



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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WORKWEAR

VFBV had a very productive meeting between CFA representatives and the VFBV Uniform Working Party on 9 March 2019. More than 3,300 volunteers participated in the Volunteer Workwear Survey conducted by CFA late last year, and the results were shared and discussed.

Volunteer feedback to the survey was comprehensive and detailed, if at times blunt, and provided CFA with a clear picture of volunteer expectations and aspirations for workwear. VFBV delegates have reported the discussion was refreshingly open and constructive, and they had a renewed optimism that CFA has heard volunteer feedback and is responding constructively.

The turnaround is welcomed after significant historical controversy and disappointment about consultation and listening to volunteer feedback, and is a positive indicator that significant progress is being made. VFBV gained a number of commitments from CFA on how it will incorporate the volunteer feedback into a revised design.

VFBV is pleased CFA committed to publicly releasing the results of the survey shortly, and will provide more information, including next steps after the survey results have been released.

SOP 6.06 consultation

CFA is currently consulting on proposed changes to SOP 6.06: Practical and Hot Fire Training. CFA is proposing significant changes to this SOP, and members are asked to review these and provide feedback to VFBV as soon as possible. Information on how to access the proposed SOP can be found on the VFBV website.

Brigades and Groups are urged to assess the changes and discuss the potential for any of the proposed changes to impede or create barriers to operational training conducted by Brigades and Groups. Members are encouraged to also discuss feedback at upcoming District Council meetings to ensure VFBV is informed of any concerns or difficulties.

My long last word and big thank you

by Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

This will be my last Fire Wise editorial as I will be stepping down as VFBV CEO at the end of this month. Wow, it starts to set in when I write it down that plainly. What a journey it has been! And because it's my last I am taking the liberty for it to be a long one. Apologies to anyone too busy to read it.

The most important thing I want to say is THANK YOU. Thank you to everyone I have worked with throughout my 27 years with CFA and VFBV. You are incredible people doing an outstanding and sometimes undervalued job. CFA volunteers aren't just something that this state is lucky to have, you are fundamentally and absolutely vital to Victoria's fire and emergency management arrangements. Value what you do, be proud of what you do and keep up the good work.

I have said this to many people outside CFA but perhaps not enough to those of you who are CFA – CFA volunteers, along with volunteers from other organisations, are the epitome of selflessness and a glue in society that we cannot do without. CFA volunteering is a legacy that we inherited from wise people who came before us and being a part of sustaining that legacy has been an honor and a privilege. Many of the most outstanding people, leaders, exemplars of true decency and humble professionals, are people I have met through my work with CFA and VFBV.

Deciding to step down as VFBV CEO has been one of the most difficult decisions I have had to make for a long time. Having made the decision I must say I am extremely happy with it but it was hard all the same. I am leaving as VFBV CEO but I leave with many friendships that I know will be lifetime friendships, many fond memories and proud achievements plus a bond to CFA volunteering that will transcend whatever I do next in life. Like many others CFA has become family to me and I'm not going far. I hope I haven't seen the last of the best of CFA and I hope CFA remains a strong and proud organisation for years to come.

Stepping down as VFBV CEO on 30 April will bring an end to a significant chapter in my working life and the 27 years with CFA, including 15 years as an employee of CFA in senior management roles at both corporate HQ and CFA regional management and the last 12 as CEO Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria. It is a hard decision and one that I sadly see many valuable, experienced and dedicated CFA people grappling with.

Count back 27 years and you will see that my time with CFA started in 1992. CFA of today is a vastly different, more modern and more capable organisation than it was then. Don't believe the rubbish our current State Government spins when it says CFA is still operating as it did back then.

Back in 1992 I remember the future planning discussions talking about big challenges and opportunities. There was great energy and constant drive, proud drive, to

improve and modernise. Back then and I expect well prior there was constant effort to evolve, adapt and innovate to ensure CFA could cope with urban service growth, changing demographics, increasing community expectations. And apart from where government funding hasn't allowed for this CFA has risen to the challenge.

I remember during my role as CFA's Manager Corporate Planning people mocking when we forecast wild future ideas such as the possibility that people would one day have 'PEDs' (Personal Electronic Devices) with computing power similar to desk top computers and how these would transform the way people worked and lived. The I-phones we all rely on today are way beyond what we dreamed of. And wanting a pager that would let volunteers tell their brigade whether they were responding or not, crazy space cadet stuff supposedly. Sadly, even today when such technology readily exists, brigades have had to buy such a system without the endorsement of the government policy makers!!

Back then the CFA budget was about \$80M per year, there were about 300 paid firefighters supporting volunteers in 26 integrated brigades, about 70,000 volunteers and a few hundred paid staff in management, administration, specialist and technical roles. CFA scratched to fund fire truck replacement and upgrades or issue Personal Protective Clothing, training was nothing like it is today and inter agency cooperation was patchy. There were perpetual discussions about challenges such as the need for radically better funding of CFA to resource modern training, truck replacement, personal issue PPC, communications systems, upgraded facilities and equipment to cope with urban population growth and the need for flexible local brigade support options to sustain and strengthen CFA brigade capacity in Melbourne's urban growth corridors.

Right back in 1992 and in the decades that followed, the strategic discussions about the future direction and modernising the fire services included the need for fire service resourcing priorities to move beyond a preoccupation with response and suppression to a greater focus on community awareness and communities sharing responsibility for their own safety. There was active discussion, albeit sometimes unpopular, about the logic and need to reform the paid-only MFB fire service model to introduce volunteers and an integrated service model like the CFA fully integrated model (paid firefighters and volunteers working together as one team) throughout the MFB area. For my whole time with CFA there has been deep recognition of the need for fire services to work together and the notion of more joined up fire and emergency services. Sadly now the current Victorian State government wants to split it further apart



and institutionalise a more fragmented fire service.

Throughout my time in CFA there has been a concern across all sides of politics, successive Governments and officials in agency command roles (both CFA and MFB) about the impact and future risk of escalating industrial restrictions on how the fire services are able to manage and deploy their scarce and expensive paid resources; a view that industrial interference was crippling fire service efficiency and driving an unaffordable increase in the cost of fire services and dragging resource allocation away from areas that would actually have a bigger impact on community safety outcomes. Even as recently as 2015 I recall the current Victorian Premier supporting a view that the EBA demands (now supported by this Government) were unaffordable, unrealistic and unworkable.

As far back as I can recall review after review, including the Productivity Commission and Victoria's own Auditor General's Office have been saying that fire services should be focussing on community safety outcomes not just fire truck response times. And all of the progressive talk, not just in Victoria but the world over, has been that any future planning and modernisation of the fire services must be driven by a paradigm shift in focus away from a simple fire suppression focus to a more holistic approach that also includes a better focus on prevention, preparedness and recovery underpinned by building local community awareness, capability and resilience and ideally underpinned by local community embedded emergency management capability. Alas, a community embedded, volunteer-based service delivery model with the flexibility to be supplemented by paid staff support in a fully integrated manner when and where risk or service demand requires it. Pretty much like the world class CFA model. Who woulda thought!!

Throughout my career, all of the experts and all of the evidence-based reviews, including the pivotal 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, called for the sector to be more joined up, to move toward working as one, to work more seamlessly across jurisdiction borders. And look where we are now, looking down the barrel of the current Victorian Government's plan to further fragment the fire service and institutionalise division, inflexibility and a narrow focussed service paradigm.

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beyondBlue fundraiser

The State Urban Championship concluded with the hotly contested "W.A./Victoria Challenge event", a Hose & Reel 8s event between Western Australia and Victoria with both states making up a team from competitors at the Championship.

The Western Australia team easily won the Challenge event this year, with a time of 27.49 seconds.

This year's fundraiser auction of a number of the Victorian Challenge team's competition shirts raised \$3,100, and included monies raised from an auction of one of the 'Chief Officer's Chargers' competition shirts, an event run on the first day of the Championship between a team of the CO and his deputies, against the top 2019 Junior teams.

The \$3,100 will be donated to beyondblue, which works to raise awareness of depression, anxiety and suicide prevention, as well as tackling the stigma surrounding these issues, and encourages people to seek support when they need it. VFBV is proud to support such a worthy cause and thanks the sponsors - the Firefighters Credit Co-operative, Houghton Plumbing

Dandenong wins State Urban Grand Aggregate

Dandenong won its 5th Grand Aggregate title at last month's 2019 State Urban Championship at Bendigo. The Championship was closely contested right up until the very last event, the Champion Fours. With Dandenong taking out third placing in this event, it finished the Championship in the lead with 85 points in the Grand Aggregate. Close behind was Maryvale with 80 points, and Kangaroo Flat on 76 points.

A long-time 1978 record for the Champion Fours event set by the Carrum Brigade (now Patterson River) of 16.05 seconds was broken by the Kangaroo Flat Brigade with a time of 15.90 seconds, which created an exciting finish to the Championship.

VFBV congratulates the Bendigo and Districts Fire Brigades Championship Committee on hosting yet another very successful Championship. VFBV sincerely thanks members of the Committee and neighbouring brigades for their significant work and efforts in hosting three successive State Urban Championships. A great effort by all concerned.

VFBV also expresses sincere appreciation to the City of Greater Bendigo for its significant financial support to our State Championships over the past three years.

The Championship was well attended, with more than 2,000 people attending and 52 entered teams from across the state totalling well over 400 competitors, and also included teams from Harvey from Western Australia and Wyong from New South Wales.

The number of female competitors continues to increase, with many mixed teams now competing in the more traditional male events such as the Ladder Race, Hydrant Race and the reel events.

Eaglehawk, and R & G Gilbert Plumbing – for providing the Challenge shirts for auction.

Full results of the 2019 State Championship are on pages 10 and 11 of this edition.

YOU COULD WIN!!

Brigades or Groups that pay VFBV affiliations before 30 June 2019 will automatically go into the draw for a chance to win one of four great prizes!

The 2019/20 Affiliation notices for your Brigade/Group's VFBV affiliation and VFBV Welfare Fund Subscriptions are with your Secretary now with a due date of 30 June 2019.

As a gesture of appreciation to Brigades and Groups that pay their VFBV affiliation prior to 30 June, VFBV will automatically place your Brigade or Group into a draw for a chance to win one of the four great prizes, kindly donated by GAAM Emergency Products and Powder-safe Pty. Ltd.

For further details, checkout the "You Could Win" flyer included with your 2019/20 VFBV Affiliation Notice sent out to your Secretary last month.

upgrade or gap training to bring their qualifications up to the new standards.

TAE UPGRADE REMINDER

Members are reminded that volunteer trainer and assessors who wish to be involved in the assessment of national training qualifications need to ensure their Training & Assessing Qualifications are up-to-date. CFA has established a panel of recognised providers that will work with members to upgrade older qualifications to the new requirements.

Districts and Regions have been responsible for identifying and contacting relevant members to schedule and provide upgrade programs locally. Members holding the older TAE10 qualifications being prioritised.

In welcome news, the federal government has announced an extension to the original 1st April deadline, to 1st July 2019 to help individuals complete their gap training.

However, members are urged to not delay their upgrade as the Education Department has advised there will be no further extensions.

A number of volunteers have made VFBV aware of upgrade courses that were cancelled by CFA at the last minute earlier this year. VFBV delegates on the Joint Training Committee have expressed disappointment and concern about the factors leading to these cancellations. CFA has taken this feedback onboard, apologised and given assurances that this will not occur again.

Members are encouraged to ensure their training and assessing qualifications are up-to-date and should speak with their District Training staff urgently should they be required to complete any