

Discussion Paper –summary
VFBV 23rd September 2007
Establishing a single unified representative body for CFA volunteers

This is a summary of the discussion recently issued to all brigades seeking to progress the establishment of a single unified body to represent all CFA volunteers.

The proposed changes

Currently the Victorian Urban Fire Brigades Association (VUFBA) represents CFA urban brigades, the Victorian Rural Fire Brigades Association (VRFBA) represents CFA rural brigades, and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) operates as an overarching body to represent all CFA volunteers on matters that impact on all volunteers. It is proposed to combine these three bodies as one unified body representing all CFA volunteers.

The proposed changes aim to achieve:

- a single unified representative body (VFBV) to represent all CFA volunteers, operating under a single constitution and with management of the unified body vested in a single board (VFBV Board);
- a single and unified decision-making process and a unified voice representing members at consultative forums and with stakeholders;
- a single State Council to provide advice and make recommendations to the Board, with representation similar to that which exists today under the separate VUFBA and VRFBA arrangements;
- Two sub committees at State Council, one representing urban brigades and one representing rural brigades, to maintain process to deal with matters not common to both rural and urban brigades;
- a single Regional Council in each CFA Region, with appropriate local representation to ensure both urban and rural brigades are represented;
- consolidation of current finances, resources, administrative systems and communication processes ;
- a single leadership and support secretariat, working under the direction of the VFBV CEO, consolidating the existing resources of VUFBA, VRFBA and VFBV;
- a unified structure of committees and time-limited working parties;
- continuation of the separate urban and rural championship committees;
- expansion of the Urban Association Welfare fund to be available for all brigades; and
- broadening the eligibility criteria for the existing Urban Association Gold Star Award.

The proposed structure


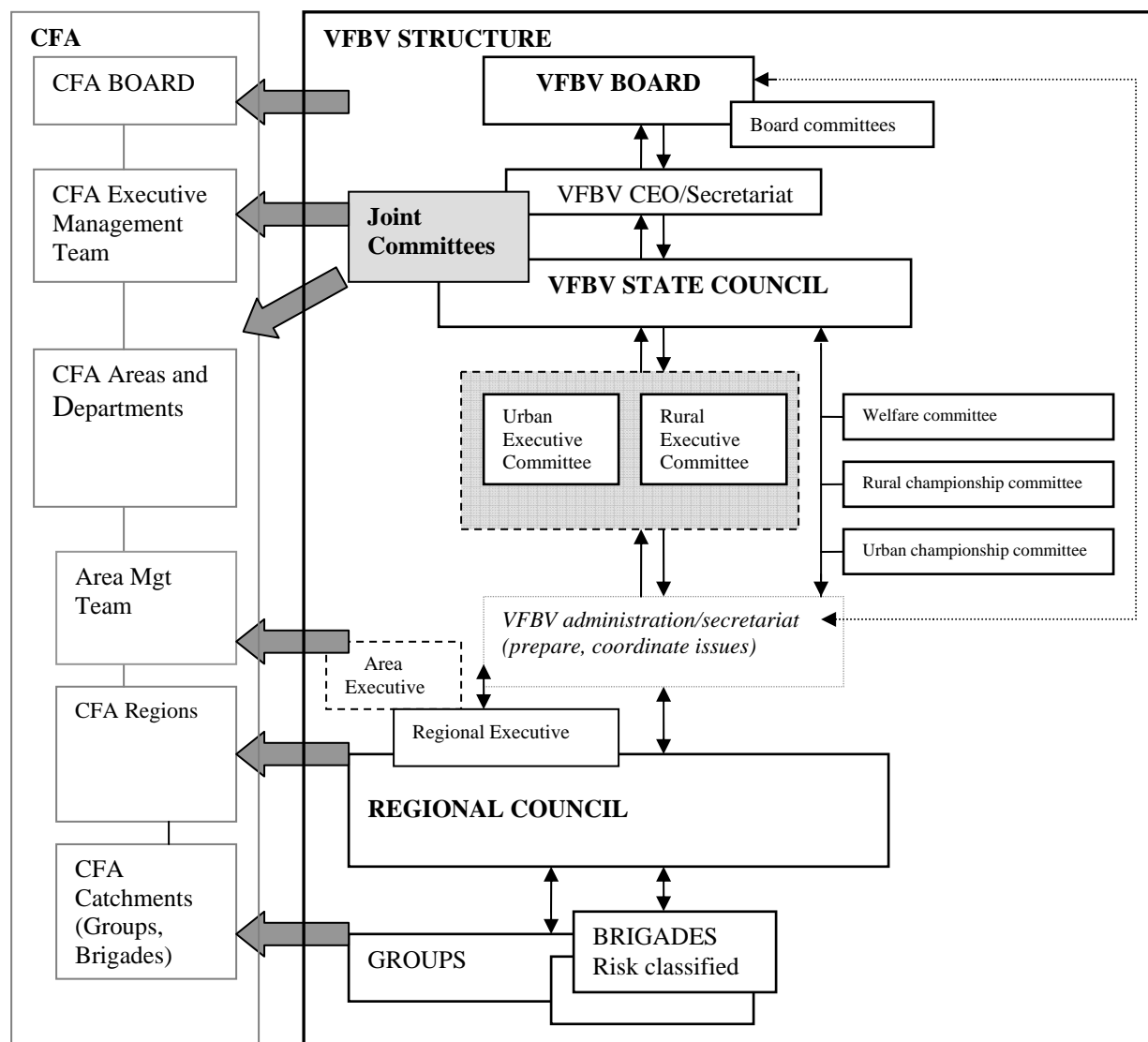
Figure 1 (following page) illustrates the structure of the proposed unified body including the key links and inputs to decision making levels of CFA management (as denoted by the symbol ).

Figure 1: VFBV structure as proposed under a unified body model



Why change?

By bringing the VUFBA and VRFBA together into one unified body representing all 60,000 CFA volunteers, we will be able to build on the combined strengths of the two bodies. The proposed changes will ensure the new organisation is well positioned, high profile and well regarded by people making decisions on matters that impact on volunteers. Key benefits will be:

- Strength in numbers
- Improved influence from a high profile united voice
- More effective use of our collective resources
- Many issues are common to both urban and rural brigades
- We have been talking long enough
- The change is already supported by many

How the change impacts on you

- At an individual level there will be no change to the way you operate as a volunteer other than potential for a stronger representative body better positioned to advocate on your behalf.
- Brigade operating rules will not change and brigades/groups will continue to operate as they do today.
- The proposal aims to achieve a single Regional Council in each region. Your brigades' ability to elect delegates to Regional Council will not change.
- At state level, the existing governing bodies of the VUFBA and VRFBA will combine as one single State Council. The opportunity for Regional Councils to forward issues to State Council will remain.
- VUFBA, VRFBA and VFBV will cease to exist as separate bodies. They will operate under a single constitution and statement of purpose
- This proposal does not require any change to the existing urban and rural championships; separate championship committees will be retained.
- The preference by the VUFBA for a 65 year maximum age limit for eligibility to be a member of the governing body will require further work to clarify an appropriate future policy having regard to discrimination law.

Action required

Feedback on the discussion paper is due by end December 2007. Please use the content of the detailed paper to support discussion at Brigade and Regional Council level. Your feedback can be provided by brigades or Regional Councils by:

- Providing written feedback:
 - via email to vfba@vfba.com.au OR fax to VFBV Office 03 98861618
 - via mail to VFBV Office, PO Box, 453, Mt Waverley, VIC 3149
- Discussion at Region Council and forwarding feedback as above;

Depending on the complexity of issues raised during feedback, the aim is to have a final position paper released to Regional Councils by early February 2008 allowing for vote on the matter at the April 2008 General Meetings of the VUFBA and VRFBA. Our desire is to ensure adequate discussion so that most if not all concerns can be raised and resolved before the final position paper is released.