

2017 VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey

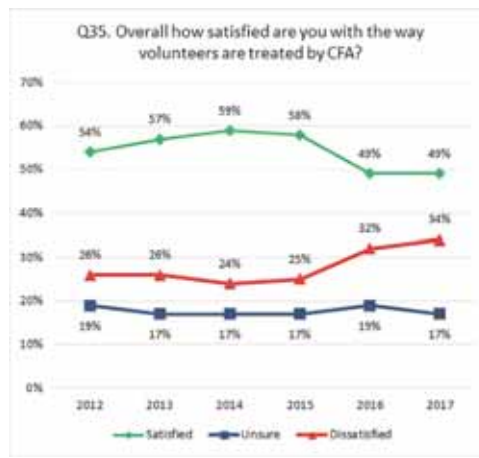
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Q35 Graph – at right: Satisfaction with the way volunteers are treated by CFA is showing no sign of improvement and is a figure that should be of significant concern to CFA.

Lower than the overall rating, only 42% of volunteers in broader leadership roles indicated they are satisfied.

59% of females compared to 46% of males are satisfied with the way volunteers are treated by CFA.

Only 38% of volunteers who identified as members of integrated brigades indicated they are satisfied, with 43% indicating they are dissatisfied. Volunteers with rural brigades showed the highest levels for this question with 53% indicating they are satisfied. The number of volunteers with urban brigades who indicated they are satisfied was 42%.

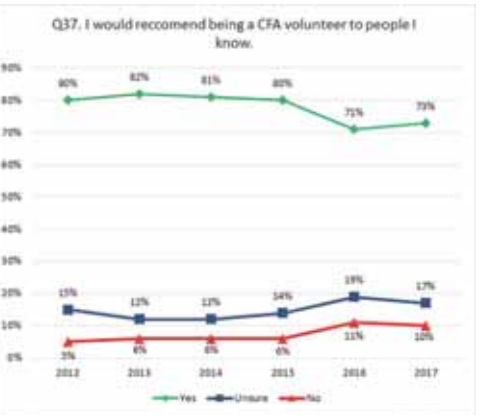


82% have indicated they intend to continue (up from 77% in 2016). The ratings for volunteers with urban brigades remains consistent with 2016 at 77%.



Q36 Graph – left: Overall, there has been a slight improvement in those intending to continue their membership with CFA, however the results reviewed by brigade type is important to be understood.

Only 60% of volunteers with integrated brigades indicated they intend to continue volunteering, down from 66% in 2016. This is in contrast with volunteers in rural brigades where



Q37 Graph – at right: Overall another slightly improved result is the increase in the percentage of volunteers who would recommend being a CFA volunteer to others

Again, the results of volunteers with integrated brigades being least satisfied is evident here. Only 50% of these volunteers indicated they would recommend being a CFA volunteer to others, this was 61% in 2016. Results for volunteers with rural brigades has increased to 77% now recommending being a CFA volunteer, compared with 73% in 2016. The results for volunteers with urban brigades remains steady at 70%.

RURAL DECLINE CONCERNING

Rural decline and retraction is a major concern for many CFA communities across rural Victoria. One of the major issues faced by these communities is the increasing reliance on volunteers to support essential community services.

As an organisation supported by a large number of volunteers, CFA is well aware that further decline, coupled with ageing populations in rural areas, presents a challenge to the current service delivery model.

Rural decline has the potential to reduce the viability and effectiveness of many smaller brigades.

Last year, Minister for Agriculture and Regional Development **Jaala Pulford** opened a stakeholder workshop at Bungaree with a focus on collaboration between organisations to tackle the problems associated with this decline.

The workshop was the second in a series of consultation activities being done by the recently-formed steering committee established to look at the impact of rural decline on CFA brigades. The committee has staff and volunteers from North West and West regions, with a focus on the Wimmera and Mallee areas.

District 20 Operations Manager **Peter Taylor** leads the way as the chair of the steering committee and brings extensive experience working in rural areas.

“I’m determined to see a strong organisational focus on actions to ensure our volunteer brigades are viable into the future,” Peter said.

“At the conclusion of these activities we expect to see organisational change where our CFA volunteers are the drivers behind creating a fire service that’s responsive to the individual needs of their own communities.

“This has to be a top priority not only for CFA but all other stakeholders.”

The workshop included representatives from Victoria Police, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Department of Health, Department of Education and Training, Victorian Farmers Federation, local councils, SES,

Regional Partnerships, RMIT, Birchip Cropping Group, EMV and CFA.

Participants shared their organisations’ experiences in the rural sector and explored opportunities to work together to implement significant change.

Regional Manager for Volunteer Sustainability in West Region **Raelene Williams** highlighted the importance of working across agencies both within emergency services and externally.

“In rural areas, our volunteers wear many hats in the community. It makes sense that we look at working closely with other organisations that have the same priorities in supporting community resilience in areas facing rural decline,” Raelene said.

“Collaboration is definitely the key to build and create resilient communities, which in turn will support ongoing brigade viability and social inclusion for our CFA volunteers.”

Further highlighting the importance of collaboration, **Blythe McLennan**, a Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC researcher with RMIT, said of the stakeholder workshop: “It was a great day all round and I’m excited to see what comes out of it with the framework for CFA.

“We are in a better position now to more thoughtfully consider rural decline and retraction in our research on volunteering.”

The first CFA workshop was held in Swan Hill in the middle of last year, where a diverse range of staff and volunteers considered how CFA can better support our volunteers in areas impacted by rural decline.

More than 30 participants provided great insight into the pressures affecting our volunteers, as well as ideas to consider as we look to address the issues.

Following these consultation activities, an action plan

will be developed. This will include the development of pilot projects in CFA and more broadly across organisations in targeted communities.

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<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Fire-Wise/351678354181>

A proud end to 2017

By Chief Officer Steve Warrington

I hope everyone had the opportunity to have a restful holiday period and spend well deserved time with loved ones over Christmas.

I recognise for our people, this period is one in which while we enjoy festivities, many of us also have an eye and ear to Victoria’s unpredictable and fast changing climate.

Communities across the state rely on the work we do, around the clock, and this time of year is no different. I thank the many within CFA that again put the community first.

We finished the year with much to be proud of, including welcoming new firefighters to our organisation and additional resources.

Wangaratta Fire Brigade received five firefighters and five leading firefighters to operate the POD vehicle, which will be available to respond from February.

Also in the north-east Shepparton has staff available for its Hazmat appliance so that the vehicle can now be deployed.

In December, CFA had its biggest day in career firefighter movement, with 150 mixed-rank operational staff starting shifts at a range of locations.

We also capped off the year with a temporary career-only station opening for Lucas Fire Brigade, while the large, volunteer Lara Fire Brigade transformed into an integrated station welcoming staff for the first time.

We also welcomed significant additional funding to CFA, dedicated to volunteers through the Victorian Gov-



ernment’s Fire Services Statement. \$60 million has been made available for station upgrades, support for better training, new specialist vehicles, leadership development and cultural change programs, targeted for the benefit of volunteers.

Last month, the government also announced an extra \$10 million for CFA, through the creation of a new funding program - Enhancing Volunteerism Grants Program. This investment will focus on strengthening volunteerism and brigade sustainability.

Grants are currently open for all brigades to access this funding. I would encourage you to think about how this pool of funding can better help grow and develop your own brigade.

A focus will be placed on strengthening brigade culture with priority given to applications that focus on areas which include:

- Improving culture, diversity and fairness
- Strengthening volunteer leadership skills
- Encouraging recruitment, retention and recognition of volunteers

• Reflecting the evolving needs and demographics of the communities that our brigades and volunteers serve

As we enter 2018, there is much to look forward within CFA. Much of my focus will be continuing our work around promoting health, safety and wellbeing, strengthening our operational capability and better supporting our people. For me this includes fitness for duty and the roll out of more innovative, easy to use online training.

www.fire-wise.com.au

Support Fire Wise and keep up to date with fire service matters and what is happening at other CFA brigades.

You can do this by subscribing to a hard copy (\$34 per annum within Victoria) or viewing a free electronic version of ‘Fire Wise’ in PDF online at the website – visit www.fire-wise.com.au.

Payment of invoices via paypal can also be made here (don’t forget your invoice number).

Your feedback is important to us . . . send your thoughts, ideas and any brigade information to gordon@fire-wise.com.au

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GAAM Emergency Products is an exclusive distributor of Morning Pride’s Kore Kooler™ Rehab Chair – a highly effective solution to assist in preventing heat stress by being able to quickly lowering the body’s core temperature to within its safe range.

Heat stress is particularly prevalent among firefighters who are regularly exposed to extreme temperatures. The Kore Kooler™ Rehab Chair promotes cooling by conduction. The firefighter places their forearms into the chair’s arm water reservoirs for 10-20 minutes. Heat is dissipated from the forearms into the ambient temperature water. Cooled blood returns to the heart and is pumped through the body, reducing the body’s core temperature.

*All technical information obtained from manufacturer’s product brochure.

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