

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 2025

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

FIRE WISE KIDS

As we reported last year, work has been underway to redevelop CFA's school-based education program. The previous program 'Fire Safe Kids' of which was developed in 2011 and has remained unchanged since, will be replaced by three new offerings. The three offerings consist of a classroom-based program Fire Wise Kids, a separate hands on fire truck experience called Truck Time, and a suite of online resources for teachers, families and children. These resources include a number of videos, lesson plans, and activities.

Development of the three offerings has been led by a project steering committee who have developed the programs in consultation with the Joint Committee, a member's testing group, a regional staff group as well as input from other parts of the organisation such as OH&S and child safety. Fire Wise Kids is designed for children 4 years of age through to Year 4. The program consists of five 30-60 minute lessons with topics such as basic hazards at home, calling triple zero and outdoor fire safety. Draft lesson plans were developed and trialled in Doreen and Phillip Island. In addition, new logos and style guides and new CFA characters have been designed. Following this, presenter support materials and training have been developed.

Testing of the lesson plans was completed in mid-March with two additional trials being conducted, one being a kinder in Ferntree Gully and a high bushfire risk trial in Belgrave South. The lessons were then updated based on the experiences during those trials. The feedback from stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive. Phase two of the project (2025/26) will begin with the launch of both new programs, Fire Wise Kids and Truck Time and the release of new stickers and resources for brigade open days (colouring in sheets and activity sheets). Work will then begin on expanding the online resources library as well as exploring specialised resources for students with disabilities and English as an additional language.

Truck Time is a standalone program designed to support brigades in engaging children in and around fire trucks and equipment safely. In addition to school settings this program is well suited to delivery at open days, fetes, or any other community event. Members who wish to deliver Fire Wise Kids or Truck Time will need to have a current Working With Children Check (WWCC) and complete the e-learning modules on LMS as well as attend an in-person observation session to practise and demonstrate skills.

2024 POMONAL FIRE RESEARCH

CFA has partnered with RMIT to conduct research into the community's response to the 2024 Pomonal Fire. The project aims to better understand behaviour of residents when faced with evacuation because of bushfire or other emergencies.

36 community members agreed to be interviewed which included 8 CFA members. It is hoped that this research will help better understand what gaps there are in emergency planning and information both before and during an emergency.

17% of respondents said they had a written plan. 60% of respondents indicated they have a verbal plan only. Of those respondents who did not have a written plan, 52% indicated it was not necessary. 93% of those surveyed accept it is their responsibility to prepare their property for fire, most focus on 'easy to do' preparation such as general garden maintenance, rather than having a comprehensive plan. 50% believe that should a fire occur it is CFA's responsibility to protect them.

Only 30% of respondents indicated that they would leave an area during a bushfire event. 14% of people indicated they would wait and assess the situation and 16% would wait until they were instructed to leave by emergency authorities. 12% of respondents would stay and actively defend their property. Reassuringly, the survey indicated that the community's trust in CFA remains high, and the community understands the importance of staying connected with CFA and their local brigade.

Joint Equipment and Infrastructure Committee



2 Minute Briefing

June 2025

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

STORZ

It has been some time since the committee last reported on the Storz coupling rollout across CFA. Delegates have continued to seek updates from the organisation on the snail pace progress of converting the fleet to Storz. While there has been some progress there was a glaring detail in the data provided that indicated that while many districts had completed 100% Storz conversion to all brigades and appliances, there appears to be some districts that are reporting 100% of the 'brigades nominated' for conversion are completed. Delegates are concerned that some districts are not nominating every brigade or appliance for the program despite the funding was clearly being provided for all brigades. As highlighted in previous articles the Storz conversion started in 2009 with funding for a 100% conversion to all brigades and appliances. Delegates have requested an understanding as to who makes the decision that a brigade does or does not receive Storz as the funding provided to date was clearly marked for all brigades and all appliances for the whole of the organisation.

ONE FUEL CARD

During the very busy summer fire period there have been reports of members having trouble accessing fuel for appliances during peak period, particularly when trying to refuel while out of area on deployment and particularly out of hours. CFA is investigating an expansion to provide 'fuel pods' for areas that have difficulty accessing fuel when the local store has closed and this will be managed by the District office. In some instances members have had to pay for the fuel themselves as they did not have the right fuel card when on a strike team out of their area. Members are able to be re-imbursed for the fuel, however this can take some time to organise and becomes yet another burden on a brigade or member. Progress is being made on CFA having a single fuel card for all appliances across the state, negating the need for brigades to have several fuel cards, dependant on what supplier is operating in the district. Delegates will continue to seek updates and look forward to the 'one card' solution.

BUILD DELAYS

Delegates have queried the inconsistencies reported for the appliance builds over the past few meetings. CFA has advised that the reporting metric has changed to now show appliances actually delivered to brigades rather than the previous method of reporting on appliances completed.

Some of the reasons for appliance build delays are flow-on's from the COVID era, there are many that are outside of CFA's control, for instance, manufacturers labour shortages and supply change issues. Added to this are the expected delays while overseas manufacturers navigate expected Euro 6 emissions changes and the effect this will have on Australian Design Rules. CFA continue to brief the Government on changes to the supply chain and its impact on Emergency Services builds.

BA CYLINDER EXCHANGE

The BA Cylinder exchange working party continues to meet regularly to seek ways of improving the member experience when dealing with BA cylinder exchange and refilling. The working group has recently been discussing a mapping process and identifying contact points when a cylinder is exchanged. While the physical aspect of the cylinder exchange appears to be an uncomplicated process - the tracking of cylinders so that testing and quality requirements are met is proving challenging. There is at IT component that also needs to be tested so that the adopted system is somewhat future proofed. We will continue to update you as the project nears an announcement and implementation.

Joint Member Services Committee



2 Minute Briefing

June 2025

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

VOLUNTEER RECUITMENT HUB (VRH)

Delegates continue to raise issues with CFA regarding the Volunteer Recruitment Hub (VRH). The release of Version 5 of the VRH will see changes that are hoped will ultimately reduce barriers to members and applicants along the way as well as giving brigades better visibility of where members and applicants are at in the process. Volunteers continue to raise application delays that occur due to CFA's medical review process with the People, Culture and Safety Joint Committee pursuing changes to CFA's medical processes. If you have recently joined CFA or transferred from one brigade to another please keep providing feedback to volrecruithub@cfa.vic.gov.au so that issues we can continue to document issues and advocate for improvements to be made.

VOLUNTEER RETENTION

VFBV continues to highlight the issues with volunteer retention, that see additional signups from CFA's recruitment campaigns dwarfing the number of volunteers exiting the system. Delegates continue to express concern at the quarterly reports showing a continuing reduction in volunteer numbers, despite the 'Give us a Hand' campaign that reportedly showed an uptick in expressions of interest during October 2024. Delegates have continued to highlight the importance of retention of current members requesting CFA establish stronger reporting mechanisms that track why members are leaving in such large numbers. Delegates have called for stronger support for volunteer exit surveys to ensure they reach every member that resigns, and the information collected from the surveys is available.

EFTPOS TERMINALS

CFA have now distributed EFTPOS terminals to all District Offices. The terminals can be 'loaned' to Brigades for BBQ's, Open Days and other authorised fund-raising activities. Delegates will continue to seek an update from CFA Financial Services on the success of these mobile terminals and the trailing of different providers and charging mechanisms. Brigades are requested to provide feedback to our Joint Committee delegates so we can gather feedback on the long-awaited provision of these terminal(s).

CHAMPIONSHIPS

Delegates congratulate the 2025 Mooroopna Host Committee and all judges, officials and competitors for another successful State Championships. Our competition committees are focused on making the event more successful and enjoyable and a great deal of work is being done to ensure that the events are relevant to fire ground practices so that members gain skills they can use back in their districts to protect their communities. Next years State Championships will be held in Stawell.

If you have competed in the past or want to give it a try you have a year to get your team back on the competition track, talk to your local competition association or VFBV District Council for information and support.

BRIGADE MANAGEMENT MANUAL (BMM)

The Brigade Management Manual (BMM) is currently under review in order to ensure it remains contemporary and reflective of current practice.

A working group is evaluating the topics set out in the BMM to confirm if certain parts are still relevant, require amendment or can be removed. Further communication regarding this will be made available soon. If there are parts of the BMM that you consider needs attention or areas where information is missing - please ensure you provide feedback to the working group via your district council representatives or State Councillors.

Joint Operational Capability Committee



2 Minute Briefing

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

ARDUOUS FIREFIGHTING TRIAL

Delegates are assisting the Chief Officer consider a new capability of an Arduous Firefighter (AFF) role within CFA. The role of an arduous firefighter will require members to have a heightened level of fitness and medical while also requiring additional qualifications to operate in remote bush and forest areas within a 45 minute walk from a suitable extraction point. Arduous firefighting can be physically demanding and requires high levels of physical exertion over extended periods in dynamically changing environments. The AFF role may be required to operate a range of equipment in both emergency and non-emergency situations in a variety of challenging environments, including off-road conditions. The new capability is being piloted by a small cohort of volunteers in the Corio Fire Brigade as a specialist response. Once trials are completed, we are requesting other areas of the state to train for the role. The intent of the pilot is to have an initial crew of AFF ready for the start of December 2025.

WHOLE OF LIFE ASSET PLAN UPDATE

It has been some time since we last reported on the Whole Of Life Asset Plan (WOLP) but work has continued to develop over the past 18 months. The WOLP is a resource to risk model that is designed to create a baseline process for the allocation of appliances and resources. The process of moving and allocating appliances while taking into consideration growth, activity, station modifications and vehicle lifecycle and District priorities continues to evolve. Last year's announcement of 25 new pumpers into the fleet is an example of where the WOLP helps inform where the new trucks will go and the expected 52 cascades that will eventuate - with 7 locations expected to receive a cascaded pumper based on growth and risk. The WOLP is being designed to guide the asset management requirements of the organisation, and a new service risk delivery model has been developed that identifies the environmental risk for each brigade, which will then inform the base service delivery classification. Like everything, volunteer consultation is a key element in the allocation of resources and delegates continue to push that District Planning Committee's across the state need to remain heavily involved in forming the Districts priorities.

BOOT AND GLOVE TRIALS

The Personal Protective Equipment & Clothing subcommittee have been busy over the past few months with new trials of structural boots, structural gloves and flash hoods taking place. The committee would like to particularly thank all of the volunteers involved in the trials at the various training grounds and their continuous commitment to the evaluation process. Tenders will be called for over the next few months with the preferred protective equipment available later in the year. Volunteers are reminded that fit for purpose PPE can be custom made by talking to your District office for a special made to order measure and fitting. We will keep you updated on progress.

SUMMER DEBRIEF

Delegates continue to impress on CFA the importance of ensuring grass root volunteer involvement in fire season debriefs. Many members will have been very active over the Fire Season in many parts of the state. It has been a busy season with an increase in activity across the state and there have been some significant fires that dragged resources from all areas that contributed to the State's volunteer surge capacity.

The Kadnook Fire in November, The Grampians National Park fire in December and the Little Dessert Fire in January were all major incidents that required significant volunteer resources to contain. Other incidents at The Gurdies in the South East, the Bullengarook fire west of Gisborne, the Creswick fire and The Sheffield/Montrose fire also kept firefighters busy during the season. VFBV would like to thank all volunteers for their continued support and commitment to the communities of Victoria over the whole of the year but particularly during the busy festive and holiday periods. Please ensure members provide feedback on deployments into CFA's AAR reporting system.

Joint Operational Performance Committee



2 Minute Briefing

June 2025

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

FIRE DISTRICT REVIEW PANEL

Members will by now have heard or read about the outcomes of the first Fire District Review Panel (FDRP) under the fire service reforms. The Minister has announced that after receiving the report prepared by the Fire District Review Panel under section 4L of the Act on 28 June 2024, she has determined that no change be made to the Fire Rescue Victoria district. This will be a relief to members of the 13 initial brigades targeted, and affirms VFBV's strong representations to both the Government and Fire District Review Panel but also highlights that there are still no clear or transparent guidelines or process that brigades can work with to determine how the first round of brigades were chosen or how brigades will be chosen into the future. Some districts have held after action reviews to assist brigades in understanding the process to date and while the brigades are very pleased with the sensible outcome from the Minister many are disappointed that there has not been more clarity around how the morale sapping process will work in the future. CFA has undertaken some changes to capability in line with assisting the affected brigades. Delegates continue to call for greater support to the affected brigades to help them with the 'what's next' as they continue to support their communities.

AFTER ACTION REVIEW IMPROVEMENTS

Many volunteers have reported over time that they have little confidence that when they provide feedback after attending significant or campaign fires that there will be any action taken from the feedback or improvements made and that in some instances what they have reported in the AAR and what is formally submitted can differ. Further to this it is reported that in some instances there is little confidence that the After-Action Review (AAR) facilitators have the necessary skill level to engage and get the best outcomes from the AAR process. Delegates have suggested that if adequate training was provided to senior volunteers or leaders within the volunteer ranks so they can also be involved in the formal AAR processes the outcomes of the AAR process may be significantly improved. Delegates also commented that there is no ability for them to see whether their feedback has been received and or taken into consideration as there is no closure of the feedback loop or notification that the feedback has reached the target. Members are reminded that feedback from any incidents, large or small can be forwarded to AAR@cfa.vic.gov.au

FIRS ONLINE

Members have reported an increased utilisation of the FIRS Online Help Guides and have acknowledged that the guides have provided simple instructions on how to fill out the fire reports. The Service Delivery Reporting Centre (SDRC) has provided 12 online guides specific to incidents that are designed to assist members to fill out the reports and can be downloaded with clear instructions on all sorts of incidents and can be used as a great training resource for brigades on those wet wintery indoor training nights.

Members have requested that CFA investigate further the opportunity for the FIRS to remain open outside of standard business hours for those members who work 9-5 and have questions regarding filling out the forms correctly. Delegates have suggested even a single weeknight and Sunday morning slot would cater to peak times where volunteers are usually attending stations for maintenance activities. CFA have agreed to investigate how this can be achieved.

All FIRS related enquiries can be made to firs.online@cfa.vic.gov.au or via 1800 628 844 (0900 - 1700 hrs Monday to Friday excluding public holidays).

VFBV will continue to pursue extended hours for FIRS reports lodged via the Service Delivery Reporting Centre.

Joint People, Culture & Safety Committee



2 Minute Briefing

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

CONFLICT AND ISSUE RESOLUTION

Delegates continue to monitor recent changes to the complaints process. An Issue Resolution team, based at Burwood, is now dedicated solely to dealing with complaints, and is assisting Districts where necessary, in resolving complaints, both formal and informal. VFBV have begun to see improvements by this approach and the work of the issue resolution team. The new approach appears to be less punitive driven and a more common sense and restorative approach which we have long argued for. Long time frames are still a concern to volunteers and to VFBV, and some volunteers still have a less than satisfactory experience. It is hoped that CFA's evolution to now viewing complaints through a lens of 'resolving a dispute and finding a solution", rather than identifying a victim and a villain will lead to better outcomes and assist brigades experiencing interpersonal conflict. Throughout committee discussions, CFA have come to appreciate the importance of both parties, complainants and respondents, being treated equally, with respect, fairness and natural justice. VFBV continue to meet regularly with key people within the Issue Resolution team and continue to monitor closely, the number of outstanding complaints, the time frames required to resolve those complaints and the outcomes for all volunteers involved.

WORKING WITH CHILDRENS CHECKS (WWCC)

As members may recall, CFA had previously proposed a December 31st, 2024 cut off for volunteers included in Schedule 1A of its WWCC Policy to attain a working with children check. However, following broader consultation on their policies and the significant feedback received from volunteers, it was clear there may be significant unintended consequences.

Under Schedule 1A it was originally proposed that all CFA employees, Junior Leaders and Coaches, Presenters of child-focused community safety programs (Fire Safe Kids and similar), Members playing the role of Captain Koala and Santa, Trainers, Assessors, Instructors (non-FRV), members participating in the Emergency Medical Response or Fire Medical Response programs and any other persons undertaking child-related work were to obtain their WWCC as a priority.

VFBV has indicated that based on volunteer feedback received during our WWCC survey, there was support for Schedule 1A as a reasonable and appropriate level, as all these positions are very closely aligned to the requirements under the legislation. Volunteer opposition and discomfort only started to emerge when considering CFA's proposals to start departing quite significantly and more broadly from what are the legal requirements.

CFA have advised they are now considering a revised date and have discussed the idea of launching a campaign to promote the requirement for compliance of this group. Delegates suggested CFA needed to increase support and assistance to these people, as feedback suggests a myriad of reasons why volunteers have not done so to date. Many have reported they are challenged by the process of obtaining a WWCC, especially for those not technically savvy, and many of those volunteers may in fact have their WWCC for a different role and have not added CFA to their card.

Both CFA and VFBV encourages those volunteers who are experiencing any problems to contact wwcc@cfa.vic.gov.au for assistance.

VOLUNTEER EXIT SURVEYS

VFBV would urge any volunteer who has transferred brigades or who makes the decision to leave CFA, to complete the exit survey provided by CFA. This is a tool crucial to CFA understanding why volunteers leave or move around the organisation. It is vital that CFA understands these circumstances and it also assists the committee who study these results to be able to respond and suggest improvements accordingly. Currently the response rate of people who actually fill out the exit survey is very low, which makes it difficult to record with statistical accuracy the real reasons people leave. We urge brigades to encourage members resigning to please use the exit survey so their reasons are recorded.

Joint Technology & Innovation Committee



2 Minute Briefing

June 2025

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

CFA INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) UPDATES

Delegates have for some time been discussing with CFA proposals for improvements in the organisations ICT Strategy, noting that historically - changes have been very slow and improvements for members minimal. We can now report that due to some careful planning and ongoing discussions there are some very positive changes to the CFA ICT Strategy. CFA has in the past taken an ad hoc approach to systems of technology by adapting and building onto current IT platforms to make them do roles that they are not really designed to do. Sometimes the adjustments can mean that the systems are operating outside their capability and when a system is changed in one area there is often a flow on effect further down the line that didn't exist and rendering the system more problematic than before. But in a very positive development CFA IT have communicated that they are now looking to invest in more 'off the shelf' type systems that are specifically designed to perform a specific task. The best example is the SAP/4 HANNA system that has allowed the finance department to operate much more efficiently and works alongside the new Finance CONCUR platform. Concur is available for member reimbursements, noting that it will provide a quicker process for members to claim reimbursement for approved items that they purchased out of pocket. While many will understandably be sceptical, delegates believe there are already changes happening and while they will take some time to land - it is pleasing to hear CFA confirm that the strategy will continue to be developed in consultation with volunteers who in many cases are the end user.

RENEWABLE ENERGY INNOVATIONS

In planning for the future delegates have requested CFA's Specialist Risk and Fire Safety Manager to provide updates on CFA's Renewable Energies projects. Delegates were provided a very comprehensive overview of CFA's legislative role in ensuring the organisation is keeping up with changes across the state in the very fast-moving renewable energies space. CFA's role is to provide support to brigades, operators and others regarding fire safety at renewable energy facilities including wind, solar and battery storage facilities. CFA has developed a set of nationally recognised design guidelines and requirements for operators for planning, design and operating renewable energy facilities. Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities can be downloaded from members online. Of greatest concern to members is to ensure accurate information is provided to members on how to fight fires around renewable energy facilities, transmission lines and bulk energy storage systems and there are several videos now available online that will help members to understand the risks involved and actions to take when confronted with this fast-paced sector. If your brigade has a facility in its area or is aware of one being planned for the future we encourage the brigade be proactive and develop a rapport with the facilities management team so that you can be prepared should the brigade be required in an emergency situation.

WORKING PARTY UPDATE

The uptake of the Supplementary Alerting System (SAS) continues to grow with thousands of volunteers now logged into the system. Release 10 is now available from IOS and Android app stores. The new release has a range of bug fixes including the option to enable a colour-coded timer that can be used by brigades to track their event response times, ability to search for members by email address and other minor enhancements. There are many changes still to occur to the system over time, but many volunteers are reporting that it meets the needs of most who use it. The app is available to download on both Apple and Android devices and a web version and desktop version is also available. You can find the app by searching for Supplementary Alerting Service in the relevant app store. Members are reminded that the EAS Pager still remains the primary means of alerting members to emergency incidents due to the built in redundancies.

Radios continue to be rolled out across the state under the State Government Radio Replacement Program (RRP) with the project on track to be completed by October 2025. CFA has over 18,000 radios to be replaced and at the time of the last meeting over 6700 radios had been delivered covering 11 districts with 1600 appliances fitted. Members are reminded that if they have not yet completed the CFARRPAWE Radio Replacement Program Training Course it can be accessed in the LMS system and takes about 1.5 hrs to complete.

Joint Training Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2025

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

IMPROVING ACCESS TO TRAINING GROUNDS

The Joint Training Committee (JTC) has been receiving regular updates from CFA regarding their ongoing commitment to increase the usage of the eight Victorian Emergency Management Training Centres (VEMTCs) across the State. Delegates have raised feedback from some Brigades who have expressed frustration at what was deemed to be quite convoluted means for them to organise a training session at one of these centres. Based on this feedback, CFA have committed to undertake work to make it easier for Brigades to organise, book and attend a training session for their members.

Recently, delegates have been pleased to start receiving reports from Brigades that the processes for organising training at these centres has been made significantly easier and centre management have been very supportive in helping Brigades create a session that suits them. Brigades that in the past have rarely, if ever, used these centres have reported that a training session at one of them was a great learning experience for their members and they plan to utilise the facilities on a more regular basis going forward. Where individual Brigades have struggled to get enough members to have a training session conducted for them, there have been many examples of several Brigades coming together for a session at a centre. Brigades and Groups, especially those whose members may not have been to a VEMTC for training in the past, are highly encouraged to reach out via their District to their closest VEMTC to see what can be organised for them.

TRAINING COMPLAINTS FEEDBACK

VFBV has long advocated for more effective mechanisms for volunteers to raise concerns and provide feedback about their training experience. JTC members have therefore welcomed the fact CFA has now implemented a formal feedback and complaints system specifically focused on training issues. This system provides a means for members to submit feedback about how training courses can be improved and report issues that may be preventing them from receiving the training they need. It can also be used by members to raise concerns relating to obtaining Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or the recognition of qualifications and competencies obtained from external organisations; areas where volunteers have reported ongoing challenges and inconsistencies across Districts. The system can be accessed by all members and is most easily located by searching for "Training Complaints" in Members Online. The JTC will be receiving regular updates as to the number and types of feedback lodged in this system and pursuing CFA to address the issues being raised.

LPG FLARE OFF TRAINING

Brigades with LPG flare off capabilities have been extremely frustrated at the inability of CFA to deliver training in this field for the last few years after there were problems with the training props.

JTC Delegates share this frustration, having continually pursued CFA to get the props rectified and the course updated appropriately.

CFA have now informed the JTC that both the Course Materials and three sets of Training Props are both finally ready for Brigades to use. The Props have been designed to be transportable and can be situated at any VEMTC, or indeed can be used at a Brigade's own station if suitable space is available. Initially the props will be deployed to Central Highlands, Bangholme and Huntly. CFA has advised that it undertook to contact all Brigades with Flare Off capabilities to notify them that the training is available. However, any Brigades requiring this training that have not heard from CFA should make contact with their District Training departments to organise for it to occur.

Delegates look forward to receiving feedback form brigades to provide us confidence that this issue has now been fully resolved.