



# VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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## VFBV VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS

VFBV's Volunteer Leadership Program scholarships will be available again in 2017 and we are now calling for Expressions of Interest from potential participants.

The two 2017 courses will be based in the Euroa (District 22) and Ararat (District 16) areas, they will run from late March to the end of the year, and successful participants will achieve the nationally recognised Certificate IV in Leadership & Management. Both locations have been chosen based on an effort to rotate the courses across the State, and their location on major highways to make travel to and from those areas as easy as possible for members from neighbouring Districts.

The VFBV Volunteer Leadership Program has already produced over 250 graduates and many are in leadership positions with their agencies, volunteer representative organisations or local communities. Graduates will

graduate with a nationally recognised Cert IV in Leadership & Management (BSB42015).

You can download the application pack from the VFBV website. We are offering scholarships to volunteers from CFA, Ambulance Victoria, Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, Life Saving Victoria, VICSES and St John. Nominations close Friday 27 January 2017.

The VFBV Leadership Scholarship course has been designed for volunteers, with a mix of lectures and interactive activities designed to suit the needs of adult students, as well as ample support using distance learning methods. The course involves 12 units, eight face to face days (six Saturdays and two Sundays) throughout the year, with course work and assignments spread throughout the year.

Any questions or queries can be directed to any of VFBV's Support Officers, and information packs are being posted to all Brigades.

## Summer and business as usual

By Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

I am hoping that everyone has found at least a few quiet moments to enjoy Christmas and managed to reflect, re-energise and prepare for 2017. It has been a hot few weeks and certainly looks like some parts of the state will have a very busy summer.

As we go into a new year, it would be easy to think that over the past 12 months the CFA and emergency sector has been tied up with just a few major issues.

But while there have been major challenges at the statewide level and attention to CFA issues right up to the

Federal level, your volunteer association that is VFBV has been quietly getting on with business as usual in the background.

Volunteer delegates on the VFBV/CFA Joint Committees, and any number of volunteers on working groups and at the District level, have been working on the equipment, training, projects and other issues that make up our everyday representation work for volunteers and Brigades.

As just a few examples of the association's work over the past 12 months, VFBV has launched its VFBV Multi-Agency Youth Network, another class of VFBV Leadership participants has graduated, a VFBV-advocated partnership with CFA has delivered 10,000 subsidised digital scanners to Brigades and Groups, we have provided practical assistance to Brigades applying for VESEF grants, and we have launched two innovative short videos, the first explaining in simple terms how CFA's great volunteer surge capacity works, and the second transforming CFA turnout data into a graphical depiction of how Brigades from all over the state contribute to CFA's ability to deal with multiple major incidents at a time while still protecting every Brigade's local community.

We have also contributed to

the State Government's Fire Services Review; worked with CFA, DELWP and EMV to increase volunteer participation in planned burning; given assistance and support to the VEOHRC Independent Equity and Diversity Review; provided submission and input to the Fiskville Inquiry; and we continue the work on yet to be resolved issues like presumptive legislation, the role of CFA Groups, chainsaw training, 40 kph speed limits near incidents, new BA acquisition and electrical safety mobile props.

It is very satisfying to note that volunteers have given their association's work a very strong stamp of approval through the year, with record numbers of Brigades affiliating with VFBV, record numbers subscribing to the VFBV Welfare Fund, record numbers of volunteers taking part in the annual VFBV Volunteer Welfare & Efficiency Survey, and higher levels of activity across District Councils and on our social media sites.

And I'd like to add a final note appropriate to the season.

Summer is here, volunteers are busy in many parts of the state, and we all need to be mindful of safety and wellbeing; our own and that of our fellow members. So stay safe, look after yourselves and keep an eye out for one another.

## Digital scanners

Enquiries from members are still being received about digital scanners, and we have good news for everyone still needing a scanner. Digital Scanners are still available at cost price - \$446.75 plus postage and handling - which is well below retail, and CFA is still accepting orders from Brigades, Groups and individual members.

The digital scanner subsidisation program was advocated by VFBV and run in partnership with CFA, and has been an overwhelming success since it began in October 2015. Over 10,000 digital scanners have been delivered

## Engaging diversity with delegate development

VFBV will soon offer more than 100 Brigade Delegates, BMT members and other volunteers a nationally recognised training course in skills for volunteer representatives.

The course will offer modules that go towards Cert II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) and Cert III in Public Safety (Community Safety).

Participants will develop practical skills in understanding the structure and communications channels of VFBV and CFA, the Delegate's role, communication skills and problem solving skills.

The newly developed course will involve two full day sessions several weeks apart, and each participant will work with a more experienced volunteer as a mentor.

The course will be free to all participants, details will be posted on the VFBV website in January, and volunteers interested in taking the course should discuss it with their District Council executive or their VFBV Support Officer.

to over 1000 Brigades and Groups, with savings adding up to over \$3 million.

To place a Tier 3 order, use the order form that's available from front page of the VFBV website [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au)

## VFBV MULTI-AGENCY YOUTH NETWORK

The VFBV Multi-Agency Youth Network now has active groups in 20 Districts, including 16 where young members, the Champions - experienced local volunteers chosen to assist and mentor them - and VFBV District Council representatives have begun work on recruiting young volunteers and discussing issues and suitable projects.

Districts 4, 5, 6 and 22 are still seeking Champions and all Districts are looking for more young volunteers - if you'd like to get involved, talk to your VFBV Support Officer or call Chris Fryer in the VFBV office on 9886 1141.

In District 12, young volunteers taking part in the VFBV Multi-Agency Youth Network, supported by the VFBV District Council Executive, are to begin work on a new smart phone app.

The app will create a register of volunteers matched with their skills, qualifications and attributes, and will be accessible by other members, making it easy for them to get in contact with volunteers with particular skills and capabilities.

The VFBV Multi-Agency Youth Network in District 12 has also had success with new members from VICSES. Three young SES volunteers have joined the Network and are now working to recruit more young volunteers from their agency.

In Districts 9, 10 and 27, young volunteers are working together to create an interconnected CFA paging system using mobile phones instead of pagers.

The app and pager projects are part of a theme that is building up among the young members of the Youth Network, the need to make better use of modern technology.

Young volunteers interested in getting involved should contact their VFBV District Council, or Chris Fryer at VFBV on (03) 9886 1141 or at [c.fryer@vfbv.com.au](mailto:c.fryer@vfbv.com.au)

## CANCER LAW REMINDER

Throughout summer, public attention turns to fire and firefighters. If you encounter any Members of Parliament this summer, VFBV urges you to remind them that Victorian volunteers and paid firefighters were promised presumptive legislation two years ago, but this important issue for all firefighters remains unresolved.

Your local MPs need to know volunteers won't accept second best just because they are not paid. For information, type Cancer Law into the search box at [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au)

## DONATIONS WELCOME

VFBV's work to defend the volunteer based and fully integrated CFA continues, and VFBV is still actively fundraising.

The public, corporate donors, community organisations and volunteers can donate to the VFBV Valuing Volunteers Fund, BSB 633 000, Account number 157 728 221, send a cheque to the Valuing Volunteers Fund, PO Box 453, Mt Waverley 3149, or make a donation by visiting [www.mycause.com.au/cfa](http://www.mycause.com.au/cfa)

Note that VFBV is a non-party political organisation: it does not accept donations from political parties.

## Planned burn training

For many years now VFBV has been advocating for a more holistic approach to planned burning, and for CFA to promote the training advantages of participating in planned burns.

The VFBV/CFA Joint Community Safety Committee has been very pleased to observe that recent planned burns have developed into exercises, not just in fire behaviour and fuel load interactions but also extend to learnings in weather behaviour, impact on flora and fauna, bush heritage and Indigenous fire management practices.

The camps are very practical 'hands on' for all involved, each participant is specifically tasked with both coaching and mentoring roles, allowing involvement by volunteers

across all aspects of the planned burning.

Recent burn camps also saw attendances from Traditional Owners, Trust for Nature (landowners) bird scientists, along with DELWP, plantation owners and CFA paid staff.

These camps offer a great opportunity for volunteers to train in realistic settings and gain extensive firefighting experience. The Joint Committee request CFA produce a brochure which explains and illustrates upcoming Burn Camps to Brigades.

## Subscribe for the latest

More than 1,000 subscribers now receive electronic access to this newsletter. VFBV's popular Two Minute Briefing from the VFBV/CFA Joint Committees, and VFBV updates on major issues.

Register at [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au) by clicking on the VFBV Newsletter box. Our Facebook page is at [www.facebook.com/cfavol](https://www.facebook.com/cfavol) and you can follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/vfbv](https://www.twitter.com/vfbv) or on Instagram @volunteer\_fire\_brigades\_vic

## 2017 CHAMPIONSHIPS

Over 900 competitors are expected at this year's VFBV State Urban Championships, with 59 senior teams and 74 junior teams entered, and Bendigo hosting its 30th urban senior championships.

Dates and locations the state championships are as follows: VFBV State Urban Junior Championships - at Tatura, on 25/26 February 2017; VFBV State Urban Senior Championships - at Bendigo, on 11 to 13 March 2017; VFBV State Rural Championships - at Wodonga on 1 and 2 April 2017

Visit the Championships section of the VFBV website [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au) for the latest rule book, entry forms, and judges'/officials' nomination forms. More details and entry forms will be posted on the Rural Championships page soon.

## AUSTRALASIAN FIREFIGHTER CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Australasian championships will be held at Carterton, New Zealand, on 17 to 19 November 2017. Expressions of interest are open until 1 March. Send your Brigade name and contact details to [j.laing@vfbv.com.au](mailto:j.laing@vfbv.com.au) or call VFBV office on 9886 1141.

## COALITION MOVES TO CHANGE CFA ACT

The Coalition parties have introduced a Bill into the upper house of State Parliament, in an attempt to introduce additional protections for volunteers' rights into the CFA Act.

The Bill is designed to prevent any outside deals that affect volunteers but bypass the existing protections of the CFA Act and the Federal Fair Work Act.

The proposed legislation is listed for debate in State Parliament in the new year, and is worthy of support from all Members of Parliament. We encourage volunteers to raise the issue with local MPs - talk to your VFBV State Councillor if you need advice.

The explanatory notes included with the Bill say it would make minor adjustments to the CFA Act "to protect volunteers from the implementation of any deed, agreement or arrangement that may have adverse effects on the volunteer firefighters across the state."

The notes also say: "Deeds, agreements and or arrangements to commit the CFA to implement clauses, which would otherwise be subject to approval by the Fair Work Commission (FWC), is not compliant with the principles of the Volunteer Charter. This amendment will ensure the CFA Act 1958 supports the integrated model of fire fighting in Victoria, a volunteer organisation with support from career staff."

## CHAINS AW TRAINING

The VFBV/CFA Joint Training Committee continues to advocate for much greater access and support for members to attain chainsaw qualification and training.

Despite two Mobile Chainsaw Training trailers developed through the Mobile Prop Project in 2015 to add additional capability for members to access chainsaw training, a UFU grievance over the training package, equipment and trailer use and design has resulted in a yearlong ban on paid instructors using these trailers to deliver any chainsaw training, resulting in the widespread cancellation of CFA planned courses for volunteers.

CFA advises that the IR issues are close to being resolved, and has confirmed there are no IR restrictions on volunteer trainer and assessors accessing, towing and using the trailers.

Whilst disappointed that Brigades are currently unable to access paid support and delivery of chainsaw courses through CFA's training pool, the Joint Committee has requested that CFA increase the number of endorsed volunteer trainer and assessors to deliver this training, so that Brigades can access this vital training.

CFA has agreed to streamline and prioritise volunteer access to the new trailers, equipment and training package, as well as investigate an Expression of Interest process for subject matter experts to be identified and endorsed for volunteer training and delivery.