firefighters. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CFA & DSE to establish an agreed process with key stakeholders to capture lessons free from fear of retribution or blame and de-identified in so far as is possible to protect individuals. 2. CFA & DSE to urgently promulgate interim lessons following a serious incident e.g. within 24 hours of the incident. 3. CFA to develop more effective communication solutions, e.g. web based, to the distribution of incident reports and lessons learned from CFA, state, national and international sources. 4. CFA & DSE to adopt similar processes in relation to detailed incident analysis as currently in use overseas. 5. Establish arrangements to ensure lessons learned are transferred to stakeholders at appropriate opportunities and incorporated into pre-summer briefings and training curriculum. 6. Best practice to be identified from a "whole of agencies" process and communicated to the lowest applicable level. 7. Lessons learned to be a focus of skills maintenance programs. 8. CFA/DSE to provide adequate resources to conduct regular strategic and tactical operational reviews, analyse information and disseminate findings. 				

Issue No. 11 (WP 22)	Priority: Red	IMT's not listening to information provided from the fireground		
Safety: High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: V High	Efficiency: V High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Process to receive and evaluate information exists but is not always used. 2. Feedback on IAP's needs to be encouraged, provided, accepted and acted upon. 3. Quality and timeliness of situation reports provided by Strike Team Leaders and Sector and Division Commanders requires improvement. 4. Situation Reports are often devoid of meaningful information or advice designed to contribute effectively to a review of progress toward the achievement of current IAP objectives and for the development of future strategy. 5. Situation Reports are not always requested by the next line commander. 6. IMT personnel fail to accept or act on intelligence because it comes from a source external to their agency or from another unfamiliar source. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training and pre-season briefings to emphasise the requirement for timely and detailed situation reports from field commanders. 2. Develop a planning template that includes reference to the need to actively seek intelligence from field commanders. 3. During Planning and Situation Officer training courses, emphasise the value of all intelligence until such time it is proved to be inaccurate. 4. During Planning and Situation Officer training courses, emphasise strategies for obtaining and validating intelligence and that this process needs to be proactive. 5. Situation Reports from field commanders needs to include information on current situation, progress toward achieving objectives, future predictions and advice to aid in the development of the next IAP (i.e. what have I got, what's it doing, what am I doing, what's it going to do and what's needed [objectives and resources] for the next period or shift cycle). 6. All intelligence should be accepted and acted upon by the IMT/Planning Unit regardless of source. The Planning Unit may initiate processes to validate or corroborate intelligence if concern exists as to its veracity; however this must not initially delay immediacy of action based on the degree of urgency associated with the information provided. 				

Issue No. 12 (WP 21)	Priority: Red	Tendency toward the early adoption of less aggressive fire suppression strategies.		
Safety: Low/Med	Sustainability: V High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: V High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Culture of over cautiousness emerging. 2. Imbalance between "<i>get the job done</i>" and "<i>let it burn</i>". 3. Adoption of a "<i>risk averse</i>" attitude rather than a "<i>risk conscious</i>" attitude following the adoption of adversarial proceedings during recent inquiries and the adverse outcomes from some of these inquiries. (Linton, ACT and Eyre Peninsula). 4. Lengthy decision making process in relation to back burning impedes activity. 5. Continuing rejection of aggressive direct attack options under appropriate conditions resulting in loss of skills in executing direct attack strategies safely. 6. Adoption of indirect strategies with extended margins and perimeters in lieu of more aggressive parallel attack options. 7. Lack of empathy with the natural environment due to changes in work/skills profiles and experience. 8. Lack of understanding of and experience in factors affecting fire behaviour and weather. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the level of knowledge of field commanders from Strike Team Leader and above in fire behaviour and risk management so as to provide increased confidence in personnel to undertake direct attack safely. 2. Expand opportunities for experiential learning. 3. Commensurate with volunteer availability, encourage greater involvement with DSE, VicForests and private plantation companies in various burning programs. 4. Provide additional training programs for CFA and DSE conducted by experienced 				

<p>forest fire fighters who have some history of direct attack under a range of complex environmental conditions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Implement mentor programs. Establish a “no blame” environment in the absence of negligent actions when strategic and tactical decisions result in less than expected outcomes. Ensure location specific limitations on tactical options are established by the Planning Unit prior to the promulgation of an IAP so that field commanders are clear on their options.

Issue No. 13 (WP 13)	Priority: Amber	Integrated Fire Agencies Coordination Centres (IFACC)		
Safety: High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: V High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clarity/understanding of the role and relevance of an IFACC. Indications that IFACC's resulted in duplication of effort and functions and often delayed decisions unnecessarily. Some see an IFACC as a substitute for role of the Chief Officers' and agency SECC's. Concern at competencies of staff assigned to IFACC's. i.e. are not subject to the same training and skills maintenance regime as required for personnel assigned to IMT's. Concern at process of “second guessing” the IC when not necessarily in possession of all of the intelligence. IFACC's involved in resource acquisition and deployment without consultation with the ICC. Required resources that may have been more effectively utilised in alternative roles and functions. IFACC hours of duty not consistent with inter-centre communication, consultation and functional dependency. 				
Further information required: Nil				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review and justify the requirement for IFACC's; i.e. clear and unambiguous demonstration required as to why IFACC's are needed and what they contribute to the overall management of multiple incidents. If concept is to continue, role and functions of IFACC and relationship with RECC, SECC and ICC's to be clarified and documented. If concept is to continue, personnel assigned to IFACC's should be subject to the same competency regime as persons deployed to Level 3 ICC's and IMT's. Implement appropriate protocols to ensure information and requests are not delayed or duplicated when IFACC's are unattended for extended periods. 				

Issue No. 14 (WP 16)	Priority: Red	Mobilisation and Demobilisation		
Safety: High	Sustainability: V High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mode of transport – buses vs coaches. Road transport to be weighed against air transport. Inconsistent and inefficient application of modes of transport. Consider adoption of “rapid turn-around” Strike Teams for campaign operations. Small groups have a limited human resource base from which to draw from and yet the expectation of Region does not always account for this. Tired personnel are delivered to a central location and then have to drive home. Dedicated buses assigned to and retained with a deployment worked well. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review planning for strike team transport at a Regional level. Implement specific arrangements and dedicated personnel in the Logistics Section to manage “quick turn around” Strike Teams. Adopt a process of risk assessment and alternative options planning to avoid weather interruptions to the planned transport arrangement for personnel. 				

4. Brigade and Group OIC's should determine the maximum number of resources (vehicles and personnel) that can be released from a brigade/group and the number of personnel available to undertake rotations over an extended period. This should then form the base figure around which provision of resources is managed.
5. CFA should institute real time IT systems to track availability of personnel and monitor draw down of resources.
6. Implement arrangements to transport personnel from door to door wherever practicable.
7. Use coaches instead of buses.
8. Coaches dedicated to individual strike teams using smaller coaches where available.
9. Use road transport for up to 3 hours travel and consider air travel for longer journeys.

Issue No. 15 (WP 2)	Priority: Amber	Staging		
Safety: High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some personnel may have lost sight of the role and purpose of Staging Areas. 2. Unnecessary delays in processing, briefing and deployment of resources. 3. Difficulties encountered when briefing large groups of personnel of ensuring key messages are understood and adequate provision for questions exists. 4. Loss of morale when crews are held at a Staging Area for an extended period without adequate information. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reinforce the role of a Staging Area in pre-season briefings and in Staging Area Management courses. 2. Improve information flow between the ICC and Staging Areas on "current situation and strategy" particularly when it is anticipated that crews will be held at a Staging Area for an extended period. 3. Review the requirement for all resources to be briefed at the primary Staging Area. 4. Consider the establishment of Division Staging Areas. 5. Briefings should be cascaded down command levels i.e. Ops. Officer to Division to Sector to S/T Leaders etc. thereby obviating the need for centralised briefings. 6. Review processes, procedures and training to incorporate an emphasis on the requirement to minimise the period that resources are held at a Staging Area. 				

Issue No. 16 (WP 4 & 20)	Priority: Amber	Incident Control Centres and Incident Action Planning		
Safety: High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ICC's and IAP's tending to become focussed on the paper work rather than operational and resource imperatives and associated timelines. 2. Unnecessary time delays while resources held at a Staging Area awaiting briefings. 3. IAP's have become too detailed and prescriptive and often prescribe tactics which remove flexibility from the line commander. 4. Dominant process is the ICS itself rather than the outcomes the system is designed to deliver. 5. ICC Planners and IC unable to meet deadlines. 6. Roles and resource management is not fully integrated at IMT and ICC level e.g. at DSE managed incidents, the role of CFA Deputy Operations Officer is still a common assignment and indicates a joint agency approach rather than an integrated model. 7. Volunteers in an ICC don't have access to the same IT based (IMS, RMS, FireWeb weather etc) systems that staff have and are therefore prevented from functioning efficiently. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deploy competent personnel for IMT roles, particularly planning. 2. Ensure situation reports from the field are regular and relevant. (See Issue 11). 3. Change emphasis in ICS training to use of the system to deliver outcomes rather than following the system for the systems sake. 4. Apply 80/20% rule for intelligence gathering and planning. 				

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. IAP's should specify objectives, outcomes and broad strategy not tactics. 6. IAP should allow for strategic variations in order to meet changing situations and facilitate maintenance of the objective. 7. IAP's to focus on objectives leaving Division and Sector Commanders to select strategy and tactics to meet dynamic fireground conditions. |
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Issue No. 17 (WP 5)	Priority: Red	Briefings (particularly of incoming crews)		
Safety: High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Normalcy of delays. 2. Too much focus on paper work – unnecessary information. 3. Groups being briefed are too large. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep IAP simple and focussed on those implementing i.e. deliver briefings to relevant groups. 2. During ICS training and in pre-season briefings, emphasise that timeliness in the production of an IAP is a key outcome of the ICC and responsibility of the IC. 3. Concentrate on quality not quantity – objective, task, maps (colour where available) aerial photographs, weather, communications plan, reporting line and safety issues. 4. Discourage large briefings. 5. Conduct briefings using the chain of command i.e. Ops Officer briefs Div/Sector Commanders, S/C briefs Strike Team Leaders, S/T Leaders brief Crew Leaders. 				

Issue No. 18 (WP 9 & 10)	Priority: Red	Management and use of local resources and integration into Incident Management Teams		
Safety: High	Sustainability: Med.	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reluctance to use local personnel still evident particularly when paid staff occupy key management roles. 2. “Club” atmosphere amongst IMT personnel who know each other or have other synergistic connections. 3. Where IMT personnel are predominately from out of area, disconnect occurs between the ICC and local personnel. 4. Local brigades drift from formal inclusion in the IMT or in the field 5. Local resources disenfranchised or not being used optimally leads to self deployment 6. Local resources not being adequately informed leads to self deployment. 7. IMT's still reluctant to use local knowledge either imbedded into the IMT or through a structured process of communication and intelligence acquisition. 8. Local personnel are not necessarily physically available when they are at risk or directly involved in protecting their assets. 9. CFA do not know what HR capacity/capability is available at any given time, but more particularly when large fires are occurring. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to reinforce the need for and value of local knowledge in IMT's. 2. Brigades to pre-plan availability of personnel with local knowledge. 3. Local input into IMT and IAP to be included as a key performance indicator for the ICC and a measure of the performance of key IMT personnel, particularly the IC and Planning Officer. 4. Key IMT personnel to take a pro-active approach to obtaining local knowledge in the absence of a physical presence in the ICC. 5. Particular attention should be paid to briefing local crews and ensuring that management and deployment arrangements recognise local requirements and on-going security of the area. 				

Issue No. 19 (WP 11)	Priority: Red	Communications Plans		
Safety: High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inadequate planning. 2. Channels included in the Plan also used as primary channel in some Regions. 3. Plans not robust – channels included did not work through available repeater system. 4. Insufficient channels. 5. Designated channels not used. 6. DSE use of SMR (not a part of Communications Plan). 7. DSE use designated channels for day to day business e.g. employee time records and other administrative tasks not directly relevant to fire ground operations. 8. Changes to operating channels during shift – not communicated across the fireground. 9. Some FIB's use UHF. 10. Lack of adherence to Communications Plan. 11. Lack of infrastructure to support Communications Plan. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Move away from the use of local channels for fireground operations where a conflict of use is likely to emerge. 2. Designate fireground channels for specific locations. 3. Develop specific Plans for large or multiple fires. 4. Include key communications information on IAP maps. 5. DSE to adopt alternative administrative arrangements for time-keeping etc that does not involve fire ground communications facilities or the necessity for key personnel (e.g. Sector Commanders) to cease monitoring fire ground communications facilities. 6. Review management arrangements and procedures involved in allocated various frequencies. Promulgate procedures. 7. Ensure FIB communications requirements are incorporated into the Communications Plans. 8. Ensure every Region has effective default and escalation Communications Plans. 9. Ensure adequacy of state wide communications coverage. Install additional infrastructure where required. 10. If necessary, seek additional frequency allocations. 				

Issue No. 20 (WP 15)	Priority: Red	Duty cycles and fatigue management		
Safety: High	Sustainability: High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IMT's changed over too quickly – resulted in inconsistent plans and objectives. 2. Complete changeover of IMT caused inconsistency and lack of continuity of the operation, particularly during peak activity. 3. Due to whole of team change-over, all prior background information was lost 4. Availability of competent personnel. 5. Approach to managing IMT's as "teams" tends to establish an environment where others are excluded from participation and therefore opportunities to learn and gain experience. 6. The selection of paid personnel to fill ICS roles appears to be a strategy of convenience. 7. Volunteers not getting on courses, advice of courses and scheduling etc. not easy for volunteers thereby limiting the pool of available personnel. 8. Fatigue problem is exacerbated when the Group are unaware of who has previously been deployed i.e. Region deal direct with individuals for IMT resourcing therefore no single source of fatigue monitoring. 9. Fatigue not being given policy priority in CFA and not managed rigorously. 10. Some volunteers lack the discipline to manage their own fatigue and duty cycles. 11. Some Groups and Brigades lack the skills or desire to manage their own resources in recognition of competency, availability, fairness, equity and the maintenance of a 				

reasonable balance between CFA, family and work demands.

Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:

1. Implement staggered rotation of IMT over a 24 hour or similar period.
2. Where gaps are identified, increase availability of training to augment the number of competent personnel.
3. The Group must be advised when Regions assign volunteer personnel for IMT rotations.
4. Investigate options to provide more flexible duty cycles designed to meet the requirements of individual brigades and personnel e.g. "rapid turn-around" rotations.
5. Increase opportunities for mentoring people into roles.
6. Develop and implement a robust operations human resources management system accessible down to Group and Brigade level.
7. Commence development of leaders from time they are selected as Crew Leaders.
8. Recognition by CFA management that staff are there to support volunteers, not take their place.
9. Review period of assignment of Incident Controller to a particular incident e.g. should an Incident Controller be assigned for the duration of the incident or where an incident continues for an extended period, for a period of 5 or so days.

Emerging trends and challenges:

Issue No. 21 (WP 10)	Priority: Red	Use of resources from external agencies, interstate and overseas		
Safety: Low/Med	Sustainability: V High	Welfare: V High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased/earlier use of personnel from other agencies e.g. MFB, interstate and overseas resources when volunteers are available and competent to perform many of the tasks required. 2. The unnecessary importation of resources denies volunteers the opportunity to develop/maintain competencies. 3. Extension of international mutual support arrangements that seems to be driven more by the desire to encourage the concept and avail of opportunities to reciprocate rather than on identified need. 4. Extended operations, large fires, million + hectares two years in succession may have contributed to an earlier decision to seek external assistance. 5. Perceived lack of capacity/capability with the State to sustain operations. 6. Perceived desire to maintain some contingent capacity/capability to sustain long term operations, potentially worsening season or new ignitions. 7. Inadequate records of the availability of competent volunteers and drawdown during major incidents 8. Lack of acceptance of volunteer experience and competency. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use interstate/international resources in specialist roles; not in roles where volunteers are available, competent and need the experience to enhance or maintain competencies. 2. Don't call interstate/overseas support unnecessarily. CFA/DSE should agree that any requirement to request interstate and overseas personnel should be based on a demonstrated shortage of resources within the agencies total resource base for particular functions. 3. Ensure opportunities for interstate/overseas deployments are offered to volunteers on an equal basis to paid personnel. 4. Ensure opportunities for interstate and overseas deployments are shared equitably between CFA and DSE. 5. Ensure international opportunities are open to volunteers even if the rotation is shorter and more costly i.e. make the deployment more volunteer friendly. 6. Develop HR management systems down to brigade level capable of tracking standing capacity, drawdown etc. 7. Improve system of local capacity base requirements, draw down triggers etc. 8. CFA to resolve with DSE any underlying issues relating to the use of volunteers in IMT's or field command positions. 				

Issue No. 22 (WP 3 & 6)	Priority: Red	Utilisation of volunteers – field command (See also Issue No. 24)		
Safety:	Sustainability: V High	Welfare: V High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perception that career staff are given priority for assignment to key ICS positions prior to consideration being given to the competency and availability of volunteers. (The experience gained is seen as an advantage when seeking career progression). 2. Assignments for IMT and field command roles are determined by CFA staff who are perceived to favour their compatriots rather than selection based on competency and experience. 3. Vicious cycle – volunteers not being used, not offered training opportunities, become less available, lose interest and the mind set shifts to the use of paid personnel because volunteers aren't there any more. 4. Tendency for pre-planned IMT's to exclude volunteers. 5. DSE filling key IMT roles and then seeking to fill the gaps from CFA. 6. Perception that DSE (and CFA staff) 'cherry pick' roles and then request volunteers to 				

<p>fill the residuals.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perception that CFA staff have forgotten that they are there predominantly to support volunteers, not replace them! Some volunteers are intimidated by staff and or rank.
<p>Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Give the issue of utilising volunteers in operational leadership roles a strategic priority within the CFA – i.e. recognise the long term and fundamental benefit/need for volunteers to be engaged in leadership roles (IMT and other). Recognise that whilst volunteers may not be employees in the common sense of the word, many have a desire for further development and a “career” path within the CFA and that this is an important retention strategy. Adopt a more pro-active approach to the utilisation of volunteers. Consider alternative periods of deployment that facilitate participation of volunteers. CFA/DSE to recognise the competency and experience of CFA volunteers.

Issue No. 23 (WP 8)	Priority: Red	Volunteer access to IMT training courses		
Safety: Low	Sustainability: V High	Welfare: V High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perception that staff are the predominant focus of IMT/ICS courses being conducted. 5 day courses are not always suitable to volunteers. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative delivery options in common use in many other training institutions should be introduced e.g. off-campus, electronic delivery etc. Instruction must be available when volunteers are available i.e. place, pace and time. 				

Issue No. 24 (WP 3)	Priority: Red	Utilisation of volunteers – IMT roles (See also Issue No. 22)		
Safety: Low/Med	Sustainability: V High	Welfare: V High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perception that career staff are given priority for assignment to key IMT roles prior to consideration being given to the competency and availability of volunteers. (The experience gained is seen as an advantage when seeking career progression). Assignments for IMT roles are determined by CFA staff who are perceived to favour their compatriots. Failure of the joint IMT desk to recognise the competency and experience of volunteers. Tendency for pre-planned IMT's to exclude volunteers. DSE filling key IMT roles and then seeking to fill the gaps from CFA. Perception that DSE (and CFA staff) ‘cherry pick’ roles and then request volunteers to fill the residuals. Vicious cycle – volunteers not being used, not offered training opportunities, become less available, lose interest and the mind set shifts to the use of paid personnel because volunteers aren't there any more. Perception that CFA staff have forgotten that they are there predominantly to support volunteers, not replace them! 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Give the issue of utilising volunteers in operational leadership roles a strategic priority within the CFA – i.e. recognise the long term and fundamental benefit/need for volunteers to be engaged in leadership roles (IMT and other). Recognise that whilst volunteers may not be employees in the common sense of the word, many have a desire for further development and a “career” path within the CFA and that this is an important retention strategy. Adopt a more pro-active approach to the utilisation of volunteers. Consider alternative periods of deployment that facilitate participation of volunteers. CFA/DSE to recognise the competency and experience of CFA volunteers. 				

Issue No. 25 (WP 7)	Priority: Red	Utilisation of volunteers for public land fire fighting.		
Safety: Low	Sustainability: V High	Welfare: V High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CFA are conducting more patrol and blacking out on public land. 2. Recent fires stretched DSE resources – need to be careful that this doesn't become the norm. 3. Difference in terminology i.e. what DSE describe as 'contained' and associated timing of the release of resources. Perception that DSE hold CFA resources until fire is considered 'controlled' by DSE standards. 4. Better understanding by DSE of volunteer imperatives to get the task completed as soon as possible so as to return to their employment. 5. Recognition that deployment of volunteers not only impacts on the volunteer personally but has a flow on effect to employers or loss of income for self employed individuals. 6. Difference in perceptions about when a fire is sufficiently contained/controlled to enable the release of volunteer resources. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On public land, use CFA resources for initial and extended support to achieve containment. 2. Use DSE resources for extended patrol and blacking out. 3. Improve balance between volunteer fatigue and use of alternative resources by introducing robust HR management systems down to Group and Brigade level. Will provide advice of draw down of resources and excessive assignments of individuals. 4. Improve cultural understanding of volunteer commitments and imperatives. 				

Issue No. 26 (WP 11)	Priority: Red	Longevity of fire seasons and impact on volunteers		
Safety: Low/Med	Sustainability: V High	Welfare: High	Efficiency: High	
Details or contributing factors:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Was exacerbated by early interstate deployments (NSW). 2. Response capacity of CFA unknown from day to day, week to week and month to month. Therefore ability to sustain extended operations is unknown at any given time. 3. Interstate deployment may not have been based on a risk analysis and scenario evaluation of local conditions. 				
Recommended strategies to maintain continuous improvement:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Value and objectives of interstate deployments is supported. 2. Decision to deploy must be based on risk assessment and scenario evaluation of local conditions. 3. CFA to introduce comprehensive operations HR management systems capable of recording capacity and drawdown of resources throughout the fire season. 4. Issue will need to be closely monitored in recognition of the future impacts of climate change and associated length of fire seasons, community expectations and public scrutiny of local capacity to respond and sustain extended operations. 				