

# Joint Committee Highlights

Summary of recent Joint Committee Meetings

A brief summary of the most recent "2 Minute Briefings" which are produced after Joint Committee rounds for each of the 7 Joint Committees. Please refer to the full "2 Minute Briefing" documents attached and available from the VFBV Website for more detailed information. Printed copies are also available from the VFBV office. You can request a copy by calling (03) 9886 1141

**2 Minute Briefing Issue / Date:**

Issue 20, October 2018

## JOINT COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY

- **Scanner/Listening Set Firmware Update:** We are pleased to report that CFA has worked with Uniden to release a patch that will update the firmware and includes all the new CFA/DELWP channel mapping. CFA advise members they need to apply the update prior to **November 1st** to coincide with planned network updates
- **Fire Incident Reporting Systems:** The Committee continues to advocate for streamlined reporting and compiling of FIRS data by Brigades, including technological improvements to assist Brigades. The Committee continues to advocate for additional options such as an app that would allow Brigade's to more easily report FIRS data electronically, especially support calls.

## JOINT COMMUNITY SAFETY

- **Emergency Management Act Amendment Bill 2018:** As members would be aware through previous updates, the State Government introduced the Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2018. (Not to be confused with the Fire Services Reform Bill) VFBV provided a News Note to members on the 1<sup>st</sup> March, outlining the changes and concerns, including notice that there had been no consultation on repealing Part IV of the CFA Act which was introduced into the legislation without warning, and most concerningly – absent from the exposure draft provided during public consultation.
- **Cladding Update:** The Committee continues to advocate on behalf of volunteers to CFA, that a formal notification process be implemented for Brigades.

- **Wire Rope Safety Barriers:** The Committee expressed concern that CFA have not been disseminating information on future installations and have requested mapping data on planned and current works be provided ASAP.

## JOINT EQUIPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Small Equipment Register progress:** VFBV has been advocating for many years for improved processes to help Brigade's know what items of small equipment are CFA approved, how to order them, as well as a central register so Brigades can see what new equipment is currently being evaluated or trialed and its current status.
- **Foam – Search and Destroy:** Do you still have old Foam Concentrate in your Brigade/Group shed? CFA has requested assistance to ensure all non-compliant foam stocks are reported and removed.
- **Volunteer Exclusion from Truck Design:** CFA has reported that in order to resolve an impasse with the UFU it has agreed to co-design a "staff" Tanker with the UFU for use at Integrated Stations, referring to it as a "staff" tanker.
- **Brigade Owned Trailers Safety Check:** It has been highlighted through recent audits carried out by Brigade's that some brigade owned trailers are not fit for use.

## JOINT HR, WELFARE & OH&S

- **Access to and availability of the CFA Doctor:** VFBV has raised with CFA the problems that volunteers are experiencing when being directed by CFA to attend the CFA Doctor.
- **Volunteer Access to CFA-SAFE:** Historically, volunteers have had very limited access to CFA-Safe to directly log injuries, near misses or hazards, relying on their District Office to enter details submitted by Brigades using their Hazard Report book.
- **Matter of Respect Virtual Reality Workshops:** CFA has informed the Committee that it has completed its "Matter of Respect" workshop which was launched end of September

- **District OH&S Meetings:** The Committee continues to follow up on reports that District OH&S meetings are being cancelled or rescheduled

## OPERATIONS

- **Introduction of Vehicle Location Data:** With the introduction of AVL (Automatic Vehicle Location) IMT teams will now have access to responding vehicle location, especially useful for large campaign fires.
- **Improving Ops Committee Consultation:** During the year, the volunteer delegates have been quite concerned about lack of attendance and the level of consultation and support to this Committee from CFA.
- **Emergency Management Professionalisation Scheme:** The Committee has sought CFA's position on the new Emergency Management Professionalisation Scheme that was launched by AFAC earlier this year.
- **Fire Investigators:** CFA has advised the Committee that it is reviewing its Fire Investigation model, noting that there is currently a very high non-response rate to requests for fire investigators to attend incidents.
- **Long Term OO/OM Vacancies:** The Committee continues to strongly advocate for CFA to address the long-term vacancies in the current Operations Managers and Operations Officers pool.

## JOINT TRAINING

- **CFA Training Certificates:** VFBV Delegates have reported that some Districts appear to have stopped the practice of automatically sending out Training Certificates to members after they have completed a CFA Training course.
- **Additional Mobile Training Props:** In welcome news, and after long advocacy by VFBV on the importance and benefit of mobile training props for Brigades, CFA has advised its intent to develop another three additional Mobile Training Props.
- **General Firefighter:** CFA has now formed a new project to review Minimum Skills and rebrand it as 'General Firefighter' with the introduction of the concept of 'Foundation Skills'.

## JOINT VOLUNTEERISM

- **Volunteer Numbers Continuing to Drop:** The Committee continues to monitor the worrying trend over recent years of dropping volunteer numbers. Advice to the Committee of progressive drops in numbers, particularly over recent years is of particular concern.
- **Volunteer Travel and Out of Pocket Reimbursement:** CFA has reported good progress on VFBV's request for the development of a State-wide Business Rule to standardise and expediate arrangements for volunteers to claim travel and out-of-pocket expenses arising from their CFA activities.
- **Volunteer Grants:** CFA has reported that it has advised all successful Brigades from the Round 1 program, with assessment of the Round 2 program underway.
- **Brigade Management Manual Review:** The Committee has welcomed CFA's advice that it is looking to update and refresh the Brigade Management Manual. The Manual is a very important resource for Brigades, especially Captains, Secretaries and Treasurers as a "one stop shop" for information on the management of Brigades.
- **Annual Brigade review Delays:** The Committee was disappointed to learn of further delays with the roll-out of the new Annual Brigade Review.

# Joint Communications and Technology

2 Minute Briefing



Issue 20: October 2018

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions worked through at the most recent Joint Committee meeting between CFA and VFBV. (Meeting held Saturday 15/09/2018)

## SCANNER/LISTENING SET FIRMWARE UPDATE

Members would be aware from previous updates, that VFBV has been requesting that CFA provide an update for the Uniden Scanners (Listening Sets) that will update the scanners with all the new CFA/DELWP radio channel mapping, talk groups and fireground channels. Due to the high number of changes, VFBV requested if this update could be rolled into a firmware update that is required to update the scanners to overcome the 'super grouping' issue that was identified last year, to save members having to do multiple updates. Last year's outage resulted in all scanners 'going quiet' for a couple of days when a proprietary P25 'super group' codec was unexpectedly rolled out to the network last year.

We are pleased to report that CFA has worked with Uniden to release a patch that will update the firmware and includes all the new CFA/DELWP channel mapping. This patch can be downloaded from the CFA or VFBV websites, along with instructions on how to install it. VFBV delegates to the Joint Communications and Technology Committee have congratulated CFA on the update and thanked both CFA representatives and Uniden for their combined efforts, which has resulted in a positive outcome for members. CFA advise members they need to apply the update prior to **November 1st** to coincide with planned network updates.

In other news, CFA has this week advised VFBV that its contract with the Australian supplier for the discounted Uniden Scanners has now ended, and CFA will not be accepting any further orders. Any additional sets will now need to be sourced by members locally. VFBV has advised CFA that there is likely to be renewed interest in additional sets with the forthcoming digital rollout of CFA digital comms to the outer metropolitan areas (District 7, 8, 13 and 14), and we will continue to monitor interest levels for additional subsidy programs in the future. Since the joint Digital Scanner initiative was announced by CFA and VFBV back in 2015, we are pleased to report that over 11,000 digital scanners have been distributed across 970 Brigades and 80 Groups, closing a hugely successful and collaborative approach between the two organisations.

## FIRE INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM (FIRS)

The Committee continues to advocate for streamlined reporting and compiling of FIRS data by Brigades, including technological improvements to assist Brigades. The Committee continues to advocate for additional options such as an app that would allow Brigade's to more easily report FIRS data electronically, especially support calls.

With the majority of Brigades phoning in their FIRS reports, a few quick tips will ensure the time taken on the phone is minimal. CFA reports the average wait time for an operator is no more than five minutes, and the best times to call (shortest wait times) are on Friday's and Saturday's. The busiest days (and longest delays) are Sunday, Monday and Wednesday's – so try to avoid those days if you can.

Ensure you have all the information that is required, and it helps if you use the template for guidance. CFA reports that the most common delay during the call is when the person calling in the report was not at the job and therefore cannot always answer some questions that may not have been recorded on the Brigade report. The best option is to have one of the members who attended the incident phone in the report. Also, if all lines are busy when you first call, use the call back option so an Operator can ring you back as soon as they are free. Only 2 percent of callers are currently using this option. If you want them to phone back at a particular time, say that in your message and CFA operators will call you back at a time most convenient to you.

The Committee has requested CFA improve its systems to ensure all members attending incidents are recorded. This includes members of a Headquarter Brigade or those working in an ICC, or other roles such as ground observers and other activities relating to an incident. The Committee reinforced to CFA that it is very important all members who respond to calls is captured ensuring accurate details are available not only for any claims of injuries or illnesses attributed to firefighting activities, but also to accurately recognise the contribution of these members in protecting the community.

# Joint Community Safety

2 Minute Briefing



Issue 20: October 2018

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions worked through at the most recent Joint Committee meetings between CFA and VFBV. (Meeting held 15/09/2018)

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL 2018

As members would be aware through previous updates, the State Government introduced the Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2018. (Not to be confused with the Fire Services Reform Bill) VFBV provided a News Note to members on the 1<sup>st</sup> March, outlining the changes and concerns, including notice that there had been no consultation on repealing Part IV of the CFA Act which was introduced into the legislation without warning, and most concerningly – absent from the exposure draft provided during public consultation.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> August 2018 the legislation was passed by the Legislative Council (upper house). Amendments were introduced by the Coalition to ensure mandatory volunteer representation on the new planning committees that will replace MFPC's. These amendments were supported by the Liberals, Nationals, Shooters Fishers & Farmers (Daniel Young & Jeff Bourman) and independent Dr Carling-Jenkins. The amendments were not supported by Labor, Greens or independent James Purcell. Consequently, the amendments were defeated with 19 votes for and 20 votes against.

With Municipal Fire Prevention Committee's now to be dissolved and removal of mandatory volunteer Brigade and Group representation to the committee's that will replace them, CFA is now only entitled to one representative. VFBV has requested CFA develop processes to ensure that CFA's nominated representatives will have a requirement to consult with local Brigades and Groups both before and after scheduled meetings and facilitate processes to increase CFA representation and engagement where local Brigades/Groups wish to be involved, but are prevented from joining. The Committee has requested CFA develop an action plan and responses to the KPMG audit commissioned by CFA at the request of the Committee back in 2014. The audit found that CFA could be doing far more to strengthen volunteer input.

## CLADDING UPDATE

The Committee continues to advocate on behalf of volunteers to CFA, that a formal notification process be implemented for Brigades. At present, CFA corporate is being notified of any buildings identified by the Victorian Cladding Taskforce as non-compliant. However, the Committee has requested confirmation that there are appropriate processes in place to ensure that each Brigade who has a non-compliant building in their area - is also being notified, and work done to establish appropriate pre-plans, occupant evacuation procedures and/or higher levels of first response. AFAC has identified that some of the greatest risks are buildings under 25m where limited detection and suppression systems are in place. Approximately 300 buildings within the Country Area of Victoria are being assessed by the Taskforce. When a building is assessed as being non-compliant and having an extreme fire/life safety risk, CFA has advised that Operational Managers notify Operational Officers, who are then expected to work with the local Brigades and community. VFBV has requested CFA ensure support is provided to Districts to manage this workload, and to conduct an audit to determine how many Brigades in areas where non-compliant cladding has been identified, to determine if these processes are in fact working, and if improvements or greater oversight and support is required.

The Victorian Building Authority (VBA) has completed its audit of 1,369 priority buildings, with more than 100 having resulted in building orders and notices being issued. The Committee will continue to monitor.

## WIRE ROPE SAFETY BARRIERS

The Committee continues to advocate for better Brigade/Group involvement and consultation on future wire rope barrier installations. The Committee expressed concern that CFA have not been disseminating information on future installations and have requested mapping data on planned and current works be provided ASAP. VicRoads has been very supportive of the need to engage early with Brigades/Groups and early involvement encourages planning for turnaround points, ingress/egress points and vegetation management. CFA has committed to supporting better engagement in this space.

# Joint Equipment & Infrastructure

2 Minute Briefing



Issue 20: October 2018

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions worked through at the most recent Joint Committee meetings between CFA and VFBV. (Meeting held 25/08/2018)

## SMALL EQUIPMENT REGISTER: PROGRESS

VFBV has been advocating for many years for improved processes to help Brigades know what items of small equipment are CFA approved, how to order them, as well as a central register so Brigades can see what new equipment is currently being evaluated or trialed and its current status. The Committee is pleased to report progress, with CFA presenting preliminary specifications for a portal and App that will allow members to view and search all approved items of equipment and gear, access detailed specifications on each, and a link to the CFA Central Stores where the item is centrally stocked. The portal will also list items currently under evaluation but not yet approved, as well as a list of items that have been removed from service. Whilst early days, this is good progress – with CFA committing to making this initiative a priority. Delegates have congratulated CFA on progress so far, with encouragement to keeping it moving and ensuring its kept up-to-date. We will keep you updated.

## FOAM: SEARCH AND DESTROY

Do you still have old Foam Concentrate in your Brigade/Group shed? CFA has requested assistance to ensure all non-compliant foam stocks are reported and removed. CFA will arrange pick-up and removal of all old foams. It is important that all non-complaint foams be removed, so please check your stores today. Only approved foam should be on site. **Approved A Class:** Phos-Chek WD 881A and Chemguard First Class. **Approved Class B:** Solberg RF 3X6. **Approved High Expansion:** Angus Expandol RF. *FEM Brigades please note:* Brigades must only use and store the 600ml AFFF/AFFF-ATC recharge for extinguisher refilling with 20 litre carboys no longer permitted.

## VOLUNTEER EXCLUSION FROM TRUCK DESIGN & UPDATE ON FALL OVER PROTECTION DELAYS

CFA has reported that in order to resolve an impasse with the UFU it has agreed to co-design a “staff” Tanker with the UFU for use at Integrated Stations, referring to it as a “staff” tanker. VFBV has expressed disappointment that CFA would exclude volunteer representation on any working party – and that CFA would allow a vehicle to be designed in isolation, and only by ‘agreement’ with the UFU. Delegates have cautioned CFA about the significant flow-on effects this will have on future fleet cascading with a move to ‘staff’ trucks and ‘volunteer’ trucks and the most unwelcome complexity this will introduce to an already complex operating environment. VFBV has also pointed out that volunteers play a large role at Integrated stations and many would find their lack of involvement concerning. VFBV has always strived for inclusive and collaborative working parties and CFA appeared to be diverging from the ‘we work as one’ and joined up approach that the sector has been aiming for over recent years. This will add more pressure to an already insufficient capital budget.

In further news, VFBV has been advised that an earlier project to start preliminary investigations into the use of fall over protection for CFA’s operational vehicle fleet had stalled due to UFU intervention. This project was due to start investigating options and issues, including impact analysis of CFA implementing fall over protection for its fleet similar to recent moves by DELWP. As a key feature of member safety, VFBV supports any work to assist CFA understand what improvements are available, and what impact FOPS are may have on future vehicle planning/design. (including weight impact)

## BRIGADE OWNED TRAILERS SAFETY CHECK

It has been highlighted through recent audits carried out by Brigades that some brigade owned trailers are not fit for use. Reports of some being unregistered or unroadworthy are causes for concern. Whilst it is unknown why these are not be identified during Section 29’s - this is a timely reminder for maintenance officers at brigades to do a safety audit and arrange the necessary maintenance to ensure their brigade owned catering, quickfill, or equipment trailer is roadworthy, safe and ready for use this fire season.

# Joint HR, Welfare and OH&S

2 Minute Briefing



Issue 20: October 2018

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions worked through at the most recent Joint Committee meetings between CFA and VFBV. (Meeting held 29/04/2018)

## ACCESS TO AND AVAILABILITY OF THE CFA DOCTOR

VFBV has raised with CFA the problems that volunteers are experiencing when being directed by CFA to attend the CFA Doctor. Some of the issues highlighted were the difficulty and impost on members attending the Doctor's Melbourne office and the subsequent cost to volunteers in terms of lost earnings, transport, accommodation and other incidental costs. In our experience, many volunteers are not aware that they are entitled to reimbursement for these costs. VFBV requested that when CFA direct a volunteer to attend the CFA doctor, they must be made aware of their access to these reimbursements. The Committee also requested CFA consider either the CFA doctor making scheduled Regional visits or an arrangement with multiple providers strategically located throughout the State to minimise volunteers having to travel to the city. CFA agreed to consider these requests and will report back on progress at the next meeting.

## VOLUNTEER ACCESS TO CFA-SAFE

CFA-SAFE is CFA's online system for reporting and recording Health, Safety and Environment hazards, incidents and near misses. Historically, volunteers have had very limited access to CFA-Safe to directly log injuries, near misses or hazards, relying on their District Office to enter details submitted by Brigades using their Hazard Report book. Whilst convenient for many, lack of direct access can create delays in reporting and managing potential risks, as well as no line of sight to the hazards status or progress. VFBV has received a high number of complaints recently about a perception that these Hazard Reports seem to "disappear" in the 'system'. For CFA employees for example, after a hazard is logged in CFA-Safe the system automatically assigns it to their line manager, via email – and status can be seen and monitored. For volunteers their brigade Captain is not linked into the system as their line manager, and there is very little line of sight from a Brigade perspective, and no automatic notification or updates. This often feeds the perception that 'nothing is happening.' VFBV has informed CFA that they believe CFA have underestimated the number of volunteers who do in fact have regular access to email and computer access, and systems should cater for those that do – while retaining paper systems as back-up for those that don't. VFBV has requested that CFA review its systems to provide better access & notification for volunteers, and review systems to ensure Captains are regularly informed of hazards and progress reported by their members.

## "MATTER OF RESPECT" VIRTUAL REALITY WORKSHOPS

CFA has informed the Committee that it has completed its "Matter of Respect" workshop which was launched end of September. Whilst fully supportive of the program's intent and objective, delegates expressed disappointment that the Committee was not involved or had the opportunity to input into its content or design. Having been provided the opportunity to trial the finished product at their last meeting, delegates have praised the use of virtual reality as a tool to engage and excite members, providing a novel and effective way of approaching the subject matter. All delegates agreed that the technology was a very useful tool for this workshop and could be used in many applications for training and other learning applications. Delegates advised CFA that volunteers may not strongly relate to some aspects of the initial scenario (budget meeting) developed for the workshop, and CFA could perhaps consider additional scenario's that may be more relatable. As VFBV is not aware of the entire package, nor seen the corresponding workshop materials it is difficult to make conclusive comments, but early work looks positive and encouraging. VFBV expressed that volunteers could certainly contribute valuable content to the workshops going forward, including case studies and live cases Brigade's deal with on a regular basis. CFA has committed to better involvement with the Committee in the future. VFBV would encourage volunteers to be involved when offered the opportunity with this very important work.

## DISTRICT OH&S MEETINGS

The Committee continues to follow up on reports that District OH&S meetings are being cancelled or rescheduled. CFA has committed to ensuring that these important District meetings occur and has instructed Districts to ensure they do.

# Joint Operations

2 Minute Briefing



Issue 20: October 2018

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions worked through at the most recent Joint Committee meeting between CFA and VFBV. (Meeting held 16/09/2018)

## INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS – INTRODUCTION OF VEHICLE LOCATION DATA

With the introduction of AVL (Automatic Vehicle Location) IMT teams will now have access to responding vehicle location, especially useful for large campaign fires. CFA demonstrated the mapping and systems used through EMCOP advising the intent was to provide information updates on how to use the system through this year's pre-season preparation communications. VFBV delegates confirmed the importance of IMT personnel being advised and trained how to use and access the data. Delegates also discussed concerns raised by volunteers regarding members who have CFA radios installed in their private vehicles or use CFA bag radios, and the implications on privacy. VFBV has requested members be made aware of how the AVL system works so they can specifically understand when AVL data is sent (and when it is not). Members should also refer to Section 25 of the CFA Business Rule – Resource Tracking System for details on exceptions.

## IMPROVING OPERATIONS COMMITTEE CONSULTATION

During the year, the volunteer delegates have been quite concerned about lack of attendance and the level of consultation and support to this Committee from CFA. Whilst previously the Chair of the Committee has been the Chief Officer, the Committee have resolved to try a new approach and have welcomed Deputy Chief Officer Garry Cook AFSM as Chair. Despite a strong view that the optimum arrangements would be for the Chief Officer to be Chair, Committee members are optimistic that this will reenergize support from CFA to the Committee and enable the Committee to progress a number of issues that have been dragging.

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALISATION SCHEME

The Committee has sought CFA's position on the new Emergency Management Professionalisation Scheme that was launched by AFAC earlier this year. The aim of the scheme is to credential practitioners in emergency management, benchmarking individual skills against published professional standards and providing assurance to individuals, fire and emergency service agencies and the public that their qualifications and experience meet nationally-agreed requirements. CFA has advised it is supportive of the scheme and intends on commencing an initial voluntary intake of candidates who have achieved accreditation as Level 3 Incident Controllers to pilot the certification process. The Committee has agreed to monitor this process and share learnings and process improvements as the candidate's progress to certification.

## FIRE INVESTIGATORS

CFA has advised the Committee that it is reviewing its Fire Investigation model, noting that there is currently a very high non-response rate to requests for fire investigators to attend incidents. Relying on advice from the District Coordinators, CFA is firmly of the view that the current pool of fire investigators is insufficient and not sustainable for the increased frequency and complexity of cases that are becoming more frequent. CFA is proposing a more centralised system that could better coordinate requests for investigators. The Committee has requested strong engagement with practitioners in this process and has sought a thorough review of current processes and systems to ensure elements of the model that are working well - remain but are supplemented and supported by revised arrangements to improve response rates.

## LONG TERM OO / OM VACANCIES

The Committee continues to strongly advocate for CFA to address the long-term vacancies in the current Operations Managers and Operations Officers pool. These long-term vacancies and the high number of temporary arrangements that results in OM and OO's frequently changing continues to cause Brigades and Groups significant upheaval. Lack of continuity in these roles impacts significantly on strategic planning and support for Brigades and catchments.

# Joint Training

## 2 Minute Briefing



Issue 20: October 2018

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions worked through at the most recent Joint Committee meetings between CFA and VFBV. (Meeting held 26/08/2018)

### CFA TRAINING CERTIFICATES

VFBV Delegates have reported that some Districts appear to have stopped the practice of automatically sending out Training Certificates to members after they have completed a CFA Training course. Whilst this was initially refuted by CFA, further investigation has revealed that some CFA Districts have unilaterally taken the position that they will no longer issue certificates to members automatically and require members to either specifically request one through the District Office or print their own from the new Learning Management System. (LMS).

VFBV has expressed disappointment about this change and believes that volunteers should be recognised by CFA with the issuing of a formal certificate, especially given that they are giving up substantial amounts of their own time to attend training courses. VFBV State Council has formally requested that CFA request all Districts resume the practice of automatically issuing training certificates to members after the successful completion of each course. CFA representatives have indicated that they were disappointed to learn this was occurring and are sympathetic to the angst this issue has caused, promising to assist with its speedy resolution. State Council has also requested that CFA backdate any certificates that have not been issued and send these onto Brigades as soon as possible.

### ADDITIONAL MOBILE TRAINING PROPS

In welcome news, and after long advocacy by VFBV on the importance and benefit of mobile training props for Brigades, CFA has advised its intent to develop another three additional Mobile Training Props. These props are popular amongst Volunteers as it allows them to train close to home in a safe and controlled environment on a number of different scenarios and helps Brigades either unable to attend training campuses due to distance or inconvenience. The Committee agreed with a CFA position that one of the new props be designed around an LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) bullet type scenario built on a similar base to the car fire prop and including three different types of live fire scenarios. The Committee is seeking suggestions from volunteers as to what the other two new props should be. If you have any suggestions, please talk to your local State Councillor or local Joint Committee delegate who can then pass your suggestions on.

### GENERAL FIREFIGHTER

It has been approximately 17 years since Minimum Skills Wildfire was introduced following Linton. As members would recall in October 2011 CFA conducted a comprehensive review of the 'Minimum Skills' program. Volunteer feedback was fairly consistent with volunteers reporting a high level of confidence in the learning outcomes, but raising concerns that whilst the outcomes have not significantly changed, course times and materials have been constantly increasing, with inconsistent formats across the State and the observation that a lot of theory based materials added over recent years may be considered superfluous and possibly adding very little value at the cost of more effective practical components. CFA has now formed a new project to review Minimum Skills and rebrand it as 'General Firefighter' with the introduction of the concept of 'Foundation Skills'. This is an opportunity to focus on the core learning outcomes and also consider new learning technologies and methods that can adapt to the diverse range of Brigades and members across CFA to make the package as assessable as possible. CFA has committed to prioritizing this work and has also instructed the project team not to reinvent the wheel or throw the baby out with the bath water. This is to be a focused review, with an intent to go back to basics but refresh and contemporise the learning materials and structure to ensure the core learning outcomes remain and ensuring that new operational members develop the essential knowledge and skills required to safely and effectively participate in their first turnout under supervision.

CFA is conducting early preliminary consultation, with the aim of having draft materials out for wider consultation and feedback in coming months. VFBV is supportive of this approach and will advise members when the draft materials are available for review and feedback. Keep an eye out, and be ready to review and provide feedback when asked.



# Joint Volunteerism

## 2 Minute Briefing



Issue 20: October 2018

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions worked through at the most recent Joint Committee meetings between CFA and VFBV. (Meeting held 26/08/2018)

### **VOLUNTEER NUMBERS CONTINUE TO DROP**

The Committee continues to monitor the worrying trend of dropping volunteer numbers. Advice to the Committee of progressive drops in numbers, particularly over recent years is of particular concern. Success of recent recruitment and retention initiatives also masks the extent of drops. Anecdotal evidence shows this is not simply due to normal volunteer ageing or turnover and the trend shows escalating departures. VFBV continues to warn of potential impact of dropping numbers and morale on CFA's capacity to manage large scale long duration major incidents, and the loss of significant knowledge and experience from long-term members departing and the flow on effects. The Committee is seeking more detailed figures to help understand the extent of the problem.

### **VOLUNTEER TRAVEL AND OUT OF POCKET REIMBURSEMENT**

CFA has reported good progress on VFBV's request for the development of a State-wide Business Rule to standardise and expediate arrangements for volunteers to claim travel and out-of-pocket expenses arising from their CFA activities. The Committee has requested research on implications of the per kilometre rate being reviewed, with current rates reflecting historical Australian Taxation Office guidelines. Delegates have requested a simple flow chart be developed to simply communicate how and when travel reimbursement can be claimed.

### **VOLUNTEER GRANTS (CFA VOLUNTEER SUSTAINABILITY GRANTS PROGRAM)**

CFA has reported that it has advised all successful Brigades from the Round 1 program, with assessment of the Round 2 program underway. CFA spoke to the successful initiatives which have been funded to strengthen Brigade viability. Acknowledging the many positive applications, delegates also raised concerns with the timelines and lack of transparency. CFA has advised that it is not in control of the announcements, advising this is a Ministerial decision. The Committee has requested some more transparency on the unsuccessful applications and reasons why – so that Brigades can be advised and learn from what has not been accepted to inform future bids. Noting that many of the successful grants are for items that would normally be considered core activities for CFA, VFBV continues to advocate for a more strategic review of CFA base funding – ensuring Brigades are not required to fundraise for items that should be a core responsibility of CFA.

### **BRIGADE MANAGEMENT MANUAL REVIEW**

The Committee has welcomed CFA's advice that it is looking to update and refresh the Brigade Management Manual. The Manual is a very important resource for Brigades, especially Captains, Secretaries and Treasurers as a "one stop shop" for information on the management of Brigades. CFA has requested feedback on which parts of the manual Brigades use the most often and if there are any areas where more information would be helpful. If members have any feedback or suggestions, please contact your local State Councillor or VFBV Support Officer so this can be fed back to the Committee.

### **ANNUAL BRIGADE REVIEW DELAYS**

The Committee was disappointed to learn of further delays with the roll-out of the new Annual Brigade Review. CFA have advised that roll out is now delayed due to unresolved issues being held up by UFU consultation requirements. CFA has been reporting very positive volunteer feedback from Brigade's piloting the new annual brigade review that provides important planning and brigade support services to help brigade's meet their performance standards and long-term viability. VFBV have expressed deep concern that once again it appears a UFU veto provision is preventing rollout of a fundamental volunteer support and brigade capacity building initiative. CFA have recognised the frustration with delays caused by the UFU consultation barriers but have to date been unable to find a way to break the impasse due to current CFA practice that these reviews are conducted by OO's and OM's whose work is covered by the UFU Operational EBA.