

**VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES  
VICTORIA**

*one voice for all CFA volunteers*

**STRATEGIC PLAN  
2007 – 2010**

## OUR VISION

**CFA volunteers**, recognised as the core strength of CFA and fundamental to emergency management in Victoria, are:

- provided with the resources they need to do their job safely and effectively;
- valued for what they do and recognised for their skill, professionalism and community leadership;
- treated fairly and equally in all matters affecting them;
- always consulted about issues that affect them as volunteers; and
- supported to ensure their welfare is preserved.

**VFBV**, recognised as the unified voice for all CFA volunteers, is positioned with the profile and capability required to ensure:

- the three way commitment set down in the **Volunteer Charter** is fully applied by CFA, the State of Victoria and CFA's Volunteers;
- individual and collective needs of volunteers are protected; and
- proactive representation, leadership and influence on all matters affecting the welfare and efficiency of CFA volunteers.

**CFA**, recognised as a professional emergency service, is regarded by individuals, families, employers and the community as a great place to volunteer.

## OUR MISSION

To achieve our vision we will:

- be **well informed of and responsive to grass roots** volunteer needs, ideas and concerns;
- **represent volunteers** and work with CFA and the Victorian Government to ensure ongoing commitment to the principles outlined by the **Volunteer Charter**;
- be **aware of strategic influences**, opportunities and challenges confronting CFA volunteers, volunteerism generally and the decision makers who influence our future;
- be **proactive and prepared to lead and contribute, as volunteer advocates, to decision making** and future planning processes at all levels;
- build the **profile and relationships** required to position VFBV as an active and respected influence on decision making;
- deliver **communication, representation and decision processes** that keep volunteers informed and provide opportunity for volunteers to be consulted on matters that impact on them
- **resolve concerns** and issues raised as quickly as possible;
- work collaboratively with CFA management to **achieve a CFA culture, structure, and operating context** that treats volunteers fairly, justly and reasonably.

## VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS

The Volunteer Code of Conduct details the behavioural principles expectations and ideals which all CFA volunteers will aspire to. The values and behaviours detailed in the Code, created by volunteers for volunteers, will provide the ethos underpinning all VFBV decision making plus guide how we treat each other and how we treat others.

This means we are committed to promoting and displaying behaviour underpinned by principles of:

- Safety;
- Respect;
- Trust, Integrity, Honesty and Truthfulness;
- Commitment and loyalty;
- Communication;
- Comradeship, teamwork, support and welfare;
- Leadership and Discipline;
- Equity and Diversity

We understand that the world around us is ever changing and we will remain alert to opportunities and challenges requiring our attention. We will respect tradition and also be open to new ideas based on what is best for volunteers into the future.

We will respect and encourage diversity of opinion and will passionately advocate the views of volunteers, providing leadership to ensure our message is based on objective thinking and informed strategic analysis.

We will respect and recognise the vital support provided to volunteers by families and employers and will always remain conscious of the needs and interests of these vital supporters of volunteers.

We will be proactive and will seek to work cooperatively with all who have a genuine interest in volunteer matters, or who can influence decisions impacting on volunteers. We will not show political bias.

We will display strong, transparent, governance and accountability to our constituents and stakeholders at all levels.

We will remain dedicated and focused on improving the welfare and efficiency of volunteers with a philosophy of volunteers supporting and representing volunteers.

We will deliver what we promise and we will finish what we start.

## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Neither VFBV nor the volunteers we represent operate in isolation from the external world. As well as challenges, opportunities and changes impacting on volunteers from within CFA, there will be continuous change in the world around us. These changes present both challenges and opportunities for VFBV and for CFA volunteers.

Our future planning will be based on continuous review of the challenges and opportunities likely to confront us, so that we can understand and prepare ourselves given the reality of our own internal strengths and weaknesses. VFBV will progressively improve our analysis of external trends and our ability to strategically analyse the implications of our ever changing external environment. In doing so we will be able to plan better, be more proactive in representing the views of volunteers and be better prepared to shape decisions that impact on volunteers.

The following is a summary of the external challenges and opportunities we are currently aware of.

### **Key external challenges**

- Some public apathy toward volunteers and the volunteering ethos;
- Difficulty recruiting volunteers and developing volunteer leaders;
- Generation X and Y will have different motivations and different life pressures;
- Industrial body attitudes to volunteering versus paid staff resource models for fire services and desire of others to be seen to represent volunteers;
- Competing or conflicting influence of other interest groups, including industrial bodies on politicians and Government decision making;
- Retaining Government support for volunteers;
- Increasingly complex and demanding legislative constraints and obligations;
- Possible structural changes to fire and emergency services. Possible future scenario of a single fire service or emergency management agency;
- Changes in community expectations and flow on demands on volunteers;
- Multiple years of below average rainfall - extended fire seasons and impacts on rural communities and volunteers generally;
- Rural economic and population decline and shift of population to urban areas;
- Extensive growth in urban, provincial and coastal areas.

### **Possible opportunities**

- Improve inclination of key stakeholders to involve us early, seek our views before making decisions/policy/announcements
- Getting more effective in influencing CFA to actively address volunteer concerns not doing things that CFA should/can do);
- Stronger links with volunteers and volunteer representative bodies from other agencies, eg SES, Coast Guard;
- Work with other volunteer organisations to solve common problems;
- Improve relationships and links to politicians and key decision makers;
- Improve Government and community recognition of the value of volunteering to society and community strength; to the economy via cost effective emergency service; and to emergency management outcomes;
- Build on the good name and high profile of CFA and CFA volunteers following recent campaign events
- Pursue corporate sponsorship, support

## **Internal Strengths**

- Our numbers
- Skill and experience amongst our constituents, at top end of Associations and VFBV;
- State-wide network of volunteers, consultative forums and grass roots links;
- Role of Associations enshrined in CFA legislation;
- Formal structures and links to provide strong input to CFA decision making and direction setting via representation at CFA Board, formal committee involvement with CFA management and Regional Councils;
- Informal networks within and external to CFA;
- Ability to readily access Ministerial and Ministerial advisor levels, access to key Government bodies and decision makers;
- Volunteer Charter

## **Internal Weaknesses**

- Current perception and possible reality of three Associations not one unified voice;
- Low profile;
- Difficulty harnessing our full volunteer numbers or activating to an issue;
- Name is hard to remember, unfriendly and narrow;
- Operate with very low resource levels, trying to do many things on a shoe string;
- Linking the efforts of our various forums and providing appropriate direction and focus to ensure best possible outcomes from our efforts;
- Old and sometimes outdated procedures;
- Profile and influence of Regional delegates and Regional process is not consistently strong;
- Election based representation and finite individual time capacity can limit ability to target best talent for role;
- VFBV still talked of as a 'future' model;
- VFBV Board regularly diverted to micro issues;
- Perpetuation of urban and rural brigade classifications;
- Volunteer apathy and capacity to give time to issues not directly impacting on them. Lack of interest generally by many;
- Lack of forward planning; previous plans paper based, external consultant driven; not progress reviewed

## **Issues requiring VFBV attention and input on behalf of volunteers**

In addition to the general challenges and opportunities emerging from the above analysis, there are a number of specific issues requiring attention from VFBV on behalf of all CFA volunteers. Issues requiring priority attention are:

### **Immediate:**

- Resolution of EBA concerns re impact on matters also affecting volunteers;
- Issues emerging from 2006/2007 Summer Campaign;
- ENRC Inquiry into Impact of Public Land Management Practices on bushfires in Victoria;
- CFA Organisational Form initiative;
- Debate about recognition, payment and incentives for volunteers;

- Discussion about recognition and support for employers of volunteers;
- CFA review of Administrative Support Needs of Brigades;
- Review of CFA Act;
- Future Volunteer sustainability;
- CFA Brigade Classification review;
- Integrated Fire Management Planning;

Medium term:

CFA Brigade Financial Management Review;  
Links with representation of Coast Guard, SES and other volunteers

## ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES AND POSITIONING FOR THE FUTURE

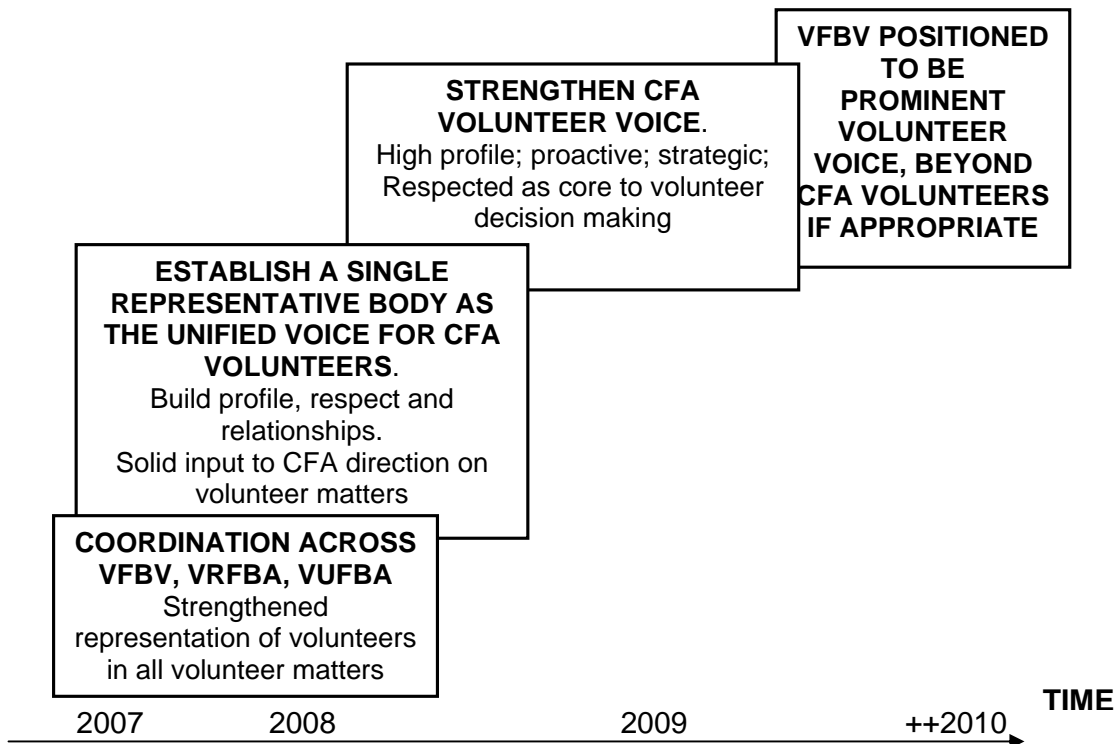
As can be seen from this brief analysis of our operating environment, there are several immediate challenges confronting VFBV plus some good opportunities to build on the work already done. Considering these factors our strategic direction can be described broadly in terms of three key phases.

The interim focus will be on refining coordination of issues between VUFBA, VRFBA and VFBV to ensure best possible coordination and collective attention to issues affecting all CFA volunteers so that we maintain an effective voice right now. Finalising the achievement of a single representative body as the unified voice for all CFA volunteers is the next key priority and will be the major focus for the immediate term of this plan.

As process, structure and transition issues for the unified volunteer representative body are resolved, our efforts will focus toward progressively strengthening the volunteer voice, increasing our profile and positioning to take a more proactive role in shaping future volunteer decisions.

As VFBV becomes more recognised and respected as a high profile, prominent volunteer advocate and leader, the opportunity to expand influence and representation beyond CFA volunteers is a possibility that can be explored.

These phases are illustrated in the diagram below.



Progress through these key phases will be driven partly by the pace at which VFBV can develop and also by changes that happen around us. For VFBV to be successful, the necessary forward thinking will need to have been done to enable swift reaction to new opportunities or challenges. Regardless of current mindsets, our planning must contemplate possible future scenarios so that we are well prepared to control our destiny in a continuously changing world.

## KEY RESULT AREAS

The future success of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, delivery against our vision and mission and ultimately the benefits we provide to our constituents is dependent upon achievement of results in the following Key Result Areas:

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

The focus within these Key Result Areas will change over time as VFBV builds our capacity and improves our profile and positioning internally amongst CFA volunteers and also with external stakeholders.

As we work through the phased journey outlined in the diagram on previous page, the specific focus within these Key Result Areas will change and evolve.

The overall goals and specific objectives within each of these Key Result Areas will form the basis of VFBV annual Business Plan.