



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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Cold climate jackets project complete

The Cold Climate Jacket project that was supported and advocated by VFBV back in 2015 has officially ended, officially closing on 30 June 2017.

Following advice that CFA would not consider personal issue of cold climate jackets, VFBV advocated for funding through the VESEP program to fund a cache of jackets for each brigade, similar to how the black jackets had been distributed to rural brigades many years ago.

Over the course of the project - 7,176 cold climate jackets have been distributed across 1,196 brigades, with six jackets covering a range of sizes distributed to each brigade. With the distribution now complete, additional jackets can be purchased through the State Logistics Centre at cost price.

VFBV has congratulated the CFA Protective Equipment Department on its management of the project, and thanked the CFA VESEP secretariat for its support of the program.

Disappointingly, there have been reports of some Districts which did not consult with brigades on what size jackets were provided. District OM's were provided an opportunity in July 2016 to review the standard range of sizes and request changes to the default sizing allocations in consultation with brigades.

VFBV has requested Districts that did not consult with brigades on sizing consider purchasing relevant sizes from the SLC and support brigades in swapping sizes on a one for one basis as appropriate.

VFBV is also advocating for additional sets to be supplied to brigades each year, in order to build up the pool of jackets available.

WELFARE & EFFICIENCY SURVEY NOW OPEN

The annual VFBV Welfare and Efficiency Survey is now live and you are encouraged to have your say.

One of the largest surveys of its kind, the VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey is a critical tool to capture the views of CFA volunteers and track what the key issues are, and how well CFA is performing in relation to meeting volunteer needs.

This is the sixth year the survey has been offered, and with the high number of participants, is an extremely reliable representation of the views of volunteers across CFA. Participation is important to ensure the survey continues to be a significant method of capturing volunteer opinion, and guarantee volunteer voices are heard.

The survey is also being offered to emergency management volunteers across Victoria and Fire Services around the country for the second year. This not only enables a sector view of volunteer opinion, it also allows for a comparative view about how CFA volunteers feel compared to their peers with other agencies.

It is vital that you get involved. The survey will take 10 – 15 minutes to complete and is open until close of business 16 October 2017.

A link to the survey as well as last year's results can be found on the VFBV website. The national and Sector results are also available.

VFBV Support Officer (North East)

VFBV is seeking to appoint a VFBV Support Officer to work in regional Victoria with VFBV District Councils, Brigades and volunteers to facilitate consultation, issues resolution and volunteer engagement.

The position is a State role, with emphasis and focus on providing support throughout CFA's North East Region (Districts 12, 13, 22, 23 and 24). This is an existing position, with the incumbent vacating the role.

In addition to relevant skills, candidates will need to understand CFA and volunteerism, be good listeners, and be able to navigate through complex issues resolution, be self starters and have a passion to improve arrangements that benefit the welfare and efficiency of CFA volunteers.

Extensive regional Victorian work travel is envisaged and flexible work base locations will be considered for this position, with the priority focus in the North East Region covering CFA Districts 12, 13, 22, 23 and 24. Applicants living outside the region, but within a reasonable distance (neighbouring districts) will also be considered.

Flexible working arrangements, to cater for extensive evening and weekend work, will be tailored to match the needs of our volunteer membership base, and a vehicle will be provided for travel.

This is a full time position giving the right candidate an opportunity to really put their stamp on the VFBV of the future.

All applications must include both a current resume and a cover letter addressing the key selection criteria outlined in the position description. A copy of the Position Description can be found on our website www.vfbv.com.au

Any questions or queries re the application process should be directed to Cathie Smith from the VFBV Office on (03) 9886 1141 or via email at c.smith@vfbv.com.au

Applications close 25 September

As we continue through another tense month waiting for Parliament to decide on the future of our Fire Services, there has been much discussion within the sector on whether the Victorian Fire Services are fundamentally broken beyond repair and without redemption. In fact, it is this assumption that sits behind much of the spin and messaging in the justification for the proposed dismantling of CFA, which is a convenient narrative to further a different agenda.

As VFBV has formally stated on the record, we believe this to be an invented crisis to further a political and industrial agenda. Critics of our message have tried to paint volunteer opposition to the proposed legislation as therefore being against change. One only has to read back through every major inquiry into the fire services over the last couple of decades to know nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, volunteers have frequently led the charge and proposed reforms and improvements to the system for years, pushing the agencies and decision makers to improve, adapt and evolve to better meet our community needs. It is this truth that has made it so easy for all of us to see straight through the empty rhetoric and spin.

The proposed legislation offers us no improvements. It does nothing to improve community safety. It does nothing to fix the issues that volunteers have long campaigned to fix, and it removes the last remaining remnants of flexibility and adaptability to a service delivery model that at its heart is about partnering with our communities to build lasting and effective commu-

VALUES DRIVEN LEADERSHIP

nity safety and resilience.

If there is to be a crisis, then perhaps the most deserving of this moniker would be the crisis of leadership we now find ourselves in. And really, given what has been done to our leadership over the last 12 months, how could we not?

We now find ourselves in a situation where some of our leaders have refused to honour their legal and moral obligations to the Volunteer Charter. They have forced our previous Minister, the Hon Jane Garrett to resign. They have sacked our entire independent 10 member CFA Board. And they have presided over the resignation of no less than two agency Chief Executive Officers, (Nolan and Higgins) and three Chief Officers (Buffone, Rau and Stacchino). And what is the wrong that all these people have apparently committed? Is it they dared to take their obligation as officers of a statutory authority seriously, and provided frank and fearless advice to the Government of the day? Is it they dared to lead with honesty and integrity? Is it they dared to stand on principle and honoured their obligation to creating public value and protecting the safety of the Victorian public?

And how poorer is our sector now that all these people of integrity are no longer with us? What does it say to those that are left? What does it say about those that are left or have taken their place?

It is therefore incumbent on us to draw upon the leadership within our own ranks, to lead by example using our shared values of honesty, integrity and inclusiveness – and become masters of our

by Adam Barnett, VFBV Acting Chief Executive Officer

own destiny. To put our communities first, and embrace our community based ethos that is at the heart and soul of our CFA service delivery model. To embrace our strengths, and work as one integrated team not separated by our differences, but unified in our desire to serve our communities and the people of Victoria.

So what to do when people try to segregate us, try to demonise us, and ask us to accept those unable to lead with integrity, honour and respect? We must find a new way, and we must teach our leaders that they must earn our trust and respect, and only then may they deserve our confidence and loyalty. This is not a call to arms, but rather a call to honour.

One can't help but observe the increasing incidence of people mistaking aggression for strength, and bullying for leadership. It's up to all of us to recognise bullies in our midst, and call them out. The bullying leader can sometimes be very alluring. They can often be smart and charismatic. But like a magician, they rely on tricks and misdirection that doesn't survive an inquisitive peek behind the curtain. So how do we recognise the bullying leader?

- A bully leader dominates and intimidates and issues directives and orders. They are authoritarian and demand things be done their way. Compromise is seen as weakness. They are pulling everyone else down so that they can push themselves up

- A bully leader surrounds themselves with yes people and only those willing to agree with them and go along with their orders without question. Inclusiveness is reserved only for the chosen few sycophants willing to sell their credibility and reputation to advance their leaders cause. They mistrust everyone and rarely delegate, believing only they have the power and charisma to pull it off

- A bully leader plans and plots in secret. They control access to information and rely on ignorance and despise transparency. Manipulation is their weapon of choice, and they distort and manipulate the information and narrative so it tells the story they want told. They communicate with subterfuge and spin to mask their real intent and objectives

- A bully leader lacks empathy for others. They are dismissive of other people and opinions, and use ridicule and criticism to cut down their competition or objectors. They are aggressive and use power plays to get what they want. They manipulate other people by fear and aggression and use intimidation and victimisation to target those that don't agree with them

But here is the secret to dealing with the bullying leader. Leaders need followers. And each of us has the power to choose the values and behaviours we will accept. And here's the thing about leadership, there is a symbiotic link between those that lead and those that follow. It's a choice. We each

have the power to choose those that we place our trust and confidence in, and we can use that choice to influence the kind of leadership we get.

The wonderful thing about CFA is the community ethos of our brigades. We don't need to look up for leadership – we are surrounded by it. Look for people that inspire you. Look for people that approach leadership as a collaborative task. They empower those around them, they welcome differences of opinion and seek to understand why people don't agree with them. They share their knowledge and vision in an effort for people to understand where they are coming from, and what they are trying to achieve. They approach leadership as a true partnership.

They work hard to communicate with honesty and integrity, and build trust and respect amongst all those that deal with them. Their strength comes from their quiet determination to do what is right. They are not afraid to make difficult decisions – but always have empathy with those that may be disadvantaged by them. They inspire us, and make us want to do better. They cause us to look back at overcoming difficult challenges with pride, and not regret or shame.

The sad reality is that bullying leaders rarely storm the fortress and steal our blind obedience and support. Rather, we get fooled in giving it away. Perhaps not consciously, but certainly subconsciously. By doing so, we are ultimately devaluing the worth of our loyalty and support. Ultimately, we teach people how to treat us.

The bullying leader should have no place in our organisation or our sector. The bullying leader loses all moral authority and legitimacy to lead. I am reminded of Herman Melville's story of Bartleby the Scrivener. Bartleby decides one day to answer all his boss's orders with; "I would prefer not to."

We need to reaffirm and restate the values and behaviours that we expect of our leaders. And it isn't a one-way journey. We must model the behaviours we want to see in others, and reward those that display the values and behaviours that are important to us. It won't happen overnight, but little by little we can influence and shape the type of leadership we deserve. Bullying leaders treat power as a commodity – and without it – they cannot lead for very long. The sooner we choose to value who it is we put our trust and confidence in – the sooner we can shape our own destiny and the destiny of the wonderful organisation we are all apart of.

Choose wisely, and never underestimate the power of your individual voice and ultimately the people you choose to be led by. Do it respectfully, and have faith in yourself. Put value on the qualities you demand from your leaders and don't settle for less. This in turn will ensure only those that deserve your trust and confidence will become tomorrow's leaders.