



VFBV

VOLUNTEER FIRE
BRIGADES VICTORIA

2 Minute Briefings June 2024

The **2 Minute Briefings** are a quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from recent Joint Committee discussions between CFA and VFBV.

They are intended to update members on key issues that have recently been discussed. Effort is made to include any related items that may have been progressed out of session or through other avenues that are related to each committee's subject matter. Priority is given to topics where recent progress has been made. Topics where no progress has been made or where there are differences of opinion are sometimes included to ensure members are aware of VFBV efforts in continuing to advocate for progress or outcomes.

Joint Committees are formal committees between CFA and VFBV made up of VFBV delegates appointed by VFBV State Council, and CFA management representatives appointed by CFA. They are a critical loop in our consultative structures. They endeavour to work collaboratively and cooperatively on issues but may also be required to escalate issues where resolution or common ground cannot be found - requiring executive attention.

Joint Community Safety Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2024

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

CHILDREN'S FIRE EDUCATION PROJECT

Work continues to redevelop Fire Safe Kids, CFA's school-based fire safety education program. The majority of Fire Safe Kids was developed in 2011 and has remained unchanged since its initial development. During this time demands on schools and brigades has increased and the methods of engaging with young people has changed considerably.

The current version of Fire Safe Kids is designed for children aged 4-12 years which statistics show are an age group that is at higher risk of death or injury from both structural fire and bushfire. To address this risk the educational programs must be best practice for the age group and effective in discouraging behaviour that may contribute to a fire starting and encourage an understanding of how to best respond should a fire occur.

The project's steering committee has been meeting every two months to oversee the project. The committee are working through a wide range of issues such as ensuring the program is compatible with the current curriculum, the creation of training packages and child safety modules, program websites and branding. It is also proposed that 11 videos will be developed to help children understand topics such as what happens when dialling triple zero (000), the importance of smoke alarms, common hazards around the home and preparing for bushfire etc.

The new children's education program was un-named at the time of meeting. Delegates were advised there was to be a consultation process for naming the program to be developed. However, we have recently learned the decision has been made to call the new program Fire Wise Kids. Committee delegates will seek to understand what consultative process was undertaken to ensure opportunities for members to be involved is respected and maintained in future decisions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PATHWAYS

Readers will remember that last year we reported on training pathways being developed for delivery of Community Engagement. These pathways are to enable members to understand what skill, learning and training is required for them to deliver various community engagement programs as well as how to advance their training into other areas. Community Engagement pathways are currently being developed for FEM technician, Communicator, Presenter, Facilitator and an IMT pathway for community engagement.

The draft pathways can now be viewed by logging onto Members Online and clicking, Brigades/Operations -> Training -> Training Pathways -> Community Engagement. Members are encouraged to discuss the pathways and any suggestions for improvement with members of the Committee. Your local delegate can be found by contacting VFBV Support Officer Colin Booth at c.booth@vfbv.com.au

E-learning packages and training modules will be uploaded as they become available.

SMOKE ALARM INSTALLATION PROGRAM

The Smoke Alarm Installation Program is set to continue for another year. In the 2022-23 Financial year, brigade Community Safety co-ordinators installed 2590 smoke alarms into 1059 households. These smoke alarms were installed free of charge by CFA members to people deemed vulnerable due to not being able to obtain, install or maintain smoke alarms themselves.

Recently CFA announced that in partnership with RACV, funding has been obtained for a further 500 homes. As well as the installation of free smoke alarms, the program also provides opportunities for brigades to discuss other aspects of home fire safety with residents such as fire prevention, escape plans and provides details on how to check and maintain smoke alarms once installed. In some regions the program has been delivered in partnership with other community organisations such as the Bush Nursing Centre. Brigades interested in participating can speak with their Regional/District CFA Community Education Coordinator.

Joint Equipment and Infrastructure Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2024

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

WORKWEAR ORDERING

Members have continued to discuss the availability of workwear for new members that have joined since the initial workwear project ended. It was acknowledged by CFA that the Project had an initial allocation which has now been exhausted, and work needs to be done on a new member and replacement workwear policy including how workwear could be funded and managed. While welcoming the ability to order workwear, concern was raised by delegates that under the current user pay proposal only wealthier brigades that could afford to do this for new members would take on the cost but brigades that are unable to bear the cost would be left to wait until an ongoing solution had been found. This then risks the costs being pushed onto volunteers personally. Delegates have called for clear communication that this is being worked through, as some brigades may place bulk orders if the ordering system is rolled out and communications on intent aren't clear. Delegates queried how additional workwear could be purchased if stock was allocated when the project finished. CFA advised that after the project closure, an assessment was made, and additional stock was procured to hopefully fill this. Delegates also queried the opening hours of the State Logistics Centre for volunteers for fitment or to collect items, as its current opening hours are very restricted and not at all volunteer friendly. CFA has acknowledged that the current operating hours are not member-focused and that it was an issue that CFA was seeking to address.

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF NEW STATIONS AND TRUCKS

VFBV delegates and members have reported an increasing number of faults with new station and appliance builds over the past 18 months. Consequently, the delegates raised the issue with the E&I committee. CFA has noted that the Quality Assurance process is a continuous learning process, and CFA is constantly looking for ways to improve it. Land & Building Services are still navigating the relationship with the Community Safety Building Authority (CSBA) as the government partner in new station builds, which has its own Quality Assurance overlay. VFBV encourages members and brigades to report all issues and faults they have discovered to the relevant department as CFA remains the contact for brigades.

Some questions raised by delegates on the Quality Assurance of new build appliances were answered, such as the process of reporting and tracking defects and faults, the end-user testing of new appliances, and the extent to which volunteers are involved in the testing of new appliances or involved in the Quality Assurance process. Currently, CFA is refining its internal process to capture data on when vehicles are at the Workshops and the DMOs are performing repairs of warranty or contract items, or whether they are returned to the manufacturer for warranty issues. This is intended to enable better reporting and allow CFA to understand the size and scope of defects or faults and whether they are systematic or one-off issues.

FCV FUNDING

Delegates and interested parties continue to raise the issue of the current CFA maintenance funding model for Group FCV's across the state. This has been a long and drawn-out process to source additional funding to cover the gap currently worn by Groups. Research has identified that Group funded FCV's have not had an increase in funding for many years with the allocation falling well below annual CPI increases. Delegates have argued that due to groups not having the same ability to raise funds as brigades currently do there is a large funding shortfall. Some Groups are supported by their Districts by an outdated process, which wouldn't cover the cost of servicing and was found to be approximately a \$22k shortfall across the state for the 96 group vehicles which is a substantially higher estimate than previously thought.

The servicing cost break down is for the standard Ford Ranger delivery provided by CFA but the additional costs on top of the finalised figure for Toyota Prado's or other special-order vehicles will have to be met by Groups. If DMOs were to undertake this work they would require additional resources as there are currently 361 FCV's across the state as well as the 8 red-plated CFA FCV funded through fleet budget, 257 funded by brigades, 96 funded by groups.

CFA have been aware of the growing gap in funding and are working with finance with an aim to fund the difference.

Joint Member Services Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2023

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT HUB UPDATES CONTINUE

Further improvements to the Volunteer Recruitment Hub (VRH) were implemented in March but volunteer feedback continues to seek further performance improvements. Improved Brigade Secretary/Captain visibility and email advice has seen an improvement in application movement. CFA has reported that there have been increased numbers of people putting in an EOI however there are only 36% who make it to the Brigade member status. The progression past the current 'blockers' e.g. WWCC (now able to progress to 'Fit for Work' without waiting for the WWCC number) has improved the process but members transferring between Brigades remain problematic with further investigation at State, District, and Brigade level required.

Further enhancements will follow as VRH v4.2 rolling out in the middle of 2024. There are resources available for members on the members online portal including information for families, VRH Toolkit and a dashboard to help you. Captains/Secretaries and recruitment officers are requested to monitor these upgrades and any future changes and let CFA know if the system is improving by contacting the VRH team at volrecruithub@cfa.vic.gov.au

CALLS FOR MORE LEADERSHIP TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Delegates continue to raise concerns on the general lack of leadership training available within CFA. Recent progress of the Volunteer Leadership Development Project that is funded through the CFA Public Fund, saw CFA recently call for members who are interested in applying for a Certificate IV in Leadership and Management, similar to the interagency program that VFBV used to run prior to EMV cutting funding for that program back in 2018. While CFA's latest program only made 20 positions available, they received more than 150 high quality applications from volunteers. VFBV believes this is a clear indication that volunteers from across the state are screaming out for leadership training.

Some online resources have been developed and can be accessed via Members Online as a part of the CFA People Capability Framework and the CFA Leadership library is available for members who wish to learn more or improve their knowledge base. VFBV is continuing to call for CFA to provide further leadership opportunities in a timely manner for members to participate in, including ensuring CFA training pathways incorporate what development opportunities are available.

VICTORIAN CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME UPDATE

Following our update back in December '23 on this topic, we are pleased to advise that CFA have now registered to be a donation partner with the CDS to receive donations. However, donations received through this 'generic' CFA are lodged to the CFA Public Fund and are not attributed to the local brigade. These funds will be used for Statewide initiatives.

If brigades wish to benefit from the scheme, they must register individually with the relevant Zone Operator (East, West or North). In your application, CFA advise you must nominate for the funds to be deposited into the CFA & Brigades Donations Fund bank account to meet the registered donation partner rules. Your CDC allocated donation partner ID will then enable the trust to link deposits to your individual brigade. Search for 'CDS' on CFA members online for the FAQ.

CREDIT/DEBIT CARD AND TAP AND GO DONATIONS

Brigades have been waiting patiently for CFA to finalise the policy on CFA brigades receiving donations through tap and go services. Delegates continue to seek an update from CFA Financial Services on the results of the trial of mobile terminals and the two differing contract services that were offered during the pilot. Delegates continue to follow this up with CFA with brigades awaiting the results of this long-awaited trail so they can plan for their next event with the knowledge they are operating within the CFA guidelines.

Joint Operational Capability Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2024

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

FIRE SPOTTING GOES DIGITAL

In 2023 delegates received an update on the state of the fire towers across Victoria. FFMVic is currently responsible for the operation of 62 fire towers across the state and CFA has 3 towers. While towers play a very important role, there has recently been trials of remote cameras, with only one camera attached to a current fire tower and the remaining 6 being attached to telecommunication towers. The Cameras provide a 360 degree view of the surrounding area and are AI enhanced to spot smoke and fire 24 hours a day with a range of over 20km. Each site has remote access allowing an operator to digitally zoom into an area where a fire is suspected to have started. If a fire is spotted by the operator an alert is sent to the Dedicated Duty Officer (DDO) who can action further if required. These 'stations' as they are named can be very useful when spotting lightning strikes and storm events as they can be monitored 24/7. If a strike is detected that starts a potential fire the operator then alerts 000 for a brigade to respond or an aircraft to be despatched on days where PDD is operating. Members can currently only access the digital images in a limited capacity, with further work continuing to assess the programs usefulness.

PPE & C WORKING PARTY FORMED

It has been some time since CFA abolished its Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing (PPE&C) committee and members have been advocating for the need for a constructive volunteer forum for volunteers to raise specific PPE&C issues. During last year's reform to our Joint Committee structure, PPC/E now sits within the Joint Operational Capability Committee and the Chair has now agreed for the working party to be formed. The working party will meet out of session and provide recommendations back to the Joint Committee for endorsement. VFBV is looking forward to announcing some of the exciting new projects that will begin to see traction shortly. In the past the PPE&C committee were involved in selection and trials of the cold weather jackets, new generation wildfire gear and F15 Structural helmets to name just a few. CFA has advised there will be trials running in 2024 for a new structural firefighting boot, structural flash hood and structural glove to name just a few. VFBV will continue to update members on the progress of items as they come before the committee for discussion.

IMT WORKSHOP

VFBV delegates, Group Officers and experienced volunteers from many brigades have been commenting over some time on the lack of real training towards developing members to fill IMT roles when incidents cross into the Level 2 and Level 3 space. Often the higher-level roles are being filled by the same people time after time and there has been no increase in capability since fire service reform, with numbers actually declining in some areas.

In some positive discussions some groups are allocating an IMT mentor role to an experienced member with the intent on helping less experienced or new interested members to understand and develop in the roles within an IMT. Before the start of the 2023-24 fire season the Chief Officer published a 'Statement of Intent' to the Districts for IMT's with 4 key performance measures –

1. Increase the number of volunteers in development for IMT level 3 roles.
2. Increase the number of volunteers as level 3 Operations officers and planning Officers
3. Develop the ability for District Level 2 ICC's to be stand alone for up to 48 hrs after an incident starts
4. Increase the capability for level 2 ICC across all districts using local volunteer members.

It was reported by members who currently volunteer at the level 2 and level 3 incidents that even with recent fire and storm events the organisation has struggled to fill all the roles required, with many members having to undertake more than one role for extended periods of time in all parts of the state. VFBV commends the CO's 'Statement of intent' which is focused on improving the IMT capacity and capability in every district so that there is a high level of 'self-sufficiency'. The next step is to ensure training opportunities are made available, which delegates will continue to monitor.

Joint Operational Performance Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2023

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

DOCTRINE REVIEW CONTINUES

Delegates were pleased to hear that the review of CFA's (outdated) doctrine will continue for 2024, however the pace at which this change is occurring is of concern to delegates. While no-one is arguing that some of CFA's doctrine is grossly outdated with some SOPs' not having been reviewed since 2003, there is great concern that some of the timelines for members to reply to feedback requests are very short and inadequate for effective consultation. While VFBV usually requests a minimum of 3-months for doctrine reviews, multiple requests and more than a half dozen SOP's being reviewed in each tranche is leaving very little time for detailed discussions on each item. Given CFA has waited more than 13 years to update some of its doctrine, delegates have stressed the importance of genuine consultation and not rushing to do it all at once. Members are very keen to get involved in the doctrine feedback space but question the quality of feedback when only given a short time to reply to some very complex subjects, especially multiple items at once. Members are also balancing work commitments, family time and CFA duties. VFBV will continue to try to amend time frames to best fit volunteer's busy lives however there will be some instances where this may not be possible. The Chief Officer has to date been very understanding of our requests for more time. For members who do find time to give feedback VFBV thanks you and will work to ensure all feedback is considered adequately. Please don't wait until after a SOP is finalised to provide feedback. By then it's too late.

FIRE DISTRICT REVIEW PANEL

CFA has completed its submission to the Fire District Review Panel, with feedback submitted to the panel by the Chief Officer. All 13 brigades were involved in their own brigade chapter with the submission published and available through the Members Online portal. Impacted brigades will also have an opportunity to contribute to an After-Action-Review process to discuss the lessons learned out of the review process. Delegates noted that keeping the affected brigades updated to the progress of the review will be a very important part of the process so that any actions can be responded to quickly and effectively and we continue to learn how do develop responses and demands in the future.

POST INCIDENT AAR'S

With the close of this years fire danger period, and following busy fire activity across the Western Districts in particular, members continue to ask how they can contribute to After Action Reviews. Following last quarters update on post incident AAR's, CFA have now advised the Committee they are working on introducing an Observation Collection Tool which will allow members to contribute in real time. We are told the tool will be available for all volunteers to contribute and will allow all members to see the results in an expediated process. The Committee will monitor and update on progress.

PUMPING PITS

Brigades with pumping pits will have received a letter from CFA at the end of December last year outlining the organisations decision to discontinue the use of pumping pits based on water quality issues. Members will remember that Safety Alert 35 was issued in 2015 suspending the use of pumping pits. While VFBV pushed CFA to establish a pumping pit remediation program, Brigades have been informed that after an extensive testing regime across many brigades it was impossible to guarantee the water quality would be unaffected by contaminants over a period of time. The decision to discontinue the use of pumping pits is disappointing as VFBV's preference was for a regular testing and maintenance program to be implemented so that brigades would still have access to safe water and pits for training purposes, and our belief that collar tanks introduce manual handling issues when used regularly for training, as well as unknown water quality when using natural bodies of water as an alternate. CFA is investigating the distribution of a 2000 litre collar tank for each of the 94 brigades as a replacement of the now discontinued pumping pits. If brigades have a pumping pit and were unaware of the closure or did not receive notification or are unhappy with the decision, we urge Brigades to raise their concerns with CFA and notify VFBV of your action so we can monitor.

Joint People, Culture & Safety Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2024

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

CFA COMPLAINTS PROCESS KPMG AUDIT

At the end of 2023 CFA contracted KPMG to undertake an internal audit of the CFA Complaints process, including oversight of Issues Management Complaints, Case Management, policies/procedures, systems including data integrity and reporting. The findings shared with the committee were not very favourable. These findings included among other things, a lack of clear process for prioritising complaints, lack of a standard approach for escalation of complaints, no documented process for contact frequency with complainants and inconsistent issue of the satisfaction survey for closed matters. The audit also identified concerns with the lack of clear assessment criteria for determining if external investigators should be appointed and a lack of KPI's for external investigators i.e. clear timeframes and quality standards of investigations and subsequent reports. CFA Record keeping for informal complaint matters was also identified by KPMG as a concern, as was data accuracy. Sadly, these findings come as little surprise to VFBV delegates, who have raised these and other concerns with the committee for some time now, reflecting feedback they have received from disgruntled and distressed volunteers, experiencing the complaints process. VFBV now see those volunteers and delegates as vindicated, in their unwavering attempts to address and change what was a less than satisfactory complaints process. All is not doom and gloom though. The fact that CFA shared the audit findings with the committee, shows genuine transparency and a robust appetite to include volunteers in the discussion for change and improvement. CFA have requested VFBV, via a volunteer working group, meet with CFA, to work through the issues together, and find solutions to rebuild a fairer complaints process. This work will include the procurement and establishment of a panel of external investigators. VFBV will continue to report on changes made to build a better, fairer more robust complaints process.

HR BUSINESS PARTNER RESTRUCTURE

CFA have completed a restructure which will enable four (4) Issue Resolution Business Partners and a Child Safety Advisor to be dedicated to the matters of complaints. Their role will include early intervention and hopefully early resolution, whilst matters are minor and less complex. They will also be responsible for Case Management, which will include keeping complainants and respondents updated on the progress of their individual matters i.e. progress of external investigation and time frames etc. VFBV will monitor these changes and look to see if it results in the desired process improvements.

NEW COMPLAINT REPORTING PORTAL

CFA's Organizational Development Department are in the process of establishing a portal by which any volunteer at any time, can access the portal to report a complaint. Once a complaint is logged within the system a member of CFA's Complaints Department is alerted and can act immediately. It is hoped, this alternative pathway will eliminate those complaints, that were raised at a local level in the past, and not acted upon in a timely manner or at all, thus often causing a small informal matter to fester and develop into a larger more serious, formal complaint.

The committee have also discussed exploring language to eliminate the use of 'Formal' and 'Informal Complaints'. CFA are in the process of establishing a Tier System that will nominate a lower end, minor complaint at Tier One for example, and a more serious or more complex complaint at Tier Four. A VFBV working group will work with CFA to help develop and refine this Tier system and we will continue to keep you updated on progress.

SUSPENSION/STAND DOWN

VFBV previously raised its concern with the use of 'stand downs' in complaint matters. CFA have now confirmed there is no provision within the Regulations for 'stand down' – the only provision is for a formal suspension, which requires certain procedures to be followed. VFBV understands the Chief Officer will be issuing an interim SOP (for volunteer consultation) which clarifies the suspension process, and the steps CFA is required to undertake. If any volunteer is currently "stood down" please contact VFBV and the Resolutions Team in People and Culture at resolutionsupport @cfa.vic.gov.au

Joint Technology & Innovation Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2024

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

MOBILE DATA CAPABILITY PROJECT

Members have been highlighting the need for consultation on the integration of changes to the CAD environment. CFA gave the Committee members an update on this project with particular focus on the barriers that members see in its progression. CFA are lobbying Triple Zero Victoria, EMV and the Minister to ensure that the CAD Integration for CFA is provided as part of the Next Generation CAD upgrade. The Next Generation CAD upgrade is expected to be completed within the next 2 years. The Committee members reinforced that this work is essential for the success of the mobile data project. The Project Team are currently going through the process of how a Brigade may be able to purchase the Tablets through ICT with restrictions applied. These restrictions include all purchases, installation and ongoing (including replacement) costs will be the responsibility of the Brigade. Tablets, and dock will be a standard configuration and type and the cost of the SIM is likely to be at the brigade's expense. CFA security requirements and software updates will be managed via CFA's Enterprise Mobility Management (EMM) tool SOTI. Brigades will be notified as to the final requirements and how to access this via communications from CFA at a later date. Members have highlighted that while it is pleasing to see some progress it is also disappointing that brigades will yet again be expected to fund vital front line equipment. VFBV is working with CFA to explore alternate funding opportunities, but again calls out the appalling state of CFA's budget which sees volunteers having to fundraise to buy essential tools and equipment.

RADIO REPLACEMENT PROJECT UPDATE

The Committee were informed by CFA that the radio replacement rollout is commencing with the first of the radios to be rolled out in District 14 during May. It is expected that the rollout will take approximately 15 months for all Districts to receive the new radios. Brigades will be given the portables first with the intent that any good batteries from the old radios can be recycled onto other Brigades ensuring the Tait portables can continue to work prior to a Brigade receiving the Motorola set. The standard portable radio will be the APX800HXE that has the same intrinsic Safety level as the current TAIT portables.

FIRS ENTRY FOR GROUP ACTIVITIES

Delegates have noted that operational activity performed by members of a Group are difficult to capture in the Fire Incident Reporting System (FIRS). The request from Committee members that any activity performed by members of a Group and not captured by Brigade reporting can be added to FIRS online by either being added as a member of a Group vehicle being responded, added in the Responded to Station section or entered in the comments section. Members have requested that this be made easier so that the true level of activity is recorded and the process be communicated to Groups and Brigades.

TELEPHONE SYSTEM UPDATE

Members have reported to the committee that the rollout of the IP Telephony system into stations has not been without issues. Generally the problems are being rectified as they happen however it has highlighted the absence of a process for members to activate should they encounter problems or faults. Some of the issues include lack of information being passed onto Brigade members from Captains, misunderstanding between sub-contractors, contractors and the Project Team and the removal of old handsets. However, on a positive side, additional handsets when requested by a brigade above those initially indicated by the Districts have generally been agreed to. Members are reminded that if they are experiencing problems with this changeover please contact CFA District in the first instance.

Joint Training Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2024

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

GFF TRAINING CHANGES

After consistent feedback from members across the state, CFA have now completed a review of the GFF program. As well as having direct input into this review, VFBV Delegates of the Joint Training Committee (JTC) have been closely monitoring CFA's progress to ensure that a diverse range of Brigades, Groups and Volunteer Instructors have been consulted for their views. Member feedback has ensured that improvements to the materials being delivered; fixing issues with and updating slides as well as re-shooting videos to better reflect modern equipment and practices has been completed. However, there is no substantive change to the actual duration or scope of content that is delivered in these materials. The review found that the material presented as part of the GFF program is generally appropriate for the needs of the vast majority of new firefighters. It is how this material is delivered that needed to be changed to make it easier for members to complete the course in the most efficient manner for them.

While it was always the intention that the existing GFF course would be flexible in its delivery methods, the structure of the course made it difficult to do and many Districts only made one model available to members. The updated course has now been structured such that it can be more easily delivered in a multitude of ways. Each of the theory modules can now be completed either face to face, online in the participants own time or, a combination of both. The assessment for each module will be undertaken at the completion of the module, rather than the single multiple hour theory assessment in the current GFF program. As with the current program, there will be the equivalent to about 2 days of practical training and assessments that participants must complete. But, when and how these are completed during the program will be tailorable by the district, brigade and instructor to best meet the requirements of the participants.

Brigades and Groups should work with their District Training teams to structure the delivery of GFF courses that best suits the needs and availability of the cohort undertaking the course. Whether it be a course that is completely delivered face to face or a course where participants would prefer to complete all of their theory online and only have to be in attendance for a couple of days of practical work. There is an example of District 16 successfully delivering the full GFF program in 3 long days face to face. This has been specifically structured to suit small numbers of 4 or 5 participants who already have some practical experience with firefighting equipment and demonstrates the sort of flexibility that can be negotiated between Brigades/Groups and their District. CFA are planning to have the updated GFF Course released for delivery during the 3rd quarter 2024. Districts should continue to deliver the current program until the new release.

BLUE HELMETS FOR INSTRUCTORS

VFBV have long been advocating for better management, utilisation and recognition of volunteer instructors. CFA appear to be now taking this on board and Delegates were pleased to be briefed that Volunteer Instructors will be issued with blue instructor helmets. Recognising this was recommended in the AFAC Peer Review into CFA Training, this step forward has been in discussion for considerable time and is an important recognition of the valuable contribution that volunteer trainers and assessors make to ensuring members receive the training they need.

The Committee has endorsed the following principles as the criteria for Instructors to be allocated a blue helmet:

- Must be a qualified Trainer and Assessor, holding a current Cert IV in Training and Assessing or the older quals.
- Must be endorsed to deliver courses in their District.
- Must have been actively delivering courses in the past 12 months.
- There must be a process where an Instructor can appeal a decision for a helmet not to be issued to them.

Issuance of instructor helmets will be managed through the Operational Doctrine and Training Department at CFA HQ. All volunteer instructors should have received an e-mail with a QR Code to link them to the application form. The QR code can also be found on Members Online by searching for "instructor helmets".