



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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Fire Impacted

The VFBV Welfare Fund and Volunteer Support & Recovery trust are looking to finalise grant arrangements for members impacted by this summer's bushfires. These trusts provide swift monetary grants to assist members in necessitous circumstances recover from loss of home, out-buildings, fencing, stock, livelihood and any other impacts resulting from large scale fire campaigns.

Impact assessments can continue to be sent in and logged on our fire impacted register. VFBV Support Officer Michelle Ryan (m.ryan@vfbv.com.au) is coordinating this work in the North East Region, and Colin Booth (c.booth@vfbv.com.au) for the South East Region. Captains and Group Officers in District 11 and 24 are in the final process of being contacted to confirm final numbers. If you are personally impacted, or know of someone who is, please ensure your Captain or Group officer is aware and make contact with either Michelle or Colin ASAP.

16/17 year olds

Submissions are due on the 15th May 2020.

Members are requested to discuss and make submission on whether the minimum age for operational activities should be changed or if there are further steps that can be taken to protect and improve the safety of children participating in CFA activities.

Information on how to make a submission can be found on the VFBV website, or by contacting your local State Councillor, VFBV Support Officer or District Council Executive member.

REFLECT AND HONOUR

by Adam Barnett, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

This month marks two very special days for volunteers. The first of course was 4 May which is St Florian's day and our annual memorial, while the second event is the 18-24 May where we celebrate National Volunteer Week.

The annual CFA memorial service is held on the closest Sunday to May 4 each year to align with St Florian's day. Saint Florian is the Patron Saint of Firefighters and was an officer of the Roman army who was responsible for organising and leading fire-fighting brigades tasked to fight fires when Rome needed to protect itself against fire being used as an offensive weapon in the third century.

Our memorial is a time to acknowledge and remember those that have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their communities. And while we cannot come together in person this year, we can come together in spirit and thought to acknowledge and pay respect to those we have lost.

This year we pause to reflect and honour the lives of 68 CFA members and 11 Country Fire Brigades Board firefighters (prior to the formation of CFA), who have paid the ultimate sacrifice and given their lives in service to protecting our communities.

I would encourage members to take a moment to pause, reflect and honour those who have selflessly given their lives. It is also an important opportunity to reflect on our history as we pay tribute to those lost – and reflect on the importance of the work we all do in making our communities safer.

May 4 is also the day chosen for International Firefighters Day that was established following the tragic events of Linton, with the day first observed on May 4 1999. We wear blue and red ribbons to pay tribute to our fallen. The ribbons are linked to colours symbolic of the main element's firefighters work with – red for fire and blue for water.

This year's service would have been a formal occasion to pay our respects to our colleagues from DELWP, NSW RFS and the United States who tragically lost their lives battling this summer's bushfires.

While we mourn the loss of each precious life lost as a result of these and any fires, I want to acknowledge each of the nine to whom this year we owe a special debt. Victorian firefighters Bill Slade, Mat Kavanagh and David Moresi. New South Wales firefighters Geoffrey Keaton, Andrew O'Dwyer and Samuel McPaul. And North American firefighters Ian McBeth (Montana), Paul Hudson (Arizona) and Rick DeMorgan Jr (Florida) who travelled from the United States of America to help Australia in its time of need.

To all the families and loved ones of those we have lost, we say thank-you and make a solemn promise that their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

VicPol

We were all saddened to learn of the tragic deaths of four police officers who died

in the line of duty serving the people of Victoria.

VFBV has conveyed the heartfelt condolences of all CFA volunteers to the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police. Along with the entire emergency management family, we stand together in solidarity and deep sorrow as we grieve this tragic loss of life.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and loved ones of Constable Josh Prestney, Constable Glen Humphris, Senior Constable Kevin King, and leading Senior Constable Lynette Taylor. May their sacrifice be forever remembered.

National Volunteer Week

This year, National Volunteer Week is being held between the 18 May though to the 24. And while many of us may not feel especially celebratory at the moment, these uncertain times may be the most important reason of all to recognise and acknowledge all our volunteers across Australia.

This year's theme is "Changing Communities. Changing Lives." Such an inspirational theme, but especially those who contribute through volunteering in our emergency services. I can't think of a more fitting recognition of the incredible work and role CFA volunteers do in changing lives and keeping communities safe.

Please take a moment during this year's national volunteer week to reflect on the difference each of you are making and take the time to acknowledge and celebrate the incredible gift this is to the whole Victorian community. You do change lives, and our State would be so much the poorer without you.

Reform

VFBV continues to raise the concerns of volunteers on the lack of engagement, communication and meaningful consultation on reform implementation. Volunteers have been making strong representations that for an organisation that is about to transition to a fully volunteer service, the lack of respect and involvement of its volunteers on this change journey is deeply disappointing.

And just as the government has determined to press ahead regardless of COVID-19 impediments - it is equally important to remind decision makers that volunteer consultation obligations have not been suspended, nor should they be forgotten. Remember those commitments and tributes following this summer's horror bushfires and the promises of respecting CFA volunteers and the vital role CFA plays in keeping our communities safe?

Recent reform announcements indicate CFA and CFA volunteers are largely being treated as irrelevant. In fact, it is difficult to tell from anything that has been announced any benefit that is in the public's interest.

Just as galling is the complete disregard and respect for the important role that administrative and non-operational staff play in modern and effective emergency man-



agement arrangements. In a sector that relies on people working together – the approach and insensitivity in decisions and communications is most disappointing.

My fear is that these missteps will make it very hard for people to envision how these arrangements will deliver lasting positive outcomes. In fact, this continued divisiveness will likely have lasting consequences on how many perceive and regard the new entity moving forward.

To those feeling disillusioned and frustrated, I share your disappointment. But please don't stew on it or let it get to you. We are all going to have to work incredibly hard to try and fix any volunteer or community impacts that emerge. Our communities are counting on it – so I again call on each of you to focus on the things we can change and not the things we cannot.

Busy yourselves on the things that matter. Your local brigade and your local community. Continue creating positive outcomes that make a real difference to our communities. At some point the world will wake up and take stock. Let us maintain our proud record of selfless community service. It will not go unnoticed when the real impacts of this change journey finally emerge.

Vale Mick Taylor AFSM

On the day of publishing of this edition of Fire Wise, we have just learned of the passing of our great friend Michael Taylor AFSM. Mick was a stalwart of Mornington Fire Brigade and ex-Captain. He joined the Brigade in 1957. Mick was an Association Life Member, CFA life member, and Mornington Fire Brigade life member. He dedicated over 30 years of service to senior leadership roles in the Association, serving 23 years on State Council and was a former VUFBA President.

Mick's support and contribution to VFBV was immeasurable. He was a member of the initial joint Associations' Steering Committee formed to develop VFBV and was a member on VFBV's inaugural Board for nine years, serving as VFBV Vice President between 2005 – 2009.

We send our thoughts, prayers and sympathy to Yvonne, family, friends and loved ones. We also extend our thoughts to fellow members of the Mornington Fire Brigade. Mick was a true icon of the Victorian Fire Services where he spent his life tirelessly advocating on behalf of CFA and CFA volunteers. He will be very sorely missed.

– see article on page 12

IFMP CONSULTATION

VFBV has been advocating through the Joint Community Safety Committee for CFA to develop internal guidelines to provide consistency and support for members contributing to municipal based emergency management or fire prevention committees.

Draft guidelines have now been drafted by CFA and have been sent to Groups, Districts and Regions for feedback.

The guidelines cover fire prevention escalation processes, fire management planning guidelines for CFA members, and guidance on how to effectively participate in municipal emergency management and prevention planning processes and committees.

Please contact your Group officer if you are keen to review and provide feedback. Feedback on the draft guidelines can be made to your VFBV District Council or VFBV Support Officer Michelle Ryan at m.ryan@vfbv.com.au

Digital Learning

CFA is currently working on uploading and improving the digital learning platform on the Learning Management System (LMS). Recent updates and materials have included Safe Driving and Legislation Requirements, First Aid, Asbestos Awareness and Prepare Test and Maintain Equipment.

VFBV delegates to the Joint Training Committee are working closely with CFA to guide and improve eLearning throughout CFA. Delegates have been keen to stress that digital learning does not replace face-to-face, but rather extends and compliments it. Physical materials are being developed to mirror each of the eLearning modules and will be made available so that those who can't or choose not to access LMS are not disadvantaged.

VFBV is keen to get feedback from any members partaking in the new eLearning. Feedback is essential in continual improvement and allows everyone to be involved and listened to. Feedback can be provided by clicking on the feedback module after completing each course, or by emailing Learning-Hub-Questions@cfa.vic.gov.au or via VFBV through your District Council or VFBV Support Officer Chris Dent c.dent@vfbv.com.au

National Emergency Medals

On Australia Day, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that the National Emergency Medal (NEM) would be awarded to recognise emergency responders for service during the 2019–20 Australian bushfire season. The Medal was established in 2011 following the Victorian Black Saturday Fires and is awarded for sustained service during a nationally significant emergency.

VFBV delegates are working with CFA through the Joint Volunteerism Committee and are intending to review the nomination criteria, which is due to be

announced later this year. As previously has been the case, the NEM is open to all emergency service volunteers, as well as fire, police, and paramedics. The Prime Minister has also announced that Australian Defence Force members may also be eligible.

The Committee is awaiting further advice from the Honours and Awards Secretariat in Canberra. In the meantime, work is underway to develop a process to support members with nominations, and review the processes used following

the 2009 Fires NEM presentations and events.

The medal itself is only awarded once to an individual.

The regulations provide that if a person is awarded for additional service or nationally significant emergencies, it is done in the form of an additional clasp denoting the nationally significant emergency. For example, the Victorian Black Saturday fires were recognised by the clasp VIC FIRES 09.



VFBV BOARD VACANCIES INVITATION TO APPLY

Closing date for written applications is 28 August 2020

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 Nev Jones AFSM, Andy Cusack AFSM, Bill Maltby and Greg Walcott expire on 1 October 2020; all members are eligible for re-appointment.

The term of appointment will be to 1 October 2022 (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 **Friday 28 August 2020** to:
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