

FFMVic Women in fire report

(by Woman on Fire)

In late 2015 Forest Fire Management Victoria initiated research to “better understand the barriers, explore the issues, and seek improvement in gender equality in fire and emergency leadership roles across Forest Fire management Victoria.”

The research was a joint team including Women’s Health groups and Monash University research teams. They used online surveys, interviews and focus groups to engage over 500 staff. The results were published in late 2015 and early 2016. They followed up with workshops during 2016 to “share the outcomes of the research and assist in identifying strategies.”

Given the workforce is employed and tries to recruit women in substantial numbers these women will also be available to serve in fire and emergency roles as required across the year as a part of their routine employment contract. The report, Women

in Fire and Emergency Leadership Roles, published in 2016, revealed data that showed 28% of fire roles are occupied by women, but 19% of leadership roles are occupied by women.

This is a noteworthy difference and the research found that women were typically occupied along traditionally male/female roles. For example, women were mainly in non-field fire roles such as Finance or Information Officer, while men were in action-oriented roles such as Crew Leader, or Operations Officer.

Barriers that women reported may be familiar to people within CFA as well. Generational cultural norms tended to shape thinking, and the actual skills and capabilities need to perform the roles were misconceived. Women also perceived a ‘boy’s club’ across the organisation that preferred ‘mates’ for opportunities and used informal channels to communicate about roles and opportunities.

Breaking into these ‘cliques’ was found difficult.

It was also found that respect of persons accrued according to their operational experience and this was relied upon to become a fire and emergency leader. Women tended to find it harder to acquire this and also had their other skills overlooked especially when their substantive role is non-field.

This was consistent with the perception of women that they were forced into Incident Management Team roles that don’t offer the same leadership opportunities as operational roles. Women reported being overlooked for training and deployment, and was consistent with biased assumptions about women’s attributes, and role requirements.

Progress through an organisation successfully is often linked to having role models, sponsors and networks, all of which were reported lacking for women. Organisations also need to have roles, deployments, training, and rosters that are flexible to engage a diverse workforce, especially women because they are still more often carers.

The report states a commitment to a lofty goal of “50 percent of staff holding a fire and leadership roles to be women” by, presumably the end of 2019.

If some of these barriers seem familiar to you, if you are one of the persons who may be part of the problem, then this summary might be a useful cause to pause.

What might CFA look like in three years if it set a similar goal? Is it even possible given we are a primarily volunteer organisation?

CHIEF OFFICER IS CFA'S NEW CEO

The CFA Board has appointed current Chief Officer Steve Warrington as CFA’s new Chief Executive Officer for a period of two years.

Mr Warrington will hold both the CEO and Chief Officer roles concurrently.

This appointment took effect on 31 May.



INVITATION TO APPLY: Board Members of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV)

INVITATION OPEN TO ALL VOLUNTEERS TO APPLY

Closing date for written applications is 31st July 2019

VFBV advances the interests of all Victorian fire brigade volunteers and advocates on their behalf to CFA and other key stakeholders. The VFBV Board drives policy development based on volunteer input and is involved in management of issues of central importance to all CFA volunteers. Vacancies for Four Board Members will arise when the terms of Samantha Rothman, Kate Boschetti, Jan Cleary and Libby Hay expire on 1st October 2019; all members are eligible for re-appointment.

The term of appointment will be to 1st October 2021 (two years) and applications are invited from interested volunteers to be considered for these vacancies.

The role of a VFBV Board Member involves contributing to VFBV direction, policy determination and monitoring the performance and governance of the Association. Also actively contributing to policy discussion at Board Meetings, networking with others about policies and issues management, and not only making decisions but being prepared to actively advocate for the benefit of all CFA volunteers and ultimately the Victorian community.

A Board Member Role Statement including the key selection criteria is available from the VFBV office or from the VFBV website.

This is an honorary position; no honorarium is paid.

If you are motivated by the prospect of making a difference for CFA volunteers, then send your written application addressing the key selection criteria in the role statement, plus an outline of your CFA activity including the names of two referees.

Applications must be lodged with VFBV by **Wednesday 31st July 2019** to:

VFBV, 9/24 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East 3151

Tel: 9886 1141; Fax: 9886 1618

Email: j.laing@vfbv.com.au

BRIGADES TO GET INTERNET UPGRADE

More than 1000 brigades across the State will receive internet connectivity as part of the rollout of Connected Brigades initiative. The initiative, funded under the State Government’s Fire Services Statement, aims to provide a secure and standard internet service for brigades, to support online training and improve the ability for members to communicate with each other – across regions, districts and with headquarters.

Anthony Ramsay, Executive Director Infrastructure Services, says: “This project also recognises the work brigades do outside of responding to calls including planning and delivering prevention, preparedness and recovery programs, as well as the amount of time our members spend at their stations.

“All brigades were invited to be part of the program with some choosing to opt out due to not requiring the service. The rollout of the project will take about a year to complete with brigades receiving the best technology available for their location - either NBN wired, NBN wireless, ADSL or mobile connectivity.

“Telstra has been appointed to manage the work after a competitive tender process, and will work with each brigade to arrange installation.

“Connected Brigades is one of 12 projects funded under the 2017 Fire Services Statement with the aim of ensuring our volunteers are equipped with contemporary, high-standard equipment, tools and systems.

“A number of infrastructure projects including station replacements, amenity improvements, appliances, training props and new technology are included in the projects.

“I look forward to updating you further about these projects as they progress.”

For more information on the Connected Brigades initiative - including FAQs - visit Brigades Online.

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Not valid with any other offer. Victorian stores only. Offer valid to 30/06/2019.



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