

Brigade

spring 2017

Protecting lives
and property

cfa.vic.gov.au



▼ Why inclusion matters

Pre-season
Update inside





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Why inclusion matters

COVER PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

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Chair Greg Smith



As *Brigade* magazine is prepared for publication, winter is still making itself felt, especially in the early mornings. Avalanche warnings were issued for alpine areas after blizzard conditions hit in early August and the season kept many brigades busy with structure fires, not to mention rescues, tanker explosions, motor vehicle accidents, light plane crashes and, of course, false alarms.

But even as Victorians shiver, members of the emergency services are out checking on aircraft landing sites and staging areas to better facilitate summer response. ICCs and RCCs are being checked for connectivity and Neighbourhood Safer Places are being signed off.

Summer is looming and preparedness activities at brigade and group levels are ramping up. The course calendar shows upcoming training ranging from operate BA plus search and rescue, chainsaw operation, crew leadership and incident management skills through to low structure, first aid and hazmat awareness.

The Bureau of Meteorology is predicting below-average rainfall to October in Victoria with warmer-than-average temperatures likely. We have just had our second driest June-July since records began in 1900, and predictions are for an early start to the fire season. The west of the state is used to a season that begins in October, but this year such an early start might even be on the cards for our East Gippsland members.

Frontline CFA members play a vital role in Victorian communities. As you engage with and educate your communities, you are cementing

CFA's commitment to shared responsibility for risk in Victoria and our core intent to build community capability and resilience.

CFA's mission is to protect lives and property. That doesn't mean that our first priority is to suppress and prevent fires, while building community capacity is a mere spin-off interest. Fire brigades combat all hazards. Communities educated about risk and actively engaged in prevention can stop many of those hazards occurring in the first place.

As you build the capacity and the resilience of communities across Victoria, you also build organisational resilience and capacity.

Thank you for all you do.

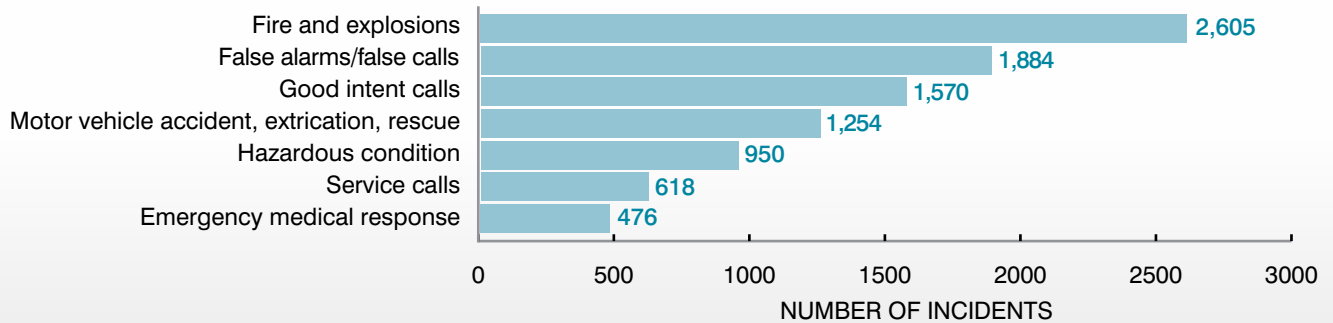


PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMUN

Incident summary

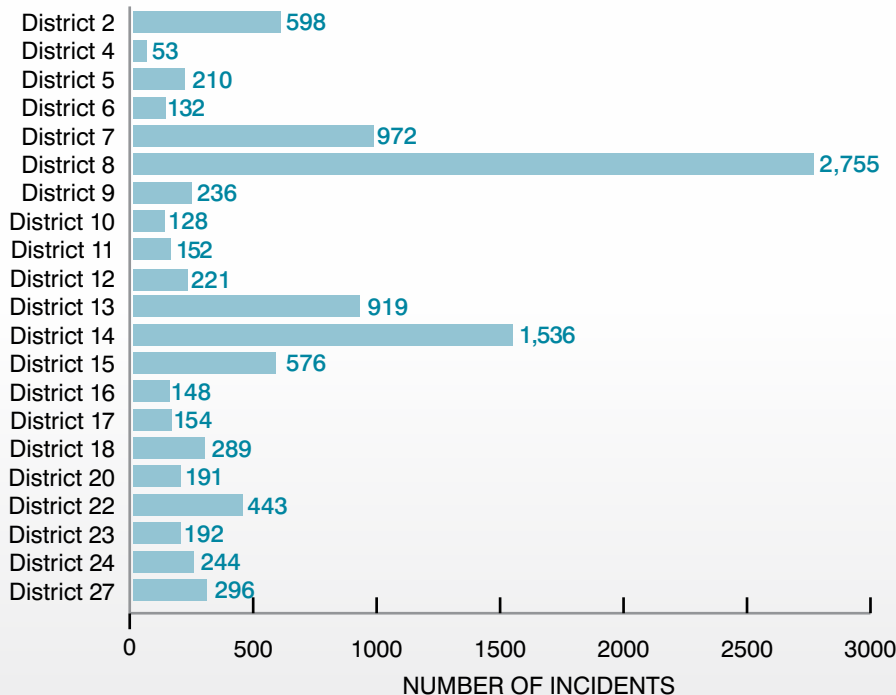
STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY TYPE

1 April – 30 June 2017



STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

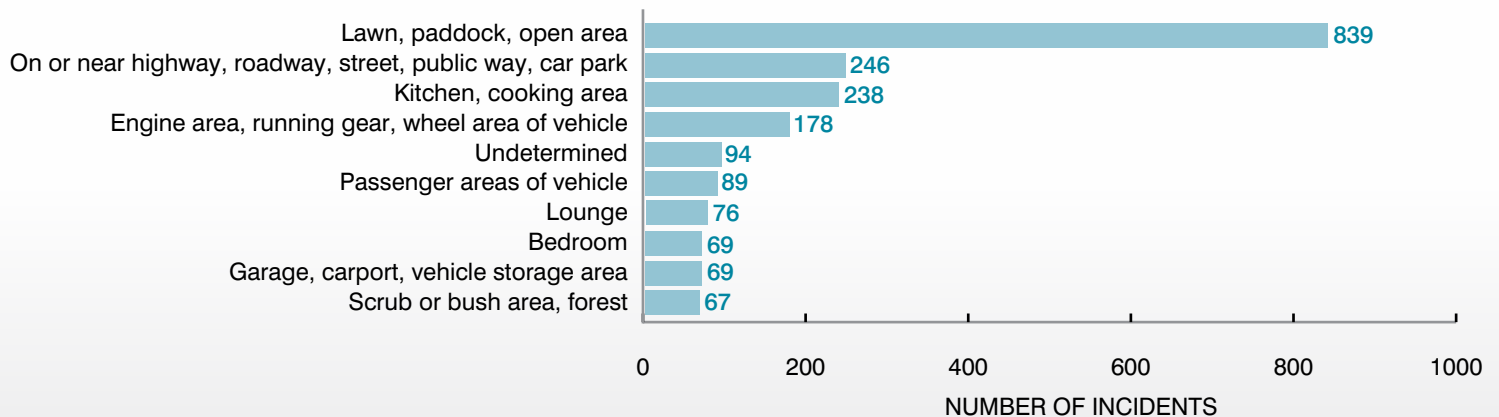
1 April – 30 June 2017



Brigades are reminded to submit their fire/incident report as soon as possible after attending an incident. Brigades on strike teams also need to submit a report. FIRS Call Centre, 1800 628 844, is open daily 8am-11pm.

ORIGIN OF FIRE

1 April – 30 June 2017



Heartache at minibus crash

An afternoon collision between a taxi and a minibus pushed the larger vehicle onto its side. Of the 12 passengers inside, most over 80 years of age, one died at the scene and two more died over the following days.

“Because they were elderly, it was probably more traumatic for those on scene,” said Operations Officer and Shepparton Officer in Charge Pete Dedman. “It tugged the heartstrings.”

The incident was on the border of the Tatura and Mooroopna brigade areas and they were both responded for potential fire suppression, with 14 members on scene at the height of the incident. The main task initially, however, was climbing in the bus with the ambulance officers and lifting casualties out on back boards to a tarpaulin on the ground which served as the triage area.

“Most people were evacuated without cutting tools involved but there was restricted access because of the hydraulic wheelchair lift and the wheelie walkers thrown around,” continued Pete.

“What stood out was how eerily quiet the scene was. Despite multiple injuries, the casualties didn’t complain. For anyone who’s done rescue work, you know that if they’re screaming they’re generally okay.

“Twelve casualties meant 12 ambulances and they just kept arriving including two air ambulances brought in from Bendigo and Melbourne.

“I was most proud that every casualty had a CFA member comforting them. For some it was quite distressing, but the coordination was fantastic with an emergency management team established and Victoria Police as the lead agency.

“They also shut down the road. The Midland Highway is undergoing roadworks at the moment so a lot of locals are using back ways like this one.”

Also on scene was Shepparton Search and Rescue, one of two private rescue units in Victoria with the other based in Echuca.

The taxi driver and his two passengers were unhurt, but he was later charged with dangerous driving.

Two nights later, a critical incident stress defusion was held to help all members on scene process the complexity and intensity of the incident.

“There’s been quite a lot of contact with peers since,” said Pete who spent 18 years in the peer program before stepping back last year.

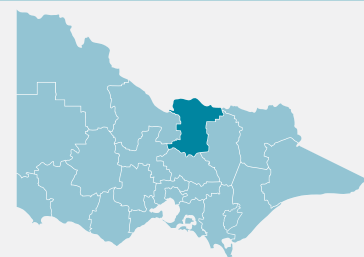


INCIDENT: Road accident

DISTRICT: 22

DATE: 20 June 2017

BRIGADES: Tatura, Mooroopna



“A number of positives came out of the incident and peer support and people looking after each other was a big one. Incident management was excellent, as was cooperation between agencies. Everyone stepped up to patient care.

“I have to put in a special word for Tatura. As a former member, I have a soft spot for them. They attended another minibus crash in October 2012 so they’ve done it tough but their response, again, was very compassionate and professional.”

STORY LEITH HILLARD



Training exercise becomes the real thing

Four brigades in the Baw Baw Group were attending a training course on structure fires and hazardous materials when they were called out to a house fire in Drouin West.

CFA members from Noojee, Neerim South, Warragul and Nilma North brigades met at Buln Buln Primary School, a few kilometres from Drouin West.

In the exercise, it was reported there was a fire at the school. Artificial smoke added to the realism and it was reported two students were missing from the evacuation headcount.

Brigade members used a number of skills during the exercise including containment techniques, draughting water, search and rescue using breathing apparatus, all while demonstrating an understanding of CFA's safety policies. However, during the exercise they were interrupted by a Triple Zero (000) call. The report was of a house fire at Drouin West caused by barbecue gas bottles venting and catching on fire.

Nilma North was paged to the incident because Drouin West brigade was at another incident. Crews immediately packed up the required items and three brigades were on the road in 30 seconds.

"The fire had started to burn up the side of the house from the veranda and, because it was clad in PVC, it all started to melt," said Nilma North Captain Ray Van Vliet.

"Flame was visible and it was progressing very quickly, fighting to get into the roof space.

"Nilma North brigade, as the first on scene, worked on cooling down the gas cylinders and limiting exposure, and then Neerim South, only a few seconds behind us, also joined in.

"Then Warragul pumper was there just moments later and members put on BA again, knocked down the eaves and then ventilated the area.

"We dropped everything at the training exercise and, with the extra hoses we had packed for the scenario, we were able to go straight to the incident.

"It was a great save by all of our brigades working together. An unusual day – to train for it then to get a call out to the real thing!"

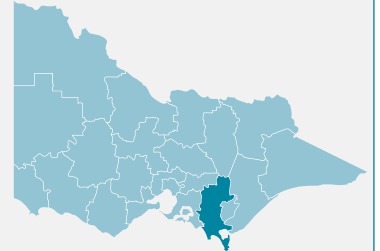
STORY DANIKA DENT

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 9

DATE: 28 May 2017

BRIGADES: Inverleigh, Teesdale, Warragul, Nilma North, Neerim South



PHOTOS: DAVID CHUGG



Tyabb tanker explosion

What was called in at 8.18pm on 22 June as a car accident with possible person trapped, appeared as black smoke in the sky as Tyabb First Lieutenant Jarrod Vetesi drove to the fire station.

By the time the crew arrived at the scene in Tyabb Tanker 1, however, VicFire was reporting multiple vehicles and fatalities. Screaming bystanders made the same report; unsurprising given the massive explosion caused when a car collided with what appeared to be a fuel tanker on the Mornington Peninsula.

Jarrold became the incident controller and events rapidly escalated.

"We couldn't access the accident because it was too hot," he said, "with firefighters in BA initially kept 50 metres from the truck.

"Every 10 minutes it was something different. We thought it was a ruptured fuel tanker then realised it was a B-double but then understood that it was a Supagas tanker. It had just loaded and that meant 63,000 litres of LPG on board, so we got water on it right away."

The rupturing of tanks also added 250 litres of diesel and 150 litres of hydraulic fluid to the mix, while crash debris was found up to 350 metres from the impact site.

"It was big," confirmed Jarrold. "We established a one-kilometre lockdown and two houses we were concerned about were evacuated. I called Hallam Hazmat in the first 10 minutes and they checked air quality and lower explosive limits or LELs."

Also big was the member response, with 126 volunteers and career firefighters attending at the height of the incident.

Their response was split by the intense heat. Tyabb had a truck on either side of the incident, each supported by five tankers and three crews in BA. Cranbourne and Somerville brigade pumpers assisted one side while Bittern and Hastings brigade pumpers worked the other.

There was a shortage of hydrants in the area. Crews were only getting 400kPa on their 38mm attack lines.

"Comms was terrible," continued Jarrold, "but we got to use Westernport's new FOV [field operational vehicle]. This mobile command post for ops and radio communications made the whole incident easier.

"Langwarrin Rescue, EPA and SES were also on scene along with ambos and police and they were all brilliant. My directives were followed all the way down the chain and there was such big support between the vols and the perms [permanents/career firefighters].

"By the time I sat down at midnight, it just hit me. It was emotionally exhausting. I don't know how I did it but my brain just went into firefighter mode. It was a learning curve for me but Ops Officer John Francis stood by me the whole night."

Jarrold remained incident controller the next day when Tyabb was on scene for 12 hours decanting. Peer support was also offered to crews that day and for several weeks after.

"The driver of the car died," said Jarrold, "but the truck driver was fortunately able to escape the flames and run up the road. All he saw were headlights coming straight towards him and he had no time to break."

STORY LEITH HILLARD



CHIEF OFFICER

Steve Warrington



Fire season preparedness

It's that time of the year when CFA, Parks Victoria, Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV) and DELWP, focus on the pending fire season.

Fire managers and fire behaviour analysts have forecast that this summer season could be longer and drier than what we've experienced in recent years.

It's also predicted to arrive significantly earlier. This is based on a number of determinates such as recorded rainfall deficits and crop and pasture reports.

Overall, there are four key factors that we need to take into account: an early start; expected warmer daytime temperatures; lower-than-average rainfall; and falling water storages.

Last year during a wet July-August period, we were assisting with floods throughout Victoria. This year, it's shaping up to be one of the driest on record.

One area of concern is that our state forests are drier than in 1982 and 2006; years which many of us will remember involved long campaign fires.

Not only are we expecting the summer season to start earlier, but we are also ramping up our preparedness in a number of regions we wouldn't normally associate with an early fire season. It's not

just the north-west of the state; this season there's a forecast early start even for places like Gippsland.

Although this is a bit of crystal-ball stuff and we may get October rains that push the fire season back, CFA is getting on with the job. We're expecting the worst and hoping for the best.

By the end of October, we need to be ready for fire season.

We're going to start engaging with regions, districts and brigades in a more formal process, but this is the first step in letting everyone know it's time to get our heads in the game.

We've compiled a list of documentation to ensure our preparedness happens at every brigade, in each district, across the regions and in headquarters.

I'm encouraging all our staff and volunteers to start getting prepared, whether undertaking burnover training in the field or completing training on our learning hub such as our new hazard trees course.

Our priority is always the safety of our members and the community, so we're out to ensure our people are as best prepared as possible for whatever situation.

In the meantime, keep doing the remarkable job you're doing and, most importantly, stay safe.



DEPUTY CHIEF OFFICER Urban



Tony O'Day

“Four score and seven years ago...” The opening line to one of the most iconic speeches ever made – the Gettysburg address by US President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. The speech, which lasted barely two minutes, recognised the ultimate sacrifice thousands of soldiers made for the greater good of their country. Lincoln was a great advocate for not focusing on any one act but, instead, recognising many acts that worked towards improving the country.

The philosophies Lincoln espoused can be broadly applied to CFA. There are many parts to our organisation. CFA is more than just a firefighting agency. It's an emergency service that strives to prepare for the diverse and ever-evolving needs of a changing community. And so too, it can be said my Urban portfolio in Fire and Emergency Management needs a multi-faceted approach to supporting CFA's business.

A great example of diversity is found in the Emergency Medical Response (EMR) project. This project develops CFA capability to respond to medical emergencies. CFA's EMR responders work with Ambulance Victoria (AV) to help patients who are usually suffering life-threatening conditions such as loss of a pulse or not breathing. Our responders are trained to use advanced equipment to maintain life until AV arrives on scene. The EMR project makes a direct and positive impact on our communities.

Our specialist response capability is world class. Whether rescuing a person who's fallen down a steep embankment or a collapsed trench, our specialist responders work collaboratively with other emergency service agencies to provide the best possible service to community members in need. In addition, CFA has 21 road accident rescue brigades fully trained to respond to accidents across the state. And don't forget our world-class hazmat capability supported by scientific officers who are on call providing 24-hour assistance.

CFA provides our frontline responders with some of the best urban firefighting vehicles in Australia, and we continue to collaborate with agencies to produce them to the highest standards.

Our partnership with ESTA ensures we continue to provide an effective dispatch system and our Operations Communications team, in conjunction with our fire services communications controllers, work hard to deliver a high-quality service in a complex environment.

All of this is underpinned by operational doctrine such as standard operating procedures and inter-agency agreements.

Despite being half the length of this column, President Lincoln's address captured the essence of how the Gettysburg battle was significant in the context of the civil war. This article may not have been as articulate, but I hope I have given you a flavour of the important contribution made by the F&EM Urban team.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER Inclusion and Fairness



Steve Smith

Since starting in May this year, I've been overwhelmed with the amount of work being done across CFA to better understand and connect with the communities we work in partnership with.

Most importantly, as I meet people across CFA, I see their passion and appetite for inclusion and fairness, and this gives me significant optimism for the future of our organisation.

There has been a lot of discussion about CFA in the media, among communities and decision makers. Change is not a bad thing and, if we embrace change and capitalise on the positive work being done, we have a bright future.

When the Inclusion and Fairness team has been out and about, one of the key messages I've been emphasising is how inclusion and fairness seamlessly fit into your everyday work. It's about how we all approach our work rather than the creation of additional work.

I encourage you to read the article on pages 16-17 of this edition, which explains the ethos behind inclusion and fairness. Some of the other stories in this edition also promote an inclusive organisation.

Again, I want to stress this is not about additional work. With the fire season fast approaching and having spent most of my time in CFA working at the local level with brigades, I appreciate the many competing demands on your time.

What I would like is for people to demonstrate a higher level of awareness around how we approach our work, the people we deal with and how we represent CFA and interact with our communities.

Respect is the key component to making this work, and I am confident we all have within us the ability to live and breathe the values of CFA and inclusion and fairness.

That being said, my team is here to assist, guide and work alongside you to create a culture we can all be proud of.

I look forward to continuing to visit districts and brigades across regions and discussing your thoughts as we move through this journey.

Steve was operations manager at District 2 before taking on this new role. His career in CFA spans over 20 years, starting as a volunteer in the Yarra Valley before becoming a career firefighter.

He has worked in a number of different CFA regions, providing him with broad exposure to the different communities across the organisation.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER West Region



Peter O'Keefe

When asked to describe CFA, some members refer to us as being like a family. Others see CFA as being broadly representative of the communities we serve. These are admirable comparisons and, in a sense, they're correct. But these descriptions bring with them certain challenges.

I recently attended a presentation by a staff member who spoke about the challenges she faced with an adult child who was addicted to methamphetamine, commonly known as ice. This destructive drug impacts not only the user but also their extended family. As well as being impressed by the courage of the staff member who was prepared to tell her story, I started to question the role that CFA can play in dealing with social issues that impact our 'family' and our community.

There seems to be broader social acceptance that a lot of societal ills and issues require a whole-of-community response. These issues sometimes have widespread impacts and community expectations about response are broadening.

As I spoke to people after the presentation, it was apparent that a number of other CFA members had similar stories to tell. Clearly this is a community issue, so you can almost guarantee the CFA family isn't immune from the effects of illicit drug use. Ice doesn't recognise lines on a map, or demographic differences such as age, gender, education or employment.

So what is our response to the scourge of ice affecting our communities? We have amazing welfare services including chaplains, peers and psychological support and these all have an incredibly important role to play in helping members deal with issues. Additionally though, we are also part of a broader family and families look after each other. Addiction to drugs, alcohol or gambling can destroy families and communities. I will engage with other managers and leaders across CFA to discuss what our response should be.

In the meantime, as we traditionally start turning our minds to the approaching summer season which comes earlier to those in the west of the state, I ask that we also turn our minds to making sure we look after ourselves, our families and our friends. After all, nothing is more important than our families and loved ones.

Member Assistance Program psychologists and counsellors offer three confidential, free counselling sessions to members and their immediate family to help with family and relationship issues. Call 1300 795 711.

Peer support is an initial point of contact for support and guidance. Available in every region, peers can help members work through issues or pursue further support if needed.

Chaplains work alongside peers to give non-denominational pastoral care including spiritual, physical, psychological and emotional care and wellbeing support. Call 1800 337 068.

OPERATIONS MANAGER District 17



Peter Novotny

I believe that by increasing female involvement in CFA we will improve our overall contribution towards community safety. There are strong benefits in building brigades that reflect the communities they serve, both in terms of gender and other backgrounds.

Advantages include enabling firefighters to more easily build trust with community members at incidents, and achieving more positive outcomes through fire safety education.

Although there may be some resourcing issues to support an increase in female participation, these can be overcome. For example, the installation of toilets at rural stations has led to more women getting involved in brigade activities.

However, we have a lot of work to do, and this was recently considered by the District 4 planning committee. I know it's also being looked at closely in other districts. Such matters need to take into account our values which state CFA welcomes diversity, challenges the status quo and promotes inclusive teams.

My district's participation statistics show that:

- more than 50 per cent of the residents across the municipal areas in my district are women according to the last census
- only 14 per cent of our firefighters are women, which doesn't reflect our community's make-up
- only 22 per cent of brigade members are women, which also doesn't reflect our community
- women hold only 12 per cent of the elected positions in our brigades, but the majority of secretarial positions.

I encourage everyone in CFA to reflect on these figures, check their district's figures, and take steps to encourage women to participate.

As well as our values, there is a range of other relevant doctrines that encourage inclusion. The Volunteer Code of Conduct values people irrespective of their race, religion, colour, age, gender, sexual orientation or creed. The Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy applies to all staff and volunteers, and the Emergency Management Victoria Diversity and Inclusion Framework supports the Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan.

It may also be worthwhile to consider including other groups that make significant contributions in your communities into our CFA forums, committees, planning bodies and other institutions.

These groups will vary depending on your area, but I suspect you know them well. In my district, forest industry brigades and Forest Fire Management Victoria are major contributors to fire management and would make contributions that lead to improvements in, and the greater relevance of, our work.

There's plenty of evidence and research demonstrating that organisations of all types benefit from a diverse workforce and leadership that brings a range of perspectives, thinking styles and decision-making processes to the table.

Amendments to the Working with Children Act 2005

From 1 August 2017, changes came into effect to the Working with Children Act 2005 which aim to strengthen the protection of children.

Who does this affect?

Changes to the Act will now require people in the following CFA roles to have a Working with Children Check (WWCC):

- Junior leaders
- Juvenile Fire Awareness Intervention Program (JFAIP) presenters
- Fire Safe Kids presenters
- Fire Safe Youth presenters
- Mobile Engagement Unit (MEU) presenters.

CFA now must ensure that anyone who performs the above roles has provided us with a copy of their WWCC. If not, they must stop delivering the programs until a WWCC is provided.

Those who hold the competencies/endorsements for the above roles have received direct communication from CFA about what they need to do.

When is a WWCC not required?

No other CFA staff members or volunteers are required by law to obtain a WWCC or provide a copy to CFA.

Emergency response and community engagement are not considered 'child-related

work' under the Working with Children Act 2005, even if they involve direct contact with children. You do not need a WWCC if you interact with children in activities such as station visits, festivals, open days, fundraising or emergency response as part of your normal duties.

Why am I being asked to supply a WWCC by organisations we partner with?

This is particularly relevant to brigades that deliver VCAL and Advance, for example, who are being asked to provide checks when they visit schools.

Many organisations (particularly schools) have created their own policy requirements for WWCC. This means that, although you are not legally required to have a WWCC because you do not hold one of the roles listed under 'Who does this affect?', another organisation can prevent you entering their premises or attending events if you don't have one.

Although it is true that you don't legally require a WWCC, it's also true that you may be unable to participate in school-based events and activities without one.

"At CFA, we take very seriously the trust placed in us by our community," said Zemeel Saba, CFA's first child safety officer. "Nowhere is that trust more important than in our dealings with children and young people.

"I am so proud of the diligence shown by our people in supporting the changes to the Working with Children Act 2005. While these changes mean that more CFA roles need to have a Working with Children card, I thank everyone for their commitment and encourage those who need a card to get one. It's not difficult and it shows our communities how steadfast we are in our roles as trusted community leaders.

"I'm always happy to provide guidance and support and can be contacted via the child safety email address: chidsafetyofficer@cfa.vic.gov.au."

Anyone can apply for a Volunteer WWCC. They are free and you can apply online at workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

Further information, answers to FAQs, links to external websites or how to provide a copy of your card to CFA can be found at <https://cfa.engagementhq.com/chidsafetyatcfa>

STORY ANGELA SEACH

Below: Boneo brigade Juniors and Junior leaders

PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM



Preserving fire services history



Below: The society's Senior Station Officer Tim Fitzgerald with an International

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED BY TIM FITZGERALD

Members of CFA and the broader community interested in restoring old firefighting equipment and trucks are welcome to join the Central Victorian Fire Services Preservation Society (CVFSPS).

President Tim Rosewall has been a member of Bendigo Fire Brigade for 38 years, so he's not far from the Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre (VEMTC) at Huntly where the society's treasures are stored.

"Sandhurst Fire Brigade was the original Bendigo," said Tim, "and our main drawcard is their Shand Mason, a horse-drawn [15-metre extension] ladder from 1891. It was manufactured in England and shipped over to be pulled mostly by Rocket who was a tough-looking farm horse.

"It was used in the Bendigo CBD until the 1940s. The manufacturer built it really well and took pride in their work so it lasted a long time."

The society also holds a 1926 Graham pumper built in Warracknabeal before going into service in Lilydale; Greenvale's 1940s Bedford tanker which was converted from an army water tank; and the original Long Gully reel from 1900. On permanent loan is a 1975 International front-mounted pumper, the last one in service in District 2, while two of Bendigo's Austin pumpers are still used now in parades.

And it's not all things on wheels: helmets, uniforms and badges also make up the collection. A number of members have their own collections which further boost the society's exhibits.

"We allow brigades around Victoria to display our collection," continued Tim, "and they're also displayed in Huntly by appointment."

The society formed in 1992 and has 31 members. While most are local, others are from as far afield as Jeparit and Shepparton. They are both volunteers and CFA staff members with an interest in fixing things and preserving fire services history for the next generation.

Members interested in joining the hands-on team can make contact by emailing cvfspd@outlook.com or phoning Tim on **0409 333 232**.



Queen's Birthday honours

CHIEF OFFICER STEVE WARRINGTON AFSM

Starting at Chelsea Fire Brigade in 1978 as a volunteer, Steve Warrington has risen up the CFA ranks to become our Chief Officer and, now, a proud recipient of the AFSM.

He joined the staff in 1983 and served 14 years as both a staff member and volunteer with his final volunteer years spent at Langwarrin. He then moved through a range of roles including operations manager in District 8 and in Community Safety before becoming deputy chief officer in 2008.

"I've had a broad experience of CFA: from being on a truck to a house fire through a range of hands-on roles during events like the '03 and '06 campaign fires and the Brookland Greens Estate and then on to Black Saturday," Steve said.

"I'm a proud, passionate CFA man and, while events like Black Saturday were traumatic on an individual and organisational level, getting through the hard times just shows us all how resilient we are."

Steve is all superlatives when he talks about the CFA membership and the professionalism of our "battle-hardened" members, both career and volunteer. When he talks about himself, however, feeling "humbled" is the recurring theme.

"There are so many challenges along the CFA journey," he said. "But I'm very privileged to work in a sector that is focused on saving life and property with good professional people.

"I'm immensely proud of what we've collectively achieved. It's a privileged position to be Chief Officer and I'm very humbled to be the leader of such an amazing organisation."

Steve and his wife Ali managed to keep the awarding of the AFSM a secret from the five children they share; three daughters and two sons.

"Mum and Dad will also be quite excited as only a mum and dad can be," continued Steve.

"While I'm humbled to receive this personal recognition, the reality is CFA as an organisation has a lot of great people in it, allowing us all to achieve great outcomes for communities.

"That's what I really reflect on. I'm just one of so many long-serving CFA members."



LANCE KING AFSM

Lance King is a CFA life member with over 40 years' service. He joined CFA in 1977 after previously being a Junior member and his passion for serving the community has grown ever since.

"I originally signed up as a runner to keep fit in the off-season of footy," Lance said. "I knew the seniors needed some new blood so I decided to stay on as a firefighter."

Lance is well respected among his peers at the Yallourn North Fire Brigade who nominated him for the medal.

"I was chuffed when I was approached by my fellow members about the nomination and I was pretty proud when I heard I was going to be a recipient of the award," he said.

Lance has given back to his community in many ways. Other than his significant role as a volunteer firefighter, he is the emergency coordinator for Latrobe City Council.

Lance's role requires a great deal of leadership and the ability to create innovative solutions which he attributes to his experience as a volunteer firefighter.

In 2009, Lance was seconded to work with the Municipal Association of Victoria, where he was instrumental in the implementation of an incident management system which is now used by 75 councils.

Lance's passion for strengthening communities, especially within the fire and incident management sector, is evident in both his personal and working life.

"I've worked for Latrobe City for 17 years and without my link to CFA I'm sure I would never have gotten the job.

"My role with CFA has helped my professional life and my work has helped my role with CFA. I've been very lucky."



In the 2017 Queen's Birthday honours, four CFA members received the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) for making a significant difference to their communities. To nominate someone for next year's honours, email cfa-awards@cfa.vic.gov.au or phone (03) 9262 8842



ALLAN CRACKNELL AFSM

An eager 27-year-old Allan Cracknell joined Nullawil Fire Brigade in 1973. Since then he has dedicated more than 44 years of service to CFA as both a volunteer and a staff member.

Allan's first six years as a CFA volunteer were spent in the southern Mallee where his passion for both the organisation and the local community truly blossomed.

"I was really interested in progressing the local town, so the fire brigade seemed like a great place to start," said Allan.

"In that time I learnt a lot about what it means to be part of a small community."

Allan has been involved in many aspects of CFA and has distinguished himself through his exceptional contribution and concern for the welfare of members and the community.

"I joined the peer program in 1995 and, soon after, in 1997, became the peer support

coordinator in the East Gippsland region, the position I hold to this day," said Allan.

"The program goes a long way to supporting individuals and brigades in tough times, which is a great thing to be a part of."

In an important behind-the-scenes role that can often slip under the radar, Allan's excellent communication skills and personal attributes have established him as an outstanding role model for all those he has contact with.

He has worked tirelessly through many major emergencies to ensure the health and wellbeing of firefighters and support staff, and to make sure the community is being monitored.

His calm and capable manner has enabled him to be a most effective leader and mentor to others in peer support, fire safety education and prevention, and a range of other CFA community education programs.

Allan has earned the respect of his peers and of the broader community through his

professional approach, selfless commitment and his exceptional contribution to their safety and welfare.

Allan, who said the nomination came as a surprise, was very humbled to receive the prestigious award.



PHOTO: BEN TROTTER

WARREN CURRY AFSM

Warren Curry joined Yarram Urban Fire Brigade in 1964 before travelling across the world to follow his passion for art in London. After Warren's time abroad, he took up a position with Yarram Fire Brigade and served the community for over 44 years.

Warren has held many brigade management roles over the years with Yarram and Port Albert brigades.

He has also had roles as group delegate, deputy group officer and group officer in the Tarra Group. Warren has attended many incidents and was often in senior roles including incident controller, sector commander and strike team leader.

Warren said Black Saturday has stuck with him as one of the biggest and most challenging fires he's fought.

"I was the sector commander for the Yarram Sector (Churchill fire) and the south-west wind change that came through at 6pm turned the fire towards the Yarram township," he explained. "Due to the incredible work carried out by the crews that day, the losses in Yarram were kept to a minimum."

Ex-Captain Dick Whitaker, a friend of Warren's for over 30 years, took over the captaincy from Warren who had been at the helm for 22 years.

"Out of all the people in the Yarram district, Warren has put more effort into CFA than anyone I know," Dick said.

"He's one of those guys that whenever there were challenges within the brigade – because everyone respected him so much – he would sort out the issues, settle the dispute and keep things moving forward."

Warren's commitment to CFA and many other community organisations is inspiring and he encourages everyone to join CFA.



PHOTO: MARIE FARRROW

"It's a great opportunity to be able to support your community in a role that is both satisfying and rewarding," he said. "You will meet a selfless group of like-minded people and enjoy the pride of belonging to one of the best fire services in the world."

During the Victorian winter, Warren lives at his second home in Greece. When he's not painting, he runs art tours on the island for other artists to enjoy and learn with him.

Improving teamwork

Effective teamwork is vital when managing emergencies. High-pressure situations sometimes cause a breakdown in teamwork leading to a poor operational response.

New research has developed tools to help improve teamwork through better real-time identification and resolution of teamwork issues.

The *Emergency Management Breakdown Aide Memoire* and the *Team Process Checklist* are flexible and easy to use. They can be used during training, in actual emergencies and in after action reviews.

The *Emergency Management Breakdown Aide Memoire* helps people recognise teamwork breakdowns through team outputs (for example, incident action plans) and formal/informal organisational networks. It also gives some practical tips to resolve breakdowns:

- **Delegate** Find someone who is close to the breakdown or has the most appropriate skills and get them to resolve the issue.
- **Resources** Breakdowns can be caused by missing resources. Find out what's missing or what will help the team, and then get the resources.

- **Mentor** Mentoring allows you to tactfully suggest alternatives, opinions and strategies.
- **Assert** If subtle strategies don't work, use your authority to resolve the problem.
- **Replace** If breakdowns are caused by disruptive people in the management team, you can replace them or give them other duties.

The Team Process Checklist provides a health check for teams and, if there's a problem, helps determine what that problem is. This tool encourages people to think through the team's communication, coordination and cooperation. Here's an example of the communication items:

- are team members providing updates on the situation?
- are team members passing on information in a timely manner?
- are team members passing on information accurately?
- is communication between team members clear?
- are team members providing appropriate feedback?



- are team members providing updates on the situation?
- are appropriate communication procedures being used?

Find out more at bnhrc.com.au/hazardnotes/33

STORY CHRIS BEARMAN, BUSHFIRE & NATURAL HAZARDS CRC

New training site at Ballan

A site for a new training ground at Ballan has been secured. The \$31 million dollar Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre (VEMTC) – Central Highlands, aims to give emergency services a location to continue their vital training and education services.

The training facility is expected to take around two-and-a-half-years to complete.

Deputy Chief Officer Alen Slijepcevic said the new state-of-the-art facility would be a great asset to the region.

"Ballan will now become home to the most modern training centre in regional Victoria, and one which will no doubt serve CFA members for generations to come," he said.

"The training ground will provide an all-hazards approach which gives our members the skills and practical experience to further enhance their role in protecting lives and property."

The 35-hectare site will include live fire simulations with the construction of a practical area drill, firefighting props, specialist training capabilities,

breathing apparatus facilities, an off-road driver track, a change room, on-site parking and infrastructure to support day-to-day operations at the campus.

"The centre will include training scenarios that simulate the emergencies our members would typically face which will improve our ability to keep Victorians safe," said Alen.

"The central location of this ground will also cut down the time members spend travelling to access specialist training, and provide opportunities for shared use with other emergency management agencies."

The environmentally-safe training ground will have water treatment and management systems on-site and ongoing testing will be conducted.

"We look forward to seeing this project come to fruition," continued Alen. "The new training ground's modern facilities and infrastructure will allow our organisation to grow and adapt to future demands."

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

Thank you to our volunteers



During the second week of May, the small but mighty phrase 'thank you' rang out around Victoria to acknowledge the generous contribution and commitment of our volunteers.

The 2017 National Volunteer Week (NVW) theme was 'Give Happy, Live Happy' and here is a snapshot of how CFA celebrated.

Brigade administrative support officers and the Volunteer Sustainability team donned their aprons and fired up the barbecues in over 80 locations, creating that instantly recognisable, wafting, mouth-watering smell, to say thank you. Smiles were a-plenty at Bogong, Ovens Valley, Benalla, Alexandra and Mansfield group events, as volunteers eagerly enjoyed a snag or burger and Kergunyah brigade's night was even capped off by a beautiful sunset.

Star bakers at many brigades celebrated our volunteers by sharing their delights at special suppers and, at headquarters, a morning tea provided the opportunity to hear about the many roles our volunteers take on every day.

Shoppers heading into Stockland Wendouree, and lunchtime workers passing through Federation Square, the Cube in Wodonga and Harmony Square in Dandenong were greeted with images of CFA volunteers in action on the big screens.

Short videos featuring Beechworth Primary School, District 18 staff, Echuca South Primary School and Channel 9's Jo Hall and Peter Hitchener were shared through CFA's Facebook page.

Over 50 CFA volunteers jumped in the car and headed down to Melbourne for behind-the-scenes tours of ESTA and the State Control Centre. On their way to town, volunteers could hear messages of appreciation on Ballarat's 3BA, Power FM, Wimmera Mallee's 3WN, Swan Hill's 3SH, Mixx FM and Bendigo and Mildura's Triple M and Hit.

There was a show-and-tell in Mooroopna, where a drone captured images of an impressive vehicle display.

Headlines such as 'Volunteers are vital' led articles in the *Yarram Standard*, *Sunraysia Daily* and many other publications.

Journalist Liz Bell's comment in the *Gippsland Times* rang true. "Tinamba might be a small town with more cows than people, but the volunteers at



PHOTOS: KEITH FAKENHAM

Tinamba brigade are a testament to the town's strong community spirit," she said.

Showcasing the contributions our volunteers make, the National Volunteer Week photo competition received more than 40 entries and brought to life the saying that 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. Montrose Fire Brigade (pictured above) was the inaugural winner in a hotly-contested competition for its entry 'Always ready for you'. It captures the evolution of a fire call from a brigade member enjoying an everyday activity, to hearing an incoming text, grabbing gear, heading to the station and responding to an incident.

Rounding out the week, CFA volunteers and other emergency services volunteers were invited to march around the MCG and participate in a pre-match ceremony (pictured top). The 57,000 AFL Country Game crowd acknowledged the contribution our volunteers make.

Linton Fire Brigade Captain Gavin Ross made it a family day with his wife, four daughters and extended family. "The experience of being in the centre of the MCG, for someone who has never been before, was an overwhelming experience that I'll never forget," said Gavin.

The big deal about inclusion

Studies show that organisations that don't support people to flourish are at risk of creating unhealthy workplaces, and will eventually be disconnected from the community they serve.

With 58,000 members, CFA has immense influence in the community. The opportunity to lead by example and demonstrate a modern adaptable service, is in the best interests of the organisation and the community.

With this in mind, we launched the Inclusion and Fairness program in May this year. Steve Smith, assistant chief officer – inclusion and fairness was appointed to drive change across directorates and CFA programs. It demonstrates our commitment to ensuring CFA remains relevant and can continue to meet our mission to protect lives and property.

Steve Smith has already had a long career with CFA as an operational member. He has also made it his business to actively participate in and support programs that promote inclusion. A member of the Male Champions of Change and a driver of the

Rural Challenge program, Steve believes there's a lot of good work being done at CFA to ensure inclusion and fairness.

"While Inclusion and Fairness is a new program, it doesn't mean there isn't a lot of good work already happening at CFA promoting inclusion," said Steve. "We're looking at what's happening across CFA in this space and supporting existing programs so they are aligned with the broader CFA strategy and values. By linking and identifying individual programs and developing governance and a framework, this work will have more impact."

Steve admitted it will take time to reach all members with the strong message designed to ensure a diverse membership can flourish at CFA.

Ultimately, the program has firm aspirations to put the spotlight on how we treat each other, understand the communities we protect, and drive respect across CFA to be a safe, welcoming and diverse organisation.

Steve is committed to developing a culture that does the right thing by members and the community.

"CFA needs to lead by example in how we behave toward each other and the communities we serve."

For stories about CFA inclusion and how we link with diverse communities, see 'Learning an age-old tradition' on page 18 and 'Breaking bread for Iftar' on page 19.

STORY JODIE HENRY

"Diversity includes race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, and age. There is over-whelming evidence of the significant and positive contributions brought to an organisation by a diverse workforce. Diversity within the organisation enables it to respond better to the diverse community it serves. Increasing the diversity of perspective within the organisation will only enhance the level of innovation that is already being generated by brigades."

2015 Victorian Fire Services Review

May 2015

Koori Inclusion Action Plan (KIAP) launched



October 2015

Fire Services Review (FSR) report released



March 2016

Victorian Government approved 18 of the 20 recommendations in FSR report. Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) commissioned to review equity and diversity in MFB and CFA



May 2016

CFA established a Workplace Culture, Diversity and Inclusion taskforce



July 2016

VEOHRC review officially launched



Why inclusion and fairness make sense



Organisations that don't manage diversity properly get left behind

Today, workplace equality is front-of-mind for businesses, governments, regulators and society more generally. This equality will be the driver of future organisational success. Companies that don't focus on this aren't just at risk of being out of date – they already are.



Inclusion and fairness are the right things to do

Knowing the community we serve is important to our key mission in keeping people safe. Victoria is Australia's most culturally-diverse state, with almost one quarter of our population born overseas. Victorians come from over 260 countries, speak over 200 languages and follow more than 120 different faiths. Women make up more than 50 per cent of the population, and people from the LGBTI community (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex) account for around 11 per cent.



It's good for the community

It's a fact that organisations that cultivate diversity and have an inclusive culture will thrive. Contributions from CFA members across Victoria play an integral part in keeping Victorians safe. More than ever, the people we protect are from diverse communities, so it's important we encourage their representatives to join our ranks.



Diversity plugs the talent gap for businesses and is also good for society

Getting the right people for the job is important. Society recognises the need to encourage all parts of the community to participate and this creates a larger pool of people to choose from when recruiting staff or volunteers.



Diversity and inclusion give us opportunities to learn from others

"By working with people from different backgrounds and with different experiences and working styles, we learn and get another view. Diverse views make for better decisions."
Dennis Nally, PwC

April 2017

People Matter survey launched by Victorian Public Sector Commission.
First meeting of Inclusion and Fairness State Advisory Council

May 2017

Appointment of ACO, Inclusion and Fairness (I&F).
Rollout of inclusion and fairness awareness sessions in the regions.
KIAP video launched during National Reconciliation Week

June 2017

I&F governance structure agreed by CFA Executive

July 2017

I&F team officially started. Inclusion and fairness awareness session held for HQ staff.
Pilot session for 'A matter of respect' training



Learning an age-old tradition

For over 50,000 years, Australia's Indigenous communities have managed the land using traditional burning methods. They created a system that was sustainable and suited the Australian landscape.

Since 2014, CFA has been learning more about traditional Aboriginal burning practices. For the second year in a row, CFA Vegetation Management Officer and Euroa brigade volunteer Phil Hawkey and Eildon brigade member Len Timmins visited Cape York during NAIDOC Week 2017 to attend the National Indigenous Fire Workshop.

An annual event, the workshop takes place at the top end of Queensland.

The Cape York National Indigenous Fire Workshop aims to increase the use of traditional fire regimens. Led by expert traditional burner Victor Steffenson, who has over 20 years' experience in planned traditional burning and land management, the workshop is a very hands-on experience.

Phil said traditional burning is very different to CFA methods of conducting a planned burn. It's



PHOTO: PHIL HAWKEY

a method of cool burning that ensures fire never reaches the canopy and scorching is minimised.

"In Aboriginal culture the canopy is sacred as it harbours life and so their fires never burn the canopy. They are single-point ignition fires that slowly meander their way across the land which allows time for small insects

and animals to escape the path of the fire," said Phil.

"It has completely changed the way I see the land, the way I see fire and the way I conduct a burn."

STORY ANGELA COOK

Training in the Pacific

In May, District Mechanical Officer Glenn Mumford and Scoresby brigade member Jim Read travelled to the South Pacific country of Tuvalu for a 10-day visit to educate the police department, fire service and local volunteers about fire safety and equipment maintenance.

CFA has had a partnership with the National Fire Authority (NFA) in Fiji since 1991 which has provided many opportunities for both organisations. Over many years, CFA has provided second-hand fire trucks and equipment to the people of Fiji, and given them training in fire investigation and basic firefighting skills. CFA is now forming a similar relationship with Tuvalu.

At just 26 square kilometres, Tuvalu is the fourth-smallest country in the world.

After arriving in Funafuti, the capital of Tuvalu, Glenn and Jim were put straight to work providing practical firefighting skills development and mechanical training. Glenn's first challenge was to repair a tanker that had spent eight months living on the beach.

"When we first set eyes on the beached tanker there were visible signs of wear and tear," said Glenn.

"It took some exploring and even a walk around the local tip to source the parts I needed to repair the vehicle."

"Most mornings would be spent inside with nine police officers and three volunteers teaching and revising skills, then in the afternoon we'd head outside and put their skills to the test," Jim said.

"The training was 25 per cent indoors and 75 per cent outside practising the theory hands on."

On the last day of the trip, the freshly-trained fireys had the opportunity to test the lessons they'd learned on a real house fire.

"It was the first time they've ever saved a house, so it was great they were able to put their skills to work," Glenn said.

Glenn and Jim built strong relationships with locals and are hoping to return. "It was great fun. Such a lovely place and lovely people," Glenn said.

STORY SALLY BOND



Above: Glenn Mumford (left) and Jim Read with Chief Officer of the National Fire Authority of Fiji Quinilau Moceitai

Breaking bread for Iftar

Iftar is the sunset meal which breaks the daily fast during Ramadan, the Muslim holy month.

CFA hosted its inaugural Iftar dinner at the Emir Sultan Mosque, a place of safety and welcome, in Dandenong in mid-June. Acting Assistant Chief Officer Bryan Russell and Nada El-Masri, the event organiser and CFA's first multicultural liaison officer, greeted senior worshippers from the mosque alongside members of the wider local community, CFA, SES, Victoria Police and the Australian Federal Police. The emphasis was on forging bonds in the room and the mood was warm and celebratory.

Stationed as CFA is in Greater Dandenong where half the population was born overseas and 266 different nationalities live, our hosting duties demonstrated CFA's determination to better represent and serve our diverse communities.

Iftar dinners coincide with the evening call to prayer, and those present at

the dinner were fortunate to hear that call made by one of the muezzins of Istanbul's Blue Mosque.

"It's vital for us to understand diversity and cultivate respect and inclusion," said Bryan in his opening remarks. "This creates better opportunity for more people to participate in and benefit from our community safety programs. We are part of this community and eager to listen and learn."

And eager to eat. The meal began with fat, juicy dates followed by a delicious range of main courses and desserts prepared and served by the catering team at the mosque. Any leftovers were to be distributed to members of the local community going through hard times.

Fasting and focusing on prayer, charity and introspection during Ramadan is thought to bring the faithful closer to God. As the imam described it, "the purpose is to refrain from feeding the body so you can nourish the soul".

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: STEVE CORRIGAN

Not just templates

The CFA Template Toolkit isn't just about handy templates that make it easier for you to produce professional-looking documents.

You can also access a range of really useful resources including:

- how to work with local media to get your story into the community
- a guide to help you use social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and hashtags
- how to plan an event
- fundraising event ideas
- how to take great photos and video
- our Visual Style Guide with lots of detail about our preferred look
- our Writing Style Guide to help you polish your words.

To access all these materials, plus the wide range of templates, click on Template Toolkit on Brigades Online, then select 'Marketing' for our style guides, 'How to and Help' for general tips, and 'Corporate Materials' for the templates. Look out for our updated style guide later this year.



Spotlight on CECs

Community education coordinators (CECs) do a lot more than just coordinate: they champion, promote, oversee and empower. They're the conductors of an orchestra, encouraging humble fire brigade members to blow their own trumpets.

Tiff Heeson (pictured below, right) operates out of the District 5 Hamilton office and has been a CEC for two years working to 137 brigades across districts 4 and 5 including the integrated Warrnambool and Portland brigades. She's also no slouch in the volunteer stakes, doubling as the Dundas Group secretary and treasurer.

"Some of those brigades are on the Victorian Risk Register Level 1 and we work particularly closely with them," said Tiff. "We want to hear about all our brigades' initiatives but also what they need support with."

"I do a lot of miles and work closely with the catchment teams, ops officers and BASOs. They're my eyes and ears."

The major task of all CECs is local coordination of the summer program. Tiff has an excellent working relationship with her Country Fire Services counterpart in South Australia, working with her at shows and markets targeting travellers, and at the Community Engagement

State Forum in Lorne. She also invests in building vital relationships with health and wellbeing staff on local councils who work across areas from diet and aged care to youth and family violence.

"Like CFA, they have a strong focus on resilience and working with communities in relation to climate change," continued Tiff. "They might be reaching people we don't such as isolated elderly people, and we look for opportunities to overlap our fire safety messages. We really benefited from those connections when flooding hit last year."

Operating out of Horsham in West Region, CEC Jenny McGennisken is also building relationships with a focus on the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and Emmetts, a John Deere distributor. This is all in service to the CFA harvest workshops run by District 17 Headquarters Brigade Captain and farmer Kevin Bolwell which ran with great success across the region in 2016-17.

"We had a stand fronted by CECs at Horsham's VFF State Grains Conference with information about harvest fires," said Jenny. "We asked people to fill in a survey around farm fire planning, equipment and resources, and that's helped us identify more material to include in our harvest presentations."



Above: (from left) CEC Chris Carey, West Region; CEC Kevin Sleep, North West Region, and West Region CEC Jenny McGennisken

PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY JENNY MCGENNISKEN

"They're expanding into the north-west and south-west this coming fire season, so now a local success story is going to benefit farmers further afield. Westmere Group told me it was the best presentation CFA has ever given them."

"The CEC role allows itself for innovation and another example is our summer safe travel presentations given via shire health services to home care workers, regional nurses and stock agents."

From 1 September, Jenny will be full steam ahead on the summer program rolled out through community events, displays, Fire Ready Victoria meetings and a media campaign.

She's been in the role for 15 years and, heck, she's a passionate CEC.

"The role has evolved to now being a partnership between headquarters and CECs," she said. "We used to have to record the numbers we interacted with but after 2009 it became all about the risk."

"Each CEC works differently but we all partner with locals to come up with solutions; we're not about *telling* people. The highlight is working with so many people in the Wimmera and our volunteers are at the centre. They're the face of their local community."

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY TIFF HEESON

Pre-season Update

2017-18 Summer Season

Safety first



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

Each year it becomes clearer that our summer is not about fire alone and this is supported by Victoria's 'all communities, all emergencies' approach to emergency management.

It was apparent Victoria had an all-emergencies 2016-17 summer season with heat, flash flooding, thunderstorm asthma, storms, water safety issues, fire and the tragic events of the Bourke St Mall incident and Essendon plane crash.

Victoria's response to these events continued to highlight how we work as one to manage emergencies and protect the community, while the community demonstrates its readiness to respond and its resilience in recovery.

It continues to be a challenging time across emergency management, locally, nationally and internationally, and sound planning and preparedness is crucial.

The key is to remain focused on the community to ensure we get the best outcomes for the Victorian community. This will be achieved through building on each other's strengths and focusing on the job at hand.

The risks associated with emergency response remain very real. I encourage you to continue to focus on your safety and that of your colleagues as a priority, to ensure we are able to continue to protect and respond to the community in times of emergency.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the valuable work that each of you contributes during what can be extremely difficult circumstances, and acknowledge the impacts that these contributions have on you and your families.

Thank you for your continued commitment.



Craig Lapsley PSM
Emergency Management
Commissioner



EMERGENCY OPERATIONS HANDBOOK

Over the past few years, Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) has produced the *Victorian Bushfire Handbook (Edition 5)*, which summarises the operational management structures and systems used by fire agencies for bushfire preparedness, readiness and response in Victoria.

In reviewing this handbook, the State Control Team has determined that it has a greater application than just bushfire and needs to move to include all types of emergencies. It will be renamed the *Victorian Emergency Operations Handbook*.

This new handbook will be published in 2017 and structured to have generic emergency management principles, processes and systems. It will include all the same information as the *Victorian Bushfire Handbook* but have a new structure.

Printed copies of the new handbook will be distributed by each agency, and an electronic version will be available on the EMV website and through EM-COP.

<http://files.em.vic.gov.au/Doctrine/ManHand/VIC-EOpsHandbook.pdf>

LACES

The application of LACES allows crews to monitor and plan for safety. The process for implementing LACES is:

Lookouts A fixed, aerial or mobile lookout shall be deployed to maintain a clear appreciation of risks and to provide timely advice of the need to use escape routes and safety zones.

Awareness Firefighters shall be aware of the impact of changes in fire behaviour including those resulting from variations in fuel, weather and topography and of other fireground hazards.

Communications All fire crews shall follow the communications plan, communicate with their crew and surrounding crews to address safety issues.

Escape routes At least two escape routes should be agreed and made known to all relevant personnel. The suitability of an escape route should be continually reviewed to ensure it remains effective.

Safety zones Safety zones should be identified and made known to all relevant firefighters. Firefighters need to consider escape time and safety zone size requirements that will change as fire behaviour changes.

DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT

The Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA) formalises existing practices where operational personnel rapidly assess and manage risk to themselves and others to decide on appropriate strategies and tactics. The process is detailed in the DRA Joint Standard Operating Procedure.

<http://files.em.vic.gov.au/JSOP/SOP-J08.02.pdf>

A series of videos has been produced including examples and case studies that apply the dynamic risk assessment process in an emergency services setting. The intention of these videos is to ensure you have the skills and knowledge to protect yourself, those around you and the community.

Property, equipment and the environment may be at risk, but we always want to ensure that you do your utmost to make it

home safely. DRA is not just important to first responders in an emergency, but all personnel who may enter an area just after an incident. Use the link below to watch the videos.

<http://files.em.vic.gov.au/EMCOP/DRA-Menu.htm>



JOINT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

The annual review of the JSOPs has been completed. The processes and procedures in some JSOPs will be different from previous versions, so it's recommended that all emergency personnel familiarise themselves with these procedures.

<http://files.em.vic.gov.au/JSOP/EMV-JSOP.htm>

AMBULANCE VICTORIA

Ambulance Victoria (AV) paramedics are crucial in supporting and ensuring the welfare of not only the public during an emergency but also our emergency management colleagues, by undertaking health monitoring at critical incidents.

AV actively supports EMV and the emergency management sector in heat-related activity statewide, both in consequence management and taking on the role of state controller for heat.

Operational frontline managers across AV continue to receive health commander training, which enables managers to respond to an incident and be represented at regional incident control centres and the State Control Centre as part of the emergency management teams (EMTs) in line with the Statewide Emergency Management Plan.

This year, given the critical link AV provides in planning and response, it is integrating its operations through the State Control Centre and the Department of Health and Human Services in Lonsdale Street. This alignment has allowed for increased visibility of activity and the strengthening of our continued relationships.

SPEAKING UP

Any of us who have led a crew at an emergency incident – always chaotic, often feeling like you’re stumbling into something without a full view – will know the value of having team members who know when and how to speak up. But so often people sit back and say nothing when something really needs to be said. It could be an idea, a suggestion, an observation, a criticism... for some reason they don’t want to speak up. At a developing incident, no individual has all the answers, but by working together a team may be able to develop a workable solution.

What stops us speaking up?

Those who have spoken up to a leader under pressure, only to be told curtly, “You’re here to do as you’re told, not to think”, or are ignored altogether, may have some answers to that question. But there’s more to it than arrogant or frazzled leadership. Why is it that curtness or irritation from a leader stops us speaking up?

A very important factor is that humans are powerfully affected by social pressures, which can be more powerful than pay or even fear of personal safety.

A classic example is that of the presence of rank or authority structure. We often hear stories of individuals who felt intimidated by rank or seniority and didn’t voice their concerns about a particular course of action. This often leads to injury.

Problem detector: the sixth sense

Research shows that humans are good at pattern matching; we do it almost unconsciously. We recognise when there is an abnormality, often without knowing exactly what it is. We have an uncomfortable feeling, a ‘sixth sense’ that something isn’t right. It’s important to acknowledge these feelings and to at least speak up about them, if not act on them.¹

A high-performance environment

To develop high performance, teams need to feel psychologically safe and this is built by trust among members, by encouraging and supporting feedback and reporting negative behaviours. This can be especially difficult with newly-formed teams. Trust takes time to build, but team leaders can fast-track this process by making the effort to get to know team members at the start of the mission, introducing themselves, and asking respectful questions. This provides an opportunity to do a skills audit and spell out the leader’s intent for open team communication, sending a powerful message that the members are valued, as are their observations and reports of information critical to the mission. A note of caution: leaders need to work to achieve the right balance, encouraging others to speak up constructively, but avoiding wasting time on issues they think are irrelevant.

Our meta-mistake: we’re wrong about being wrong

Something that inhibits many of us from speaking up is the fear, even terror, of being wrong. Making errors is actually an opportunity to learn and improve, rather than a point of shame and blame. We all make mistakes all the time. We can’t help it. We are ‘wired for error’. We need to get over our fear of mistakes. We don’t have to like being wrong, but we would be more successful if we were more calm about it and saw it as an opportunity to learn².



¹ Gary Klein, *Sources of Power* 1999 MIT Press.

² Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong* 2010 Portobello

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE... SOUNDS EASY

The use of local knowledge in IMTs has been an issue that seems to come up time and time again after significant events. It seems an easy concept – just bring some locals into the IMT to help make better decisions that reflect local community needs. So why is it an issue?

In the first hour of any event, it’s the actions of local responders and the community that will have the greatest influence on the extent of community impact, even more so if it’s a significant fire, storm or flood. It’s imperative that we view the community response as part of our local response efforts. The community is expected to react as per our advice, but we know that community will be operating from a totally different space. For our local knowledge to be of value, we must plan on what we think people in our community will actually do, not what we’d like or wish they’d do. That requires different thinking to include ‘what if’ scenarios. It means thinking and planning and it will take discipline.

As an incident impacts or threatens a community, our local responders will typically be fully occupied protecting their community, so the ability of key local people to disengage from the first hour of response to go to an IMT will always present a challenge.

Are they providing best service at the ICC or are they best served heading to the incident ground? Should local responders have a ‘set play’ where key people go or are already at the control command facility? Do we have local members from the town to provide information? There is no one answer, but the answer needs to come from the local leaders and community.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Severe weather event, October 2016

Background

Victoria experienced above-average rainfall during spring 2016 which resulted in emergency management agencies responding to multiple significant incidents statewide, far in excess of usual activations. Relentless rain, flooding and severe storms collectively caused significant property and road damage.

On Sunday 9 October 2016, damaging winds impacted areas of metropolitan Melbourne with wind speeds averaging 50 to 60km/h and gusts peaking at 120km/h. The resulting damage was widespread, with areas north of Melbourne and in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges severely impacted.

The severe winds and storm caused damage to homes, roads, buildings and infrastructure, with fallen trees and debris a large contributor to this damage. There were also major power outages across Melbourne with 90,000 properties affected for a significant time.

Before the storm, information from the Bureau of Meteorology and discussions held among multi-agency commanders and Victoria Police led to the decision to establish a Level 3 ICC in Dandenong to manage the incident as a Class 1 emergency.

IMT resourcing at Dandenong ICC included three deputy ICs and operations officers to cover each of the respective metropolitan areas. In addition, CFA strike teams worked with VICSES in sectors, with six divisional control points activated to support the response.

At 2.30pm, wind gusts in excess of 120km/h peaked in the Dandenong and Yarra Valley, with other areas across Melbourne receiving wind gusts in excess of 90km/h.

Emergency services received calls reporting a number of incidents caused by fallen trees, including several people trapped in damaged buildings and a person killed by a large tree falling in their front yard. A number of emergency services vehicles were damaged and responders injured by trees.



A Red Flag Warning was issued by the incident controller to all emergency services in the field, followed by a Safety Alert for falling trees being issued by the state response controller.

In the days after the windstorm, local councils worked with emergency services to help communities without power due to physical damage to lines and transformers. Community information flyers were posted at common meeting places (eg general stores, libraries, council halls) and residential door knocking was carried out by VICSES and CFA volunteers.

In total, emergency services received 3,616 Requests for Assistance (RFAs) over a three-day period, with a multi-agency response provided by VICSES, CFA, FFMVic (DELWP and Parks Victoria) and MFB to manage the huge peak.

Some key lessons identified include:

- Resource planning across the emergency management sector needs to occur collaboratively with an 'all hazards, all agencies' approach to ensure a high level of readiness is maintained for high periods of predicted severe weather.
- Inter-agency operability and collaboration was very strong and worked well between emergency management agencies and local government for the wind storm event. Strong relationships need to be maintained and continue to be built across the sector, with SOPs developed for incorporating a multi-agency approach to an incident with a large span of control.
- Emergency services agencies should ensure their members and relevant staff are aware of the dynamic risk assessment steps and processes and, if necessary (JSOP 8.02), organise refresher messaging or training in relevant safe systems of work used in conjunction with that assessment.
- Hazardous trees awareness programs should be delivered in a multi-agency setting, to help first responders in severe weather incidents.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Widespread floods – Hume Region, spring 2016

Emergency management agencies responded to incidents statewide caused by relentless rain, flooding and severe storms, which collectively caused significant property and road damage.

North East Region experienced a high level of responses because of floods and storms from late July into September, with flooding in the Ovens, King and Kiewa and Goulburn Broken systems. In early October the state saw further rainfall that led to significant floods of the Ovens, King and Murray rivers.¹

Following sustained activity and activations from July to September, ICCs were established in Benalla, Wodonga and Shepparton. Fatigue management and capacity to fill roles were issues with this sustained activity (particularly for Hume SES personnel), including deployments to other regions and interstate when demand locally was already very high.

When ICCs were established, SES IMT and regional control team members were supplemented with many IMT members from partner agencies including FFMVic, CFA, MFB, EMV, DHHS, DEDJTR, Victoria Police, municipalities, and North East and Goulburn Broken catchment management authorities.

What worked well?

- Although SES is the control agency for floods, IMTs had effective integration of many personnel from other agencies in IMT roles they may not traditionally fill. These roles included IC, operations and planning.
- In anticipation of the flood activity moving downstream, there was an effective strategic transition plan for escalation of IMTs from Level 2 to 3 while other IMTs downscaled.
- The focus on connection with community groups was critical. Community members had mobilised as part of the response and it was essential to understand community involvement and establish relationships between the IMT and these community groups.
- Consequence management was at the forefront of decision making by engaging specialists such as flood analysts, local government and Agriculture Victoria. By using newer technology, photos obtained from social media added to the field intelligence work undertaken by agency personnel. The use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) further enhanced the understanding of the impact.
- The intelligence section operated at both incident and regional level and assisted with effective decision making. EM-COP was used successfully at multiple locations, which again assisted with building a common operating picture.

What could we improve?

- Where personnel are working in key roles they are not familiar with such as IC for hazards, they still need to develop hazard-specific expertise or know where to obtain this knowledge.
- Guidelines for the use of EM-COP would ensure that the incident rooms are used in a consistent way. In some cases, there were multiple EM-COP rooms in place for the same event/issue.

- More detailed training is required in the intelligence role.
- The emergency management sector needs to consider how to best use social media intelligence at incident and regional level.
- Allow more time for IMTs to get established and understand the key issues when transitioning control to neighbouring ICCs.
- Ensure continuous information about potential water releases by the (federal) water authorities is provided to IMTs and RCTs so the potential impacts of water level rises can be assessed.

What would you do next time?

- SES will be briefing Level 3 ICs in Hume Region on hazard-specific aspects of flood and storm response to better prepare them for these IMT roles.
- SES NE region is developing a database of where to find information about local flood planning, community engagement (local knowledge) and locations of resources related to flood response to share with other agencies.
- Develop principles for how action-focused community groups get involved and establish productive and collaborative relationships with IMTs.
- Recognise that all communities are different and develop a community engagement plan early in the escalation phase of a significant incident.

Conclusion

The 2016 spring flooding in Hume Region was widespread and was the culmination of several months of increased activity due to storms and floods in the region. The emergency management arrangements served the region well. More agencies were involved in IMTs than ever before. The community was actively engaged in the response and there was a sense of significant improvement since the last major floods in the region. This also assisted with the transition to locally-led recovery. However, challenges remain in keeping up with social media at incident level and ensuring that the intelligence section provides quality input for decision making.



¹VICSES Final Report North East Victoria Severe Weather Event from July To October 2016

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Tanker burn under

On 21 November 2016, a CFA tanker was destroyed as crews battled to control a crop fire near Swan Hill in Victoria's north-west. The blaze was brought under control in the afternoon after burning in open country with strong, erratic winds. More than 30 crews battled the fire on the ground, supported by aircraft.

A four-person crew on a district spare tanker (that was located in the Swan Hill station as a temporary replacement) was engaged in suppressing a fire south of Swan Hill in a heavy wheat crop which burnt approximately 322 hectares.

The fire had spread from a crop north of Parsons Road, crossed the road and continued to spread south in a very heavy wheat crop up to one metre tall. The fuel load and type resulted in the truck's radiator becoming blocked with straw, chaff and grain.

To mitigate this problem, tankers on scene were required to have their radiators cleared of the wheat every time they refilled with water.

Chaff and seed caught in the engine radiator of the spare tanker caused the engine to overheat. When this issue was discovered, the crew tilted the cab and cleared the radiator before continuing.

After one-and-a-half hours operating on the fireground, the crew of the spare tanker noticed fire breaking away from a section of the western flank which had re-ignited. They travelled across burnt ground to halt the spread of the breakaway and crossed a section of burning edge to head it off. The crew noticed the low water warning light occasionally beep and flash, but did not see or hear any indication in the cab of low water warning.

With the suppression effort progressing well and much of the fire contained, the crew noticed spot fires following the path of the tanker. Black smoke was issuing from the right rear wheels, and the driver stopped the tanker with the fire about 10-15 metres away to his right, and issued the first mayday call.

Attempting unsuccessfully to extinguish the burning section of the tanker from the deck with the short deck hose, the crew noticed extreme heat rising from the right-hand side of the tanker and realised the tanker was burning intensely. Under the impending threat of the breakaway fire bearing down on them and the toxicity of the dense smoke surrounding the tanker from both crop and burning tyres, the crew abandoned the tanker and moved to safer ground.

They used a portable radio to make a second mayday call, which was then heard by the incident controller and a DELWP crew leader. A helicopter pilot with a full load of water heard the radio communication and helped by making a water drop.

What worked well?

- Heat shield worked well.
- An early request for DMO support by the incident controller when fighting fire in a crop.
- The key principles of SOP 9.15 *Mayday Radio Procedure* were followed, resulting in the effective movement of the crew to safety.



- Situation awareness by the crew which allowed the crew to move to a safe area.

What could we improve?

- Increasing awareness of the issue of fine fuel accumulating under responding vehicles.
- The need to operate from burnt ground as far as practical.
- The need to have contingency plans in case tankers become untenable, and move to burnt ground for safety. Anchor points must be established.
- Maintain radio discipline at rapidly-developing fires, especially if a mayday is transmitted.
- Familiarisation with standard and spare vehicles when located at your station is vital.
- Conducting quick vehicle checks when stand-in tankers are located at your station.
- Understanding the mechanics of the crew protection system.
- SOP 9.32 *Entrapment Procedures*, especially sections 3.3 to 4, must be practised in exercise drills as this may save your life.

Conclusion

Training on the basics of tanker operation, crew safety spray operation and the need for the crew to all maintain constant situational awareness are vital links that will help ensure efficient and safe firefighting in grassland and crop broadacre fires. It's vital we reinforce the fundamentals of firefighting with tankers in grass fuels. Annual group exercises should be used to practise turnover drills, radio procedures, grassfire tactics and vehicle familiarisation, as these may save your life.



LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Deployment to Tropical Cyclone Debbie

Tropical Cyclone Debbie, a category four cyclone, made landfall on the central Queensland coast, near Airlie Beach, around midday on 28 March 2017. From 29 to 31 March 2017, the weather system generated significant heavy rain and major flooding causing impacts to the heavily-populated areas of South East Queensland and Northern NSW.

As at 1 April 2017, Queensland SES had received around 25,700 calls for help. The Queensland Government had completed 4,660 Rapid Damage Assessments, predominantly in the Proserpine, Airlie Beach and Bowen regions.

Based on a request from Queensland authorities, response personnel were deployed to Queensland on 28 March 2017. Two deployments of recovery personnel were deployed to Queensland from 9 April and 22 April 2017 respectively to support recovery activity. This was the largest mobilisation of recovery personnel from multiple jurisdictions in our history and the first time a Victorian recovery deployment had been managed through the Interstate and International Liaison Unit (IILU) in the State Control Centre.

Feedback collected through the online deployment survey and operational debriefs indicated that the deployment was a very worthwhile experience for personnel. The Victorian arrangements were reported to be well managed, executed in a timely manner and fulfilled the service requirements of the initial request from Queensland.

However, there were a number of areas for improvement identified, particularly in relation to the level of information provided prior and during the deployment. It is important to clarify expectations for the deployment as early as possible (taking into consideration the usual time pressures), provide as much information as possible about the host state's arrangements and minimise confusion about the equivalence of roles between jurisdictions.

In preparation for further deployments, there is the opportunity to have a national discussion to mature interstate resource sharing and to further improve Victoria's interstate liaison unit processes and arrangements to support all interstate response and recovery deployments.

Personnel identified a number of lessons learned from the deployment, including:

- the value of being open to any opportunities and having individual resilience by being aware of personal limits
- the importance of flexibility, adaptability and 'going with the flow', particularly when things are not going to plan
- insight into the structure of Queensland's emergency management arrangements and the relationship between the various organisations
- the benefit of seeing how other agencies work under pressure and greater understanding of processes of emergency management in other jurisdictions
- great opportunities to learn and identify processes that could be applied in Victoria.

LEARNING FROM THE SEASON

Each year, operational personnel across the state conduct assurance activities (eg real-time monitoring and evaluation, debriefing and review activities) to capture observations from incidents. We also collect individual observations, which are used to inform debrief planning and identify statewide trends. It's important to use lessons learned from these activities to create change and improvement. EM-LEARN describes the model that Victoria is implementing to support the identifying and learning of lessons (<https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/how-we-help/reviews-and-lessons-management/lessons-management-framework-em-learn>).

The State Review Team (SRT) is Victoria's governance group that provides guidance and advice on assurance activities and the identification of statewide/multi-agency lessons. Throughout the year, the SRT analyses data from assurance activities and individual observations to identify areas to sustain and improve, and communicates these areas in the Emergency Management Operational Review (<https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/how-we-help/reviews-and-lessons-management/emergency-management-operational-reviews>).

The Emergency Management Operational Review provides an overview and narrative outlining the broad spectrum of emergency management activities undertaken across the sector before, during and after emergencies. The review also includes a selection of case studies and an update on the themes and insights that highlight good practice, and changes and improvements as part of the two-year cycle of learning and improvement.

Resources are available to the sector via the EM-COP Library (Reviews-Lessons) to support conducting assurance activities. Anyone can submit observations through EM-Share (previously Observation Sharing Centre) on the EM-COP Desktop. If you have any queries, please contact your agency's State Review Team representative (contact list available EM-COP Library > Reviews-Lessons > Contacts) or email sccvic.srt@scc.vic.gov.au.



RAISED BED CROPPING AND FIREFIGHTING

Raised bed cropping was first developed in the Wingeel area of District 7. Although it's not as common as it used to be, it presents driving difficulties if not seen because of the crop density and height. What looks like a flat paddock may contain a series of ruts that could prove dangerous to tankers and crews.

First responders should be aware that it may not be initially obvious that raised bed cropping is being used in a particular paddock. Local knowledge and observation will help identify paddocks with raised-bed crops.

Driving into a raised bed crop to attack a fast-moving crop fire will certainly be difficult, and vehicles should always endeavour to travel along the raised beds, rather than across them.

A dynamic risk assessment of the conditions should always be conducted, and consideration may be given to not driving into the paddock at all.



AIRCRAFT AND AVIATION

Aircraft are an effective tool to assist in achieving first attack success on the fireground if used early, efficiently and effectively. Below are a few simple guidelines to use when working with them.

- Determine on turnout if an aircraft is responding. (Aircraft can only be dispatched by predetermined dispatch (PDD) or through request to the RDO).
- Decide whether you require an aircraft based on fire location, current weather, fuels, predicted fire spread, further information, smoke column, etc. Don't wait until your first attack fails before calling an aircraft. Likewise, don't request or accept an aircraft if it's not required and thus limiting its availability to fires that may require it.
- Establish your fireground channel so that aircraft can communicate safely and effectively with ground crews. If this channel becomes too busy, allocate another channel (command) to ensure clear communication with aircraft.
- Ensure you communicate with ground crews and advise of firebombing aircraft working in the area of the fire. Ground crews don't need to leave the area, just stay a safe distance away from the drop area during firebombing operations. The Air Attack Supervisor (AAS) can give information about a safe distance if required.
- Ensure you are using your aircraft in the most effective area of the fire that requires work. When the fire is contained with sufficient resources on the ground to control it, release your aircraft as soon as possible.



For extended firebombing operations or when multiple aircraft are operating at your fire, the incident controller must ensure an AAS is responded to assist with air-to-ground coordination of firebombing aircraft. The AAS will become the sole communicator between firebombing aircraft and ground resources, thus easing the workload on the incident controller.

The workload for firebombing pilots and accompanying AASs can be very heavy, so there is a limit to the information they can pass to the fireground. If you require detailed fire-specific information such as fireline location, fire spread rates, locating spot fires, asset threat levels, possible control lines and water points, the incident controller should request an air observer aircraft to undertake this role.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AT EMERGENCIES

A recently-formed Traffic Flow Working Group (TFWG) has been established with representation from multiple agencies to consider the consequences of road closures and traffic disruption resulting from emergency response activities. The TFWG remit is to consider best-practice options and minimise the impact on the community arising from emergencies.



Where traffic is brought to a standstill or gridlock occurs, safety can become an issue for those caught in the congestion due to weather or the existing emergency event, and priority should be given to restoring flow at the earliest opportunity

Inadvertent traffic disruption is identified as a contributing-yet-easily-rectifiable factor. To prevent this, responders need to consider the placement of vehicles when attending incidents so they don't cause unnecessary and unintended road blockages. However, it's also understood that vehicle placement may be dictated by other factors such as water access for fire trucks, hazmat incidents or to provide protection to responders.

Traffic management and the placement of vehicles should be a priority agenda item for discussion at EMTs at all levels as a matter of course. Notably, as of 1 July 2017, Road Rule 79A of the Road Safety Road Rules 2017 came into effect, requiring road users to travel at 40km/h or slower when passing stationary or slow-moving police, emergency, enforcement or escort vehicles with flashing lights and/or sounding an alarm, to provide safer workplaces for emergency responders.

The TFWG has taken a number of proactive measures to reduce the effect of road closures, most notably reviewing and updating existing road diversion plans. This work is being undertaken by VicRoads in collaboration with Victoria Police. Once completed, they will ensure the plans are readily accessible for first responders, providing timely implementation to minimise the impact of road closures. To provide suggestions or otherwise contribute to the TFWG email: traffic-flow-work-group-oic@police.vic.gov.au

AGENCY ONLINE AVAILABILITY SYSTEMS

In May 2016, the State Control Team (SCT) endorsed the Standard Resource Management System (SRMS) project to identify systems and processes that would enable the emergency management sector to comply with the Inspector General Emergency Management (IGEM) recommendation 1 from Wye River – Jamieson Track Fire Report.

Phase 1 was implemented in November 2017 to roll out the use of the Incident Resource Information System (IRIS) for the management and reporting of deployed personnel at all Level 2 and Level 3 incidents at ICC/RCC/SCC.

Phase 2 of the project is to implement a process to capture resource availability from multi-agency IMT personnel and the ability to report on key IMT roles by mid-2017. In some instances, it will replace manual processes (eg discrete spread sheets and other tools) used by various divisions or agencies

Phase 3 will update appropriate resource management systems to include personnel attributes, roles, capabilities and rostering information across the agencies.

Initial data from all agencies has been loaded into SRMS systems with potential for automatic uploading of information from agencies.

Further communications and user training for personnel across the state in IRIS and use of agency availability systems is planned to support the roll-out.

EARLY RECOVERY - THE BASIS FOR LONG-TERM WELLBEING

The very first training Red Cross emergency service volunteers are given is three letters long – PFA. Psychological first aid is the basis of all the work Red Cross does as a community-focused emergency management organisation. In the early recovery stages, this support provides the framework for the whole journey.

Red Cross volunteers develop a deep understanding of what PFA means through their training and then, more importantly, their experience in the field at house fires, large-scale disasters and exercises within the sector.

The sooner people have access to the right support following an emergency, the better they seem to cope with the recovery – however long it takes.

Many of the community members Red Cross works with say that first conversation they had with a Red Cross PFA volunteer was the first time they felt heard, understood and validated. And in situations where the overwhelming feelings for most are of a lack of control, feeling misunderstood and often totally ignored, we cannot underestimate the impact of well-delivered PFA.



HEALTH, HEAT STRESS AND INJURY PREVENTION

Coming into the fire season, it's important to consider your personal health, including hydration levels, as a part of your preparedness for responding to incidents in order to reduce the risk of injury, dehydration and/or heat-related illnesses.

Proper preparation for work on the fireground should include a check-up with your doctor before the fire season, as well as a healthy diet and adequate hydration. Physical fitness and weight management will also help to reduce the risk of heat illness and promote effective performance on the fireground.

Hydration

The risk of dehydration and heat-related illnesses is increased by:

- being overweight and physically inactive
- consuming alcohol or diuretics such as caffeine
- consuming a diet high in saturated fat
- some medications and medical conditions.

To reduce your risk of dehydration and heat illnesses, you should aim to drink at least two litres of water throughout the day, every day, while also maintaining a healthy diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables to ensure electrolyte levels are maintained. Sweat loss from physical activity and/or exposure to heat may trigger the need for an electrolyte replacement product to further manage electrolyte levels. Use the 'What colour is your urine?' chart as a guide for water and electrolyte replacement consumption (<https://cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelId=publicDisplayDoc&docId=005419>). For every 600ml of electrolyte replacement drink you should consume 1200ml of water.

Heat stress

At an incident, active rehabilitation strategies should be implemented to further reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses. These strategies include:

- task rotation
- requesting a rehab unit
- seeking shade
- removing or loosening excess clothing
- lower arm cooling
- continued hydration.

CFA health monitoring and rehabilitation teams (HMT)

CFA now has 16 rehabilitation brigades and 14 health monitoring teams (HMT) in brigades across the state. These teams consist of brigade members who have been trained in management of heat stress and exposure to smoke. Some



teams also include nurses, paramedics and doctors who joined the brigades specially to work with rehab units.

The HMT/rehab units are located at Mildura, Golden Square, Yellingbo, Wodonga, Mooroopna, Smythesdale, Rochester, Wonthaggi, Dandenong, Yallourn North, Paynesville, Wangaratta, Mernda, Geelong and CFA HQ (HMT only).

On days of high temperatures, structure fires, hazmat incidents (long duration or hot days), incident controllers should request a rehab unit to assist in the management of members to reduce the incidence of heat stress. A rehab unit can be requested through VicFire. HMT members are also members of the rehab units and may be part of the crew that responds to your request.

Health teams have been trained to assess members for smoke exposure and hydration levels and have specialist equipment to conduct these assessments.

BUSHFIRE/HEAT HEALTH OPERATIONS

Ambulance Victoria has reviewed its Emergency Response Plan to help prepare for, respond to and recover from complex and/or mass casualty incidents. It is designed to allow AV to respond to any major incident, while minimising the impact to business-as-usual. The AV Emergency Response Plan is escalated typically four to six times per day across Victoria. The most frequent escalations are for road traffic accidents, house fires and complex medical incidents. During the warmer months, AV is on alert for grass/bushfire operations and for heat-related health incidents. Together with DHHS, AV has developed a thunderstorm asthma sub plan to cater for this health emergency.

When confronted with a forecast for high fire danger or increased risk of heat health issues, AV will prepare by:

- escalating the AV Emergency Response Plan
- stand up the AV Emergency Operations Centre
- prepare a Health Incident Action Plan
- deploy health commanders or liaison officers to control centres
- pre-position resources as required by the hazard
- brief the operational workforce.

If AV is required to respond in-field to support bushfire operations, ambulance resources will be responded according to the number of patients and their injuries. AV will also respond an incident health commander, even if there are no injuries, to liaise with the incident controller or forward commander. The incident health commander coordinates the health response, which may include patients injured by the hazard, firefighters requiring health monitoring, and people relocated or evacuated due to the hazard.

AV may also deploy specialist resources to support the incident response. These resources include Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS), wilderness response paramedics, 4WD-trained paramedics and various vehicles supporting those resources. The incident health commander is required to report to and receive information from the emergency management team.

VICTORIAN FIRE RISK REGISTER – BUSHFIRES

The Victorian Fire Risk Register – Bushfire (VFRR-B) is Victoria's first consistent process to identify assets at risk from bushfire. Since commencing implementation in 2009, the VFRR-B has had input from more than 160 agencies with responsibility for local fire management planning across 66 municipalities, alpine resorts and French Island. The participation of local experts has contributed to over 13,000 assets mapped and the level of bushfire risk assessed, to inform and enhance decision making related to bushfire planning and preparedness.

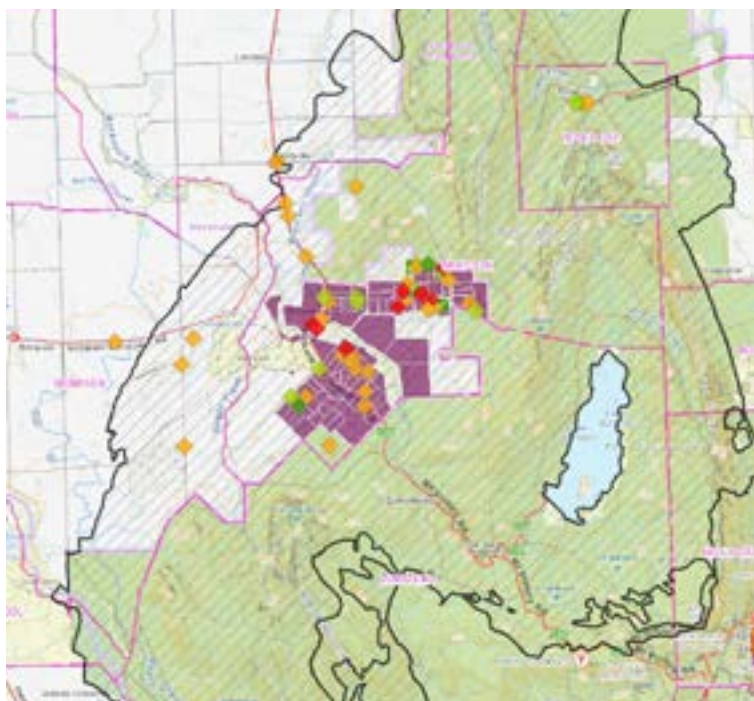
VFRR-B's development over the years has seen an increase and variation in how the data is used.

Did you know the VFRR-B:

- supports and informs Municipal Fire Management Plans
- supports targeted service delivery of CFA education programs
- informed the establishment of neighbourhood safer places (NSP), targeted properties, community information guides and local response plans
- supports agencies, government departments and businesses to prioritise treatments to manage risk.
- informs consequence management including evacuation and asset protection during an incident.

The VFRR-B data layer can be found on EM-COP and the risk information can be used during incidents to help establish an informed response.

During the 2014 Grampians fires, the incident controller used the VFRR-B layer with Phoenix Rapid Fire Prediction to predict the fire's impact. Properties with the highest exposure to bushfire were prioritised for evacuation by Victoria Police. Those properties had received a home bushfire advice visit and were aware of their risk. For more information contact the Risk intelligence Team: riskintelligence@cfa.vic.gov.au



FIRE SCENE PRESERVATION

The actions and observations of the Incident Controller and the initial responding firefighters are critical to the success of the subsequent investigation into the origin and cause of fires.

The following key points will help firefighters carry out the correct observations and actions to protect, preserve and record the fire scene.

En route to the fire

- Note the number and colour of smoke columns.
- Observe and record details of vehicles or motorbikes leaving the area along with any people in the area.
- Note if barriers have been placed to prevent the fire brigade's access or if gates are open that are normally closed.

Fire suppression

- On arrival, note the position of the firefront, flanks and backing edge. This will help establish the area of origin. Note this area by identifying particular trees, street signs or other features.
- Don't use straight water jets or drive fire trucks across the suspected area of origin.

Protect the area of origin

- Cordon off this designated area by placing witches hats or scene tape.
- Do not drag hose lines through this area.
- Secure the area to prevent fire trucks, firefighters and onlookers from entering. If appropriate, use a vehicle to block access or position personnel at the site to undertake this role.
- Leave in place any equipment, machinery, vehicle or items located in the area of origin which may have caused the fire. Protect any suspicious items, devices, tyre or foot prints located at the scene.
- Request for fire investigation to attend if the origin and cause of the fire cannot be determined or if suspicious circumstances exist. If the fire is thought to be suspicious, request Victoria Police to attend.
- Fire investigators will determine the origin, cause, path and impact of the fire with the findings recorded as part of the fire investigation report.

Recording the scene

- The incident controller is responsible to ensure that the appropriate agency is notified of the fire's cause and the fire report is completed correctly.
- Information contained in fire reports is used by CFA's Fire Investigation Section as part of the fire trend identification process and location mapping of suspicious fire 'hot spots' across the state.



VALIDATION OF TANKER CREW PROTECTION

Bushfire firefighting tanker vehicle entrapment and burnovers are life-threatening situations for firefighters. The most dangerous Australian tanker burnovers typically occur on a narrow track in a eucalyptus forest environment. The abundance of elevated and surface fuels between a trapped tanker and the firefront can allow for a sudden escalation of fire intensity associated with changes in slope or following a change of wind direction and/or strength.

Since the 1998 Linton bushfire, CFA has carried out research into and development of a variety of tanker crew protection methods. The research resulted in the installation of crew protection systems commencing in 2006 on new-build medium tankers and heavy tankers in the CFA fleet. A retro-fit crew protection system for all CFA medium and heavy tankers was completed on 1200 tankers prior to the 2013-14 fire season. Crew training, with a requirement of Minimum Skills and situational awareness has also been emphasised since 2000.

The CFA Bushfire Research Unit, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) recently completed an experimental bushfire burn test to determine the survivability of crews in three differently-protected firefighting tankers in an entrapment burnover situation at Brucknell forest.

The experiment tested a medium tanker with current crew protection system, a polymer-gel-protected ultralight tanker and a Class A foam-protected ultralight tanker. The experimental test:

- validated the effectiveness of the crew protection system research and development of systems now installed on or medium and heavy CFA tankers
- provided encouraging results on the effectiveness of crew protection on ultralight vehicles provided by water-enhancing gel products.

CFA will continue the research and development of water-enhancing systems until it can confidently incorporate a validated system into the fleet.

Evidence-based tanker crew protection system improvements and bushfire situational awareness training continue to help make tanker-based firefighting crews safer on the fireground in the unexpected occurrence of a bushfire entrapment and burnover.

To watch a video of burnover research, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ONQSjkRWi8&t=2s>



GRASSFIRE BEHAVIOUR

Understanding the effect of grassland curing on fire behaviour is needed to accurately estimate a fire's rate of spread.

One of the keys to understanding fire behaviour in grasslands is to know the annual growing cycle and, in particular, how grass curing affects the biomass available for combustion. Grass curing is the annual drying out of grass. As curing progresses, the fuel moisture content gradually decreases and the proportion and amount of dead material increases, raising the general flammability of grassland.

The proportion of dead fuel material in grassland is typically described as the curing percentage. Grass curing is understood to have a significant effect on fire behaviour in grasslands. In Australia, where grasslands cover approximately 75 per cent of the country, the degree of curing has been used as an input into the calculation of the grassland fire danger index (GFDI) and grassfire spread models.

A large field-based experimental burning program over a range of grassland fuel types was conducted to quantify the effect of curing on the rate of fire spread in partially cured grasslands. The experiments paired partially cured plots alongside artificially-fully-cured plots to observe and measure the difference in fire behaviour under the same weather conditions.

Experimental results found:

- grassfires will propagate at lower curing levels than anticipated
- current fire behaviour models under-predict the rate of fire spread in partially-cured grasslands.

These findings have been updated in fire behaviour analysts' tools and will be incorporated in the new national Fire Danger Rating model.



There are three different examples of the paired experimental grassland burns:

Ballarat: <https://youtu.be/poup5LpKClw>
Braidwood: <https://youtu.be/EqobwYgL578>
Wangaratta: <https://youtu.be/QJ5SFjNiOc>



Quick thinking saved Steve's life

When Dundas Group Officer Steve Lewis suffered a stroke in March, his awareness of the signs combined with an effective response at Western District Health Service meant the difference between a full recovery and permanent disability or death.

On the morning of his stroke, Steve was catching up on CFA paperwork.

"I'd been to a couple of long CFA meetings the day and night before and everything was normal until I went to turn a light off and my arm just wouldn't move," said Steve.

"I had pins and needles and felt a bit dizzy. I tried to talk and could hear that my speech was lazy, so I rang my wife Jill at work and brother Andrew and immediately called an ambulance."

While Steve was in the ambulance, the Hamilton Hospital Stroke Team was alerted so staff were on standby when he arrived. Through a videoconferencing unit, a Royal Melbourne stroke specialist was soon discussing administering a clot-busting drug with Steve and Jill.

"The drug worked and in about an hour-and-a-half I could move my arm a little. Within 48 hours I could move normally, and within a few weeks I was back on light duties. It was a perfect result," said Steve.

"I just wanted to tell everyone what happened because it's such an important story.

"With the clot-busting drug every minute counts, as there is only a 4.5-hour window for the drug to be administered from when you first notice the symptoms.

"It's really important to recognise and act on the symptoms. I'm lucky because in CFA, along with all other emergency first responders, observational skills are trained into you. We are taught to look for signs of stroke, heart attack and other medical emergencies.

"When it's happening to you it's a bit different, but it's imperative you make the decision to call Triple Zero (000) very quickly."



PHOTO: COURTESY OF WESTERN DISTRICT HEALTH SERVICE

STORY GRACE QUINN

Quad bikes – control is an illusion

At a roadside fuel reduction burn in February 2017, there was an incident involving a quad bike fitted with a rollover operator protective device (OPD).

With the burn underway, the quad bike became stuck in a ditch which the rider couldn't see because of tall roadside grass. After several attempts, the rider managed to get out of the ditch with only minor damage to the quad bike. The incident highlighted the potential for a rollover and the role of an OPD in protecting riders from serious injury.

Quad bikes have been used by CFA for roadside fuel reduction for many years. They are an efficient way to speed up roadside burning compared with the alternative method of firefighters walking along with drip torches. But around 10 people die every year, and many more are injured, in quad

bike accidents on Australian farms. The emotional and financial cost of these deaths and injuries to farm families and communities is immense.

Quad bikes are marketed and sold as all-terrain vehicles even though they don't have all-terrain capability and are inherently unstable. Manufacturers' instruction books include warnings and explain the limitations of quad bikes, but people still have the false perception that quad bikes are stable, robust machines with go-anywhere capability. The truth is you are never fully in control of a quad bike.

To mitigate against the risk of accident and injury, CFA strongly suggests all quad bikes should be fitted with an OPD, riders must wear helmets, be experienced, demonstrate competence, and be endorsed by their brigade captain to use a quad bike.

Take care of your mental health

“Mental wellbeing is more than just the absence of mental illness; it’s about thriving and positive mental health as well,” said Annette Molloy, Manager Organisational Wellbeing.

“Looking after your wellbeing is important, and there are several things we can do to improve our own wellbeing. *The Five Ways to Wellbeing* is a great starting point for this.”

The New Economics Foundation’s *The Five Ways to Wellbeing* has simple but valuable activities.

Connect

Connect with family and friends, in the workplace and the community. Building relationships and connecting with others in a meaningful way can be really valuable.

Be active

Whether it’s walking the dog, gardening, playing sport or going to the gym, moving your body can invigorate you. Find something that you enjoy and get going.

Take notice

Take notice of your surroundings, your feelings and the environment. Practising mindfulness is all about enjoyment and appreciation. Savour a meal, a moment, a beautiful view or time with a loved one.

Keep learning

Try something new or challenge yourself. Perhaps there’s a DIY project you’re interested in or a short course you’ve always wanted to do. Sign up now!

Give

Giving and showing kindness to others can be as rewarding for you as it is for them. It may be a small favour for a friend or a random act of kindness towards a stranger.

“*The Five Ways to Wellbeing* also links back to some of the reasons people join CFA,” said Annette, “CFA is a community. Our members connect, support one another and share experiences on a daily basis. Being a CFA member is about looking after your neighbours and mates and meaningfully contributing to society.”

To find out about our wellbeing workshops, phone **9262 8409** or email wellbeing.intake@cfa.vic.gov.au



PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMUN

Healthwatch health checks

Mount Evelyn Fire Brigade has participated in Healthwatch health checks almost every year since the program began in 2009.

Firefighter and Brigade Health and Safety Coordinator Glenn Sharp organises his brigade’s health checks and is an advocate for health and wellbeing around the station.

“The health checks give you a standard to start off with, and then you can always improve,” said Glenn. “Over the years you can see the small changes. More people should be putting their name down to do it.”

Healthwatch health checks are free and confidential and support members and their families to understand and reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes. The health checks consist of:

- measures of height, weight, waist circumference and blood pressure
- a finger-prick blood test to assess blood glucose, cholesterol and triglycerides
- an online questionnaire

- a discussion of your results with a health professional
- a healthy meal after the session.

This year a number of brigades, including the Mt Evelyn Fire Brigade, are hosting a Type 2 diabetes prevention session after their health checks.

“It was a very good eye opener” said Glenn, “I think everybody learned a little bit more.”

The sessions are delivered by Diabetes Victoria facilitators, who give useful information to members about chronic disease prevention, healthy eating and weight control, physical activity, stress management, improving sleep and goal setting.

“I think they all learned a few little tricks and bits and pieces. Overall, it was well worth it,” said Glenn.

Brigades can book health check sessions by contacting the health team on 9262 8843. To find out more about the diabetes sessions, visit esohealthwatch.gov.au or phone **9262 8843**.

Health and safety coordinators

Brigade health and safety coordinators are not alone. There's a growing network of informed group health and safety coordinators (GHSCs) working with them, and together they are making a difference in their districts.

CFA introduced brigade health and safety coordinators (BHSCs) in 2014 and this year a brigade or group may have elected a member to the role for the first time. New BHSCs don't have to be experts in safety because CFA provides training and tools to help them make sure their roles are relevant to their brigade management teams (BMT).

Joint BHSC and GHSC awareness sessions have been run across the state with more than 470 members attending including many captains and other BMT members.

Introductory information and awareness sessions take around two hours, and are held at venues that suit the group or district. BHSCs and GHSCs get to meet other like-minded members and hear anecdotes about activities undertaken to help promote a positive health and safety culture. They will learn the important role they play to ensure all incidents, near misses and hazards to be reported. BHSCs can also get involved by conducting inspections at their brigade, especially for Section 29 audits.

District 14 Health, Safety and Environment Adviser Tina Marchington said each person holding a BHSC role brings something different to it.

"I love the diversity of members who take on the BHSC role," Tina said. "When BHSCs share information we all learn."

According to Andrew Bartels (pictured), BHSC for Narre Warren Fire Brigade, "It may be smaller things that the BHSC decides to take on. For example, a BHSC can ensure that a safety share is on the agenda at brigade meetings."

Andrew also suggests that, "If your brigade doesn't meet formally, you could forward relevant documents to members via email. When safety alerts are released I'm able to communicate them to members almost immediately and place a copy on our safety noticeboard."

BHSCs receive a hard copy of the *BHSC Toolkit* for reference. Although this toolkit is available on Brigades Online, a paper copy can be useful when the BHSC returns to their brigade following the awareness session. It's suggested they start completing some of the tasks within their broad role description.

BMTs are welcoming BHSCs' input to highlight issues and share observations. BHSCs can organise Healthwatch health monitoring sessions for members and even run joint sessions with neighbouring brigades where families can also be involved. There's no limit to what each BHSC chooses to undertake.

The BHSC sessions are run by a Health, Safety and Environment Adviser. Contact your local BASO, district office or adviser to find out when the next BHSC session is planned near you.



Pumps and PNG

What's the connection between CFA water pumps and Papua New Guinea?

An innovative collaboration between CFA's Warrnambool District Mechanical Office (DMO), Rotary and the PNG village Embessa recycles obsolete CFA water pumps so they can be used for pumping village water.

Rotary's Tony Austin, who came up with the idea, approached Warrnambool DMO Officer-in-Charge Pat Hyland.

"The main focus will be to help a village in an extremely remote part of PNG get access to clean water for domestic use," said Tony.

Currently, the villagers have to cart water up to two kilometres from a river which becomes contaminated during flooding. Works on the new bore and pumping system began in July.

"It's great CFA was able to help this project," said Pat. "Although the Gaam Mk 2 pumps had reached the end of their CFA service life, they can still support people in another country. Some obsolete 32mm canvas hose was sourced from district stores and sent with the three pumps as well."

Pictured, right, is one of the pumps with DMO Allan Woodhams.

Have you considered how your brigade can support the environment? A number of brigades have introduced initiatives including solar, sensor lighting, water tanks and grey water recycling.

For more information or if you have suggestions about ways CFA can support the environment, contact Environment Manager Mark Nan Tie: m.nantie@cfa.vic.gov.au



HOW BRIGADES CAN HELP

In the field

- Protect waterways from pollution by containing fire water run-off.
- Protect native vegetation by using established tracks where possible. For fire prevention works such as planned burning, consult your vegetation management officer.
- When filling your tanker avoid cross contamination with foam.

At the fire station

- Dispose of old foam drums and old foams properly.
- Recycle paper, toner and cardboard.

- Optimise the building's heating, ventilating and cooling systems.
- Consider installing solar panels.
- Install LED lighting to save electricity.
- Encourage members to turn off lights and equipment when not being used.
- Install timers and sensors on equipment.
- Buy energy-efficient appliances.
- Turn off computers and monitors at the end of the day.
- Reduce packaging.

Missy from Mannerim

All right, so it's a stretch to call Missy, the blond Pomeranian/Chihuahua cross, a Peer Support Officer at Mannerim Fire Brigade, but she does love a pat and a tummy rub.

Twelve-year-old Missy comes as a package deal with 4th Lieutenant and Community Safety Coordinator Sandra Beasley and her husband Communications Officer Mick.

"Missy loves to be wherever we are," said Sandra, "and regularly attends our Sunday radio scheds. Brigade members are disappointed if she doesn't turn up.

"She also comes with us to the District 7 and Rural State Champs every year. We're the only brigade in the group with Juniors and some of them have parents in other brigades, so she's well known in the district."

In fact, though, Missy thinks she's a farm dog.

"She watches Mick like a hawk to see what he's wearing and that tells her whether he's going to the farm. She rides on the tractor and tries to round up sheep although she can't catch them."



PHOTO: MICK BEASLEY

Dianne Clark, Nerrena Fire Brigade, District 9

faces of
CFA



PHOTO: ROBERT CLARK

What are your CFA roles?

I'm the secretary of Nerrena Fire Brigade and the Strzelecki Group. I am also one of the staging area management team for District 9. We make sure the crews on vehicles returning from the fireground are fed, watered and rested, the tankers refueled, and generally oversee the comings and goings of all personnel and vehicles.

I've been turning out since I joined and step up as a crew leader if everyone else steps back. It's whoever is available for the job and it's what our training is all about: safety of the crew, managing hydration and fatigue and making sure nothing's bothering anyone.

If you see someone dragging hose on the fireground, make sure you help them immediately or get someone else to help because it's an exhausting job in the heat. It's all basic firefighting.

Why did you join?

In 1990, a neighbour told me the brigade needed a secretary. I was no longer involved with school council and said okay.

We're a small rural brigade averaging about six to eight incidents a year and we keep residents informed about issues such as

registering their burn-offs. Our residents try to cooperate and keep the vegetation down around houses before the fire season, so it's not too hard a task.

What was the first incident you attended?

It was a house fire in Leongatha in mid-evening. There was no fire spread and we stayed outside to suppress the fire and help the other brigades.

It was a winter's night and freezing, and the most impressive thing was a hose coming off its coupling and drenching one of the firefighters.

What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

In January 2009, I remember driving home from work and looking across to Mirboo North where our brigade had turned out earlier in the afternoon and seeing that incredible mushroom cloud forming where the fire was creating its own weather. An awesome sight.

Mostly, though, things happen and you just get on and deal with them.

What CFA training have you got the most out of?

I really enjoy the constant learning and imparting the experience I do have to others.

We did some training not long ago where we were shown the back-up required for BA brigades and what our brigade, without BA, can do to assist.

Sometimes there are odd details that stick in your mind. We trained on a mobile training prop at Ruby and were asked which way to turn on the fog nozzle. Darren Hardacre instructed it was 'left for life' and it's something helpful that you'll never forget.

Who have been your mentors in CFA?

Vince Campisi. He'd been a volunteer for many years when I joined and was very encouraging of everyone learning to drive the tanker. He made sure I got plenty of driving experience and I got my endorsed license the year I joined.

He's a Vietnam veteran and is always stressing 'look after your mates'. Make sure everyone is safe so there are no accidents which might have been avoided.

He also gave us all those prompts and reminders you need when you're new to firefighting.

The basics are also the most essential things to learn.

What has been the highlight of your time in CFA?

It's all just been thoroughly enjoyable. Every year has been a good year. It's a challenge to get new members, but those of us in the brigade enjoy the companionship and helping new members along.

INTERVIEW BY LEITH HILLARD

Euroa celebrates 125 years of service



There were three days of celebrations in June to commemorate 125 years by one of the region's strongest and most highly-respected fire brigades.

On the Queen's Birthday long weekend, Euroa Fire Brigade put on quite a show for the local community and several former members of the brigade.

Around 1,000 people gathered for the Friday night torchlight procession. The large crowd packed the Euroa Memorial Oval to watch 16 brigades including Nagambie, Shepparton, Molka, Strathbogie, Benalla, Mooroopna, Mansfield, Seymour, Broadford, Wallan and Kelvin View, march with the Euroa Citizens Band into the precinct, proudly led by Euroa brigade.

Then a fireworks display, the first in Euroa for 25 years, lit up the sky and was a huge hit with the crowd.

Later on Friday evening, Euroa brigade hosted brigade members at a function at the George Hunter Rooms at the Memorial Oval, where presentations were made to Euroa Juniors.

A 125th gala dinner, catered by Euroa Primary School, was held on Saturday night for around 130 people, who were entertained by the hilarious Singers for Hire group. Awards were handed out throughout

the evening including for brigade service and life memberships, Euroa Firefighter of the Year (awarded to Second Lieutenant Tyson Thomson) and National Medals.

On Sunday, the brigade opened its fire station to more than 300 people for a family fun day which included face painting and a jumping castle for the kids, educational activities and attractions, as well as displays of old trucks and District 22's rehab unit, and a display about community safety.

Euroa Fire Brigade Captain Damon Rieusset said it was quite an achievement to make it to 125 years.

"The support and recognition Euroa brigade has received over the past few years has been second to none," Damon said.

"Our aim has always been to serve the community in any way we can, and the 125th celebrations were an opportunity to thank the community for their support by bringing them into our world and putting on a show that people will, hopefully, be talking about for a long time."

A 125th year history book was produced by the brigade containing stories and photos from the past.

STORY ANTHONY CINI



Left: Euroa firefighters (from left) Bec Noye, Les Burke and Phil Hawkey march in the torchlight procession

Right: David Russell from the Fire Services Museum

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF EUROA GAZETTE



The hills and valleys of comms

Burrowye Fire Brigade is 76 years old and Bernadette Cheshire has been the communications officer for 40 years.

"In the early days we had two old marine radios which were like CBs," said Bernadette, pictured right with husband Noel. "During the 1985 Thologolong fire which changed direction five minutes before it got to us, Noel and I were given CFA radios.

"After that, CFA put a base station in the house and gave Noel a portable. Everyone in the valley bought CB radios for their farms but they also get used when the phones go down to talk to neighbours up and down the valley. We have a UHF in each of our vehicles as well as four portables and I still have the CFA base station and pager as well as the UHF base station."

With a population of about 10 families in an undulating-to-hilly valley on a back road between Walwa and Albury, communication black spots present a challenge.

"Mobile coverage – zip! You might get service six kilometres up the road," continued Bernadette, "but what you don't have you don't miss. Before VicFire, when Noel was captain, we mapped where he could go to get radio contact. "I know by the voice on the other end which radio to answer. I know most of the members' telephone numbers off the top of my head.

"Most farms have paddock names. We have at least 15 with names like Ram Hill, Bull Paddock, Sunnyside, the Old Post Office and Irrigation Paddock.

"When an incident is called in, I do a location estimate based on the information and description given."

The couple, with son Wayne, have 95 years of combined service to CFA.

Based in Wangaratta, Communications Technical Services Officer Warren Brown, pictured right, recently installed a new CFA radio and aerial at Burrowye which has coverage off a linked repeater from Jingellic via Mt Mittamatite and into Corryong, the group headquarters. He's one of 13 field techs who also operate as comms subject matter experts in ICCs.

Warren's patch is usually districts 22, 23 and 24 but, if a comms emergency arises anywhere in the state when he's the duty officer one week in every eight, "I go for a drive.

"It's all about a brigade's ability to respond to an incident, so first thing we do is work with them over the phone for a solution. This may be as simple as using a portable radio to talk to VicFire but other times we'll have to attend to rectify the problem immediately. We do our best to treat all brigades equally no matter where they are in the state."

Warren's regular workload over an annual 40,000 kilometres travelled includes dealing with electronic fails from fair wear and tear and installation of comms equipment in new and renovated fire stations.

Regular preventive maintenance includes visiting CFA's 120 incident management repeaters on windswept hills. A site like Mt Big Ben near Yackandandah has comms co-located for CFA, DELWP, SES and St John and NSW ambulance services, each with their own rack holding a radio and a duplexer which combines a receiver and transmitter into the antenna. For the sites with no mains power, the normal battery system is replaced with solar panels which can operate without sunshine for three weeks.

"We use telemetry to remotely monitor the battery, temperature and other issues in the racks," said Warren.

Members won't be surprised by his communication tips: "listen before speaking; think before speaking. When you're on a radio channel, pause, wait for the beeps and then go ahead."

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY BERNADETTE CHESHIRE



PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

Perfect conditions for seasonal volunteering



PHOTO: LYNDON BRADLEY

With a population of about 100 in summer but up to 8000 on a perfect winter day, Mt Hotham-Dinner Plain Fire Brigade needs an innovative volunteering model.

The key is attracting both seasonal and year-round volunteers and keeping them interested, according to Officer in Charge Lyndon Bradley who's enjoying his second winter living and working at the fire station.

"We have 4500 beds in Hotham and another 2500 in Dinner Plain 12 kilometres away," said Lyndon. "We have three trucks including an over-snow pumper and tanker at the former and a pumper tanker at the latter.

"We have six year-round members and a total of 23 operational members this winter including ski and snowboard instructors who then head to Japan, Canada and the US for their winters. A lot of them have a real passion for the mountains and the lifestyle and a good energy comes with that.

"Our members range in age from mid-20s to their 60s including four operational women. We have the village bus driver, retired people managing lodges, business owners and staff in guest services. We also have two current MFB firefighters up here managing lodges and enjoying volunteering.

"Brett Boatman was the long-standing operations officer before me and he helped build a good culture. Members can come and enjoy training on a Monday night which isn't just skills maintenance but skills acquisition. We held a crew leaders' course just before winter and we're in the process of running hazmat awareness and driving vehicles under operational conditions.

"It's a whole big family at the resort and our members also enjoy the social side."

As far as Lyndon's concerned, it's all downhill (skiing, that is).

Captain Larry Doyle is a ski patroller who responds to accidents on the slopes and provides first aid. He's been in the leadership role for 20 years and remains as enthusiastic as ever about the brigade.

"Lyndon does the training and mentoring and is backed up by some of our members to deliver a revised Minimum Skills package," he said.

"A new seasonal volunteer could be qualified within the first season and ready to turn out by their second season.

"The MFB members are having a good time and they share their expertise with us.

Of course, the risk up here is more structural than bushfire so their background is an added benefit and they provide us with a few training laughs.

"We have six drivers for the over-snow which requires a different form of driving and can also be used during summer. We also have a few up-and-comers in the brigade support team and we're fundraising for a new FCV.

"We're keeping things on the boil and standing on our own two feet."

For year-round recruitment, the brigade is targeting the Ramada hotel and resort chain which owns 25 houses in Dinner Plain, although some summer workers aren't residents but travel up daily from Harrierville. They can be kept busy through the quieter seasons servicing bushwalkers to Mt Feathertop and sporting teams doing high-altitude training.

Victoria Police has two officers full-time on the mountain while Ambulance Victoria has one.

An average winter sees about 15 turnouts with chimney fires the main drama, though Larry also cautions against the perennial threat that is burnt toast.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



Left: (from left to right) Group Officer John Pearce, Captain Rob Schomacker, Darren Burren, Captain Tony Stephens, Captain Josh Gamble

PHOTOS: LEITH HILLARD

All for one at Malmsbury

When the Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre (YJC) opened a high security unit in 2015 with 45 beds for 18 to 21 years olds, the number of annual turnouts for Malmsbury dramatically increased from an average of 50 to about 160. The workload isn't shouldered by the town's brigade alone, however, but absorbed within the wider Kyneton Group, in particular Kyneton, plus Taradale from Mt Alexander Group.

"They have it all under control," said Operations Officer Andy Waterson, "and that's a tough ask because Kyneton is already reasonably busy with around 240 calls annually.

"Malmsbury Captain Tony Stephens is very switched on. He's a good strategic thinker. He's provided strong leadership to the brigade and community by keeping locals well informed. He's been involved in the development and implementation of our response plan for the YJC and plays a vital role in local liaison and command during incidents."

Members of Malmsbury saw each stage of the build and conducted training inside. They also provided feedback to ensure, for example, that there is sufficient room for the Bendigo ladder platform and heavy pumpers to access the facility.

YJC callouts generally take two forms: a standard alarm activation is the most common, while non-standard is a call to a structure fire, disturbance or riot. The largest disturbance came in January this year when multiple fires were lit and a mass breakout led to escapees running across paddocks, car chases along the freeway and a local carjacking.

"We stage at the fire station one-and-a-half minutes from the facility along with the ambos and sometimes the police," said Tony (pictured above, second from right). "Andy, an available ops officer, or I go to the facility as a CFA commander and become part of the EMT [emergency management team] while Kyneton Group works on resourcing from the LCF [local command facility] which is very well staffed. They make sure the local area still has fire coverage and coordinate changeover crews and logistics. The EMT relays comms through the LCF back to Malmsbury while the CFA commander maintains the lines of

communication back to the rostered duty officer.

"Only when there's a level of control at the facility will we enter. The risk to our members has increased and we never put them in where the clients are. There's a lot of verbal abuse and threats and the officer in charge has a duty of care as to who goes in or whether we go in at all. The plans and processes we've put in place aim to mitigate any risk."

"We take a progression perspective," said Kyneton Captain Josh Gamble (above, far right), "partnering across the brigades where we have a few new lieutenants and building up their levels of experience. Join our brigades and you'll be busy and there's satisfaction in managing that."

Just listen to the upbeat tone of a Malmsbury brigade Facebook post from June: "A good night at training... followed up by a Justice Centre alarm call. Three appliances fully crewed turning out in 30 seconds!"

Pride and professionalism on show in under a minute.

"There was local anger after the mass breakout – not surprising – but the brigade and group have done really well to maintain a good attitude and our response hasn't deteriorated one bit," continued Andy. "Malmsbury members are perhaps the most visible locals to have that direct contact with the facility and the community looks to them to maintain a calm and commonsense attitude. They've never taken a backwards step."

STORY LEITH HILLARD



Wattle Glen's major extension

Back in 2014, it looked like Wattle Glen brigade's ambitious project to rebuild the station was going to become a reality. The complexity of the site required detailed analysis and consideration of various options to come up with a viable solution.

By mid-2016, Captain Stephen Gaunt realised just how much work was involved to ensure the upgrade delivered the best possible bang for the buck.

The brigade pledged \$100,000 to the overall project, which boiled down to a lot of sausage sizzles, Christmas tree sales in conjunction with Diamond Creek brigade, and tireless fundraising efforts in the local area by a hard-working auxiliary.

"Wattle Glen has always been closely associated with the local community and we've found our efforts don't go unrewarded," Stephen said.

"We have a growing primary school, a large aged care facility and a lot of other vital community infrastructure within our boundary, and it's up to us to protect and support that and every resident to the best of our ability.

"The upgraded station will allow us to do that more efficiently and effectively."

The start of building work followed dozens of meetings with the CFA Land and Building team, CFA Operational Support, and numerous meetings and hundreds of phone calls with Nillumbik Council, Melbourne Water, VicRoads, arborists and architects.

Through the whole building process, Wattle Glen brigade has remained operational.

"The jobs don't stop coming in just because the station is being rebuilt," Stephen said.

"Through our close links with our community, we negotiated to move to a temporary location at the nearby Scout Hall."

Coinciding with the station rebuild, the brigade took delivery of a new medium tanker through the VESEP program, to which members had pledged another \$50,000 of brigade-raised money to replace Tanker 2, an ageing brigade-owned truck.

The slab has been extended to three bays, there's a member turn-out room instead of members having to gear up next to moving

trucks, a breathing apparatus maintenance room (instead of the kitchen sink) and a meeting room so training courses can be run more effectively.

"I have a few more grey hairs from the process, but in the end it's all about the community," said Stephen.



PHOTO: STEPHEN GAUNT

The real Kaptain Koala calls time



PHOTO: TONY CATTERMOLE

In 1987 Keith Harms became captain of Beechworth Fire Brigade, and soon after adopted the nickname Kaptain Koala.

"Now CFA should pay me, because they use Captain Koala as the official mascot," Keith joked.

Keith believes being a good talker and being able to give orders has been the secret to his success as captain over the past 30 years.

"I've got the gift of the gab. When I first became captain I was a bit green but I picked up lot of skills. I never gave an order that I wasn't prepared to do myself, everyone had a voice and if anyone had a problem my door was always open."

Keith has served Beechworth brigade for more than 45 years and was awarded the National Emergency Medal in 2015.

Fire has threatened the north-east community several times over the years, with the 2009 fires the most recent. However, he thinks a fire in 2003 that started in the Buckland Gap and moved towards Stanley and Beechworth was his worst experience.

"It was the most frightening fire I have ever seen, but it was a great honour to be there and protect the local community," he said.

Keith credits the support of his wife Margaret, who is also an active member of the brigade, in helping him to carry out the role of captain for such a long time.

"We've been in the brigade nearly all our married life and she's been a great support to me. She helps me so much and if I have any problems she's the one that helps me work it all out.

"If you haven't got the support of your partner, you're no good at all."

STORY TONY CATTERMOLE

Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu*

Mallacoota Fire Brigade Fourth Lieutenant Bruce Pascoe is also an award-winning author. Most notably, his recent book *Dark Emu: Black Seeds – Agriculture or Accident* won both Book of the Year at the 2016 NSW Premier's Literary Awards and the inaugural Indigenous Prize.

Following the work of researchers such as Bill Gammage, *Dark Emu* returns to the early explorer records which spoke of the Aboriginal who "...tilled his land and cultivated his pastures with fire". The book piles up evidence that, rather than pre-colonial Aboriginal people being hunter-gatherers, they were in fact sowing, harvesting, irrigating and storing.

In the chapter 'Fire', Bruce examines how Aboriginal use of fire changed the vegetation type over tens of thousands of years, as reflected in tool technology, and increased the productivity of the land. First-contact accounts talk of Aboriginal people skilfully and systematically using mosaic burning for cropping; something that surveyor and explorer Thomas Mitchell said ended because fire was not "desirable among the fences of the settlers".

"Mitchell also talked about coming across a sea of yellow plants which were yam daisies on the volcanic plains of Victoria – the best agricultural soil he'd ever seen," said Bruce in conversation with *Brigade* magazine. "Ironically, he said that God had prepared this land for Europeans to seize when, in fact, he was looking at croplands; a massive market garden with a plant domesticated by Aboriginal people as a critical protein source.

"Within about 18 months of the introduction of sheep and the exclusion of controlled fire, the soil was compacted and that crop utterly disappeared.

"Old timers in the bush remember stories told by their grandfathers about riding from Bairnsdale to Sale and being able to see the horizon. Again, they're stories that describe a managed, park-like land which has now disappeared."

Dark Emu also discusses tree core analysis which "indicates that wild fires in [mountain ash] forests were largely unknown before the arrival of Europeans. Within years of the Aborigines being prevented from operating their traditional fire regimens, the countryside was overwhelmed by understory species."

But Bruce is encouraged by the cultural change he sees in CFA.

"As members we concentrate on saving private property, but there's a greater diversity of views

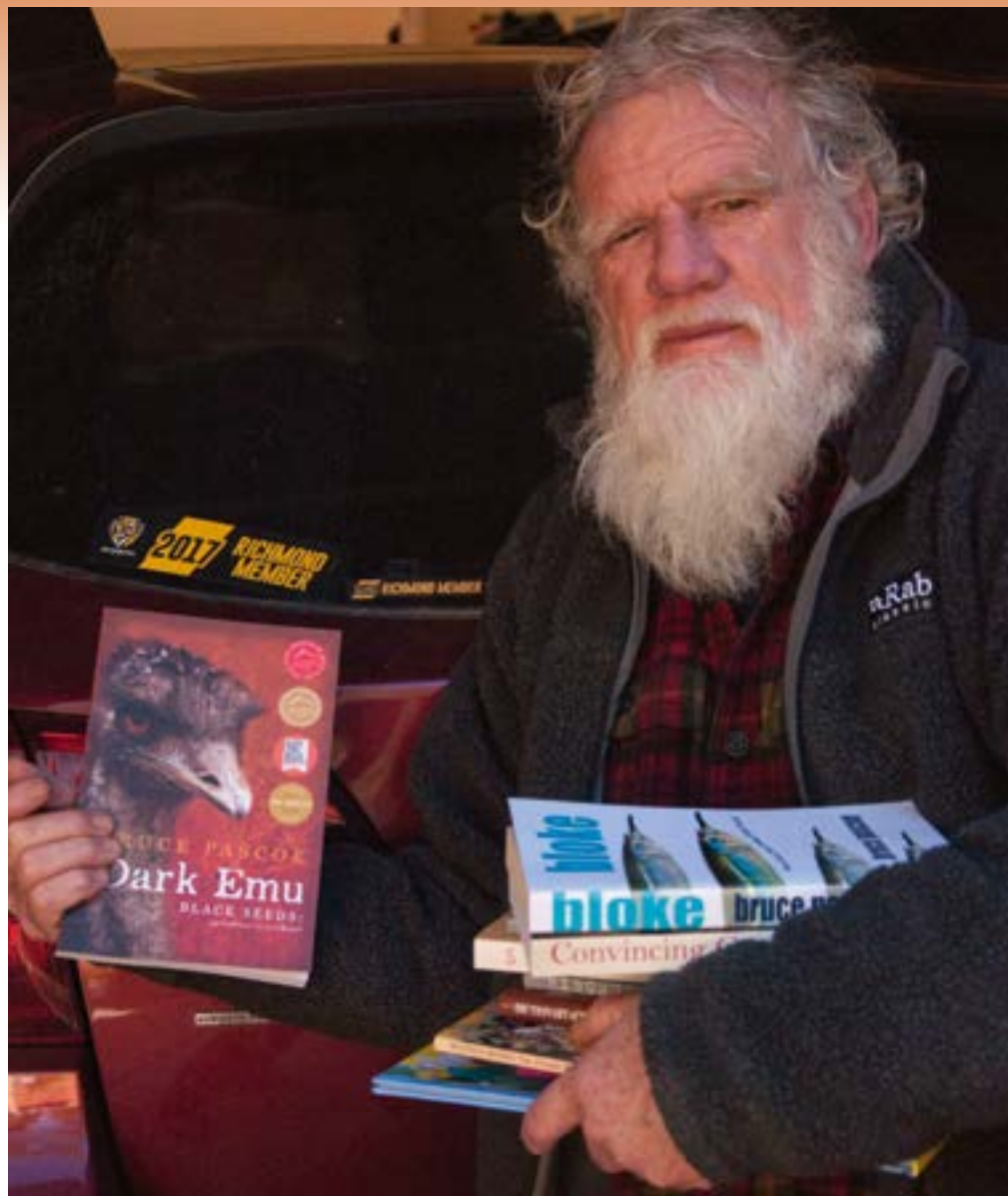


PHOTO: LYN HARWOOD

now arising from the membership. CFA is an important influencer and learning traditional burning practices [see page 18] is a step in the right direction."

Discoveries at a significant cultural site in Kakadu National Park in 2017 indicate that Aboriginal people were in Australia at least 65,000 years ago, adding some 18,000 years to the previous archaeological record. Bruce is aware of a dig at Warrnambool that further moves that record out to 80,000 years and more. "There's the concept that we've always been here," he said. "It's contestable but it's not heresy. The Brewarrina fish traps are the world's oldest

human construction. We have the oldest evidence of human habitation. We should all share in the pride that this country was a leader in human development and the invention of society."

Bruce is of Tasmanian, Bunurong and Yuin heritage. Looking at Bruce in the photo, above, you might suspect that his country is the hallowed turf of the MCG but, in fact, he lives on country at Gipsy Point.

Dark Emu is published by Magabala Books and is widely available through bookshops or can be purchased online.

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Forum encourages women

CFA West Region recently hosted the first region-wide Women in CFA forum. The aim of the forum was to give women the opportunity to share real-life experiences of CFA, including their reasons for joining CFA.

Participants representing 20 brigades were welcomed by District 15 Operations Manager Brett Boatman, who spoke of his roles and experiences within CFA since joining as a Junior member 35 years ago.

CFA Executive Manager Community Safety Gwynne Brennan shared her personal struggles of working in male-dominated industries and her subsequent roles in CFA as a volunteer and staff member. She described the support she had received and the times when no support was offered, and how she had dealt with these situations.

CFA Volunteer Sustainability Team members Kimberley Taylor and Laura Tierney from North East Region did a presentation about the development and implementation of the District 24 Women's Reference Group. The group was formed to encourage and support women's participation in CFA and to give them opportunities to influence decision making at a local level. This presentation generated a great deal of discussion about how this type of group could be established in West Region.

Participants shared their thoughts and ideas about how CFA staff and local brigades can provide more inclusive and welcoming environments for our existing members and those community members wanting to become involved with CFA.



PHOTO: CHELSEA CRUICKSHANK

"These activities unquestionably have provided us with some amazing insights and ideas that we can look to implement locally to support increased diversity in our membership," said Regional Manager Volunteer Sustainability Raelene Williams.

Feedback from participants showed that women in CFA want to contribute at a higher level, and it highlights the importance of hosting events that allow this to happen.

STORY GAIL HORSTED

Turriff-ic Torpeys

From father Angus (pictured right) to son Doug to cousin Damian, the captaincy of Turriff Fire Brigade was held in the Torpey family from the brigade's establishment in 1944 until this year.

"But you don't take it on because of the name but because there's a job to be done," emphasised Damian (pictured far right), "and I thought I'd have a go at it. My policy was that I'd do the bureaucratic politics of the brigade as long as we had the people to do the fires, and [wife] Cheryl did all the computer work.

"Speed is only six kilometres from us and Tempy another six and we work in closely with each other. The three brigades used to form one team for the championships. The major risk for us is a lightning strike in the Mallee scrub and between the three brigades we can get about 10 people to respond pretty quickly.

"We were one of the first brigades to get a new fire shed and I'm pretty proud of it. The community hall was condemned and we had to knock it down but the station is now available for meetings for the whole community. We have Christmas parties there and it really keeps the community bonded."



Damian was captain for 25 years and remains a Southern Mallee deputy group officer. He can be satisfied that he's handed on a healthy brigade with six young members signing up at the last meeting.

"I'm leaving with a few regrets but [new captain] Michael Grace put his hand up," continued Damian. "When a new, younger member offers to do it, you don't turn it down. It doesn't hurt to have new blood.



PHOTO: CHERYL TORPEY

"It's important to have communication at the forefront and it applies the same in the brigade: you have to be able to talk with each other."

Damian has four children and his brother Michael has five, so there could be another Torpey working their way up through the ranks.

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Triple response from Wyatt



For Port Albert Second Lieutenant and Junior Leader Wyatt Kilgower, the love of volunteering has generated yet more volunteering. The boy who joined the fire brigade at 12 for “the friendship side” is now also a 21-year-old chief instructor at Woodside Surf Life Saving Club, a role he’s been working up to since he was awarded his bronze medallion at 16.

Teaching Basic Beach Management involves passing on knowledge about where to place the flags, identifying rips and conflict resolution, while teaching advanced resuscitation strengthens his determination to be a career paramedic.

Wyatt has a few more years before he completes the paramedic course online through the Australian Paramedical College of Queensland. Students must complete 160 hours placement in a clinical field and Wyatt is already on the way to ticking off that requirement, again as a volunteer.

“I wanted to do a hands-on course,” he said, “so I have my Certificate 2 in Medical Response and did a Code 1 driving course. I’m now one of eight fully-trained volunteer ambulance community officers turning out of Yarram branch with a paramedic.

“That sometimes means helping someone I know in need. You turn up to anything from a broken leg to a heart attack and get to see a lot behind the scenes of the emergency services and of your town, just as you do as a CFA vol.

“Same with surf life saving. Woodside has rips and big waves straight from Bass Strait; there’s no protection from the weather. We drag Nippers out of rips each summer. No matter how hard you plan, the sea will always throw up complications.

“I used to be scared of first aid because patients are usually not happy or calm and sometimes you can’t help them, but I tend to be pretty relaxed and never get too stressed. I can keep my mind on the job.”

With all these achievements under his belt, it’s no wonder he was both a finalist in the CFA Volunteer Excellence Award at the mid-year Victorian Young Volunteer of the Year Awards, and the Wellington Shire Council 2017 Young Citizen of the Year.

The latter acknowledged the important role Wyatt played in ensuring young locals have a voice on council.

“There are about 300 children at school in Yarram but there was a hole with entertainment for young people,” continued Wyatt. “There was just the fast-food joint or there’s a two-hour round trip for a night out in Sale. We went after Freeza funding for a youth committee and teenage discos have taken off.

“There’s so much you can do for the town you live in and there are an insane number of qualifications you can get through volunteering.”

STORY LEITH HILLARD



Gondola rescue training

In late July, during the annual maintenance shutdown of the Arthurs Seat Eagle gondola, CFA carried out specialised training to rescue occupants.

The Eagle has multiple backup systems and is regularly maintained, so having to evacuate occupants while in the air is very unlikely. However, the operators and emergency services take a proactive approach to ensure visitor safety.

Emergency services have to respond to a wide range of rescues involving cliffs, cranes, buildings, amusement park structures and various types of chairlift. This means our equipment and systems of work need to be adaptable.

Firefighters already trained in some areas of high-angle rescue practised accessing a cableway mid span, accessing a tower, and accessing a gondola to override the door locks and retrieve the occupants, while ensuring their safety and the safety of the firefighters.

The Eagle is an all-weather lift suitable for the young and old and those with disabilities, so firefighters worked through the simulated retrieval of children, infants (using a specialised paediatric carrier) and mobility-impaired patrons from the gondolas. This is to ensure we have the capability to retrieve all occupants.

On the day of the training a severe weather warning was issued for strong and damaging winds. The training proceeded and safety officers monitored the conditions. These weather conditions provided an excellent opportunity for learning how to respond to emergencies at height in strong winds.

STORY OPERATIONS OFFICER DARYL OWEN



PHOTO: RACHEL JENKINS

School fire with missing people

On an evening in May, Langwarrin, Cranbourne and Pearcedale brigades were paged to attend a structure fire with reported people missing at Cranbourne South Primary School. Thankfully, the incident wasn't a real call-out but an exercise planned in collaboration with the primary school.

The exercise assessed CFA's response to a structure fire at a semi-rural location, with a focus on testing pre-plans, command and control, multi-brigade response and interactions, and the emergency management procedures of the school.

School council members, brigade family members and community members helped make it feel like a real-life situation by acting as casualties with various injuries. Firefighters carried out search and rescue operations and medical response as the casualties were assessed at the triage sector. Ambulance Victoria also took part.

Twelve vehicles and around 50 brigade members attended. Being a complex exercise, there was a job for everyone – sector commanders, rescue officer in charge, BA operators, radio operators, pump operations and safety officers.

School Principal Monique Corcoran said the exercise allowed the school to interact with emergency services and test their emergency management plan in a controlled environment.

Incident Controller Steve Butler said this type of exercise had many benefits.



PHOTO: RYAN SAYERS

"These events allow us to train with our neighbouring brigades and other agencies, build relationships with our local community and test our emergency response capability," he said.

"We can identify where we need to improve and this helps us to focus our training."

STORY GERRY SHERIDAN

Off-road driver training at CFA

In the 1990s, CFA built an off-road driving track at Fiskville to teach drivers off-road techniques on sand and at water crossings, not commonly found in national parks and state forests where off-road driver training was being conducted.

In the early 2000s, there was an opportunity to build additional props to complete a course that met all the requirements of the national competency used by CFA for off-road driving. Importantly, it was an opportunity to teach new skills under controlled conditions in a safer environment. Drivers would first train using these props then go into an approved training location in a national park or state forest. By doing this, CFA members gained the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to drive in the real world.

Several years ago, work was carried out on a dam at Huntly Training Campus, and CFA took the opportunity to use the excavated soil to build an off-road course on CFA-owned land next to the hot fire training area. This course is in a natural bush setting and is used by many CFA districts and external clients.

Following a tragic incident at a fire in 2006 when Campbells Creek Captain Trevor Day died in a tanker rollover, CFA gave a commitment to the State Coroner to improve driver education at CFA. This led to a discussion paper that supported drivers of CFA vehicles having the required national competencies for both on-road and off-road driving. The discussion paper supported CFA having off-road driver education areas to help deliver these courses.

This discussion paper became the State Driver Education and Endorsement Program which recommended building several more sites across the state. Work is almost finished building an off-road training course at our Longerenong Campus (pictured). CFA is also finalising plans for a facility at West Sale and looking for land near our training campus at Peshurst. We would also like to build off-road courses at our remaining campuses.

The off-road driver education areas will have engineer-designed and constructed props to teach driving on cross slopes, moguls, timber steps, sand, hills, rocks, mud, water crossings and V mounds.

Each of these props has been designed to cater for field command vehicles and our firefighting fleet of tankers. The degree of difficulty provided by the props varies depending on the trainee's previous off-road driving experience.



Driving instructors across the state are very excited about these training areas because they provide a safe environment to teach our drivers and provide consistency in training across the state. Having the underpinning skills and techniques before entering a state forest or national park gives confidence to the drivers and instructors.

These courses are also intended to be used for skills maintenance and to give opportunities to members to undertake testing as part of recognising prior learning and experience.

To find out how you can learn off-road driving skills, contact your district training staff.

Safe driving.

STORY GLENN JENNINGS



Steep angle training with SES

‘Working as one’ is a guiding principle for emergency services organisations in Victoria, and the best way to achieve this is to share skills, knowledge and resources across the state.

A recent example of this took place in Bright where a steep angle rescue course for CFA and SES was run over two weekends. The course was funded by VICSES’s North East Regional Office.

Twelve participants from the SES Bright Unit and Mount Beauty Fire Brigade took part, guided by SES instructors Andrew Feagan and Bill Rouse and CFA instructors Mark Sharrock and Adrian Gutsche.

Over the first weekend, participants learned the theory of steep angle rescue and were introduced to the specialist equipment needed for this type of rescue. They then spent a day outdoors practising the technical details – knots, anchors, calls and procedures.

The second weekend took them out into the hills around Bright to practise their new skills in more realistic situations. This included scenarios where they had to transport casualties both up and down slopes.

“I’ve been really impressed by the commitment of this group to their learning,” said Andrew. “They arranged several practice nights in the fortnight between the weekends, both in their own facilities and together again at Bright.”

“This is a fantastic program,” said the Victoria Police Regional Emergency Management Inspector and Response Coordinator for Hume Region Paul Hargreaves. “VicPol is developing a database of resources that can be called upon in emergencies, particularly in the alps over winter. To have a group such as this, trained and available with equipment on hand, will provide great support for us if anything occurs.”

Senior Sergeant Doug Incoll of Bright Police can see that this training will reduce response times to incidents.

“When there’s a call for an abseiler rescue, we have to wait for the Search & Rescue [SAR] squad to send a team which can take up to four hours,” he said. “Having these people locally with the cache of equipment means we can start a rescue instantly rather than waiting for SAR.”

Mount Beauty Fire Brigade member Russell Bowring got a lot out of this realistic training.

“It was very satisfying being able to train alongside another agency learning the same skills and using the same equipment,” he said. “The instructors from both agencies shared knowledge and scenarios based on their own experiences, making our training more realistic.”

Barrett Higman of Bright SES believed there would be a flow-on effect to other units and brigades in the different valleys. “What we have achieved in this course will provide benefits for this area for many years,” he said.

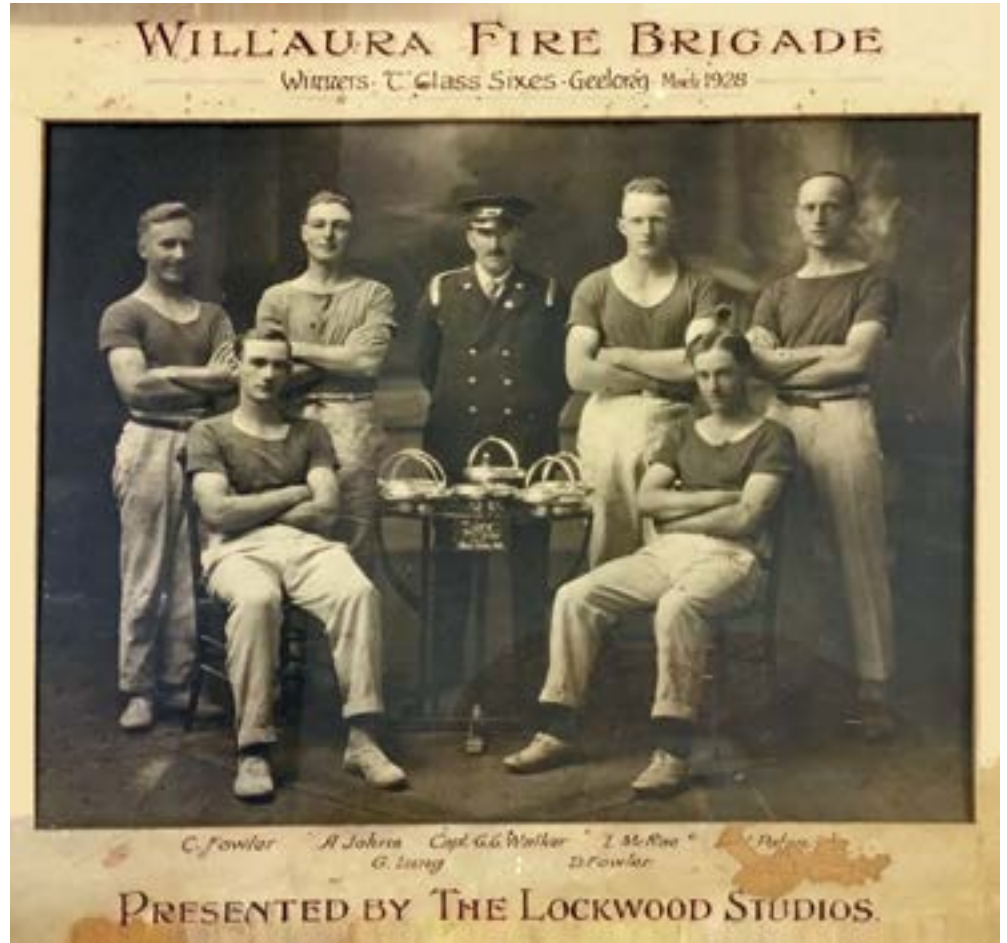
After the training course finished, SES placed a cache of high angle operator rescue equipment at Bright SES to pair with the steep angle cache at Mount Beauty Fire Station, so they can provide integrated teams to steep angle rescue incidents.

STORY GRAHAM GALES, VICSES BRIGHT UNIT



PHOTOS: GRAHAM GALES

Through the ages – Willaura





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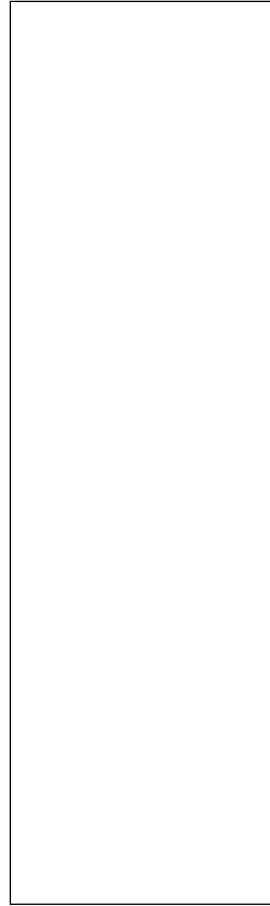
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