

Brigade

OUR COMMUNITY • OUR CFA



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Combined Champs
at Mooropna
a success

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twitter.com/cfa_members

CFA intranet:
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Community engagement material:

cfa.vic.gov.au/cecontentportal

CFA templates for download:

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PHOTO KEITH
PAKENHAM AFSM

Autumn 2021

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Fireys battle Graytown grassfire

CFA firefighters battled a large grassfire at Graytown on 19 January 2021 which burnt 210 hectares and came very close to several houses. The fire was caused by a ride-on mower which was mowing long, dry grass.

More than 60 CFA and DELWP vehicles were on scene along with water-bombing aircraft to help stop the spread of the fire.

The incident controller and Heathcote Fire Brigade Captain Carl Watkins said the biggest challenge initially was the location of the fire.

"It was a difficult area for firefighters to get to and there were strong winds so the fire had already spread two kilometres when the first truck arrived on scene," Carl said.

"Costerfield Fire Brigade captain was first on scene and he made the smart decision to protect the houses on Mount Camel-Graytown Road as the fire was already wrapping around that group of houses. When water aircraft and a few more CFA trucks arrived, the spread of the fire slowed very quickly and we were able to control it."

District 2 Assistant Chief Fire Officer Mick Hembrow said firefighters faced challenging conditions, with strong winds pushing the fire in a northerly direction.

"A Watch and Act warning was issued to the Graytown and Moormbool West communities and crews did a great job saving the houses in the area," Mick said.

A hay shed and machinery shed were lost in the fire, as well as some fencing.

The fire was brought under control just before 3.30pm that day and the Watch and Act warning was downgraded to an Advice message just after 3.30pm. Strike teams remained on scene overnight blacking out and patrolling the fire.

Incident Controller Carl Watkins said Heathcote and Costerfield brigades returned to the scene a couple days later when temperatures increased again to check the area thoroughly with thermal imaging cameras.

"We wanted to make sure the scene was safe and the thermal imaging cameras did locate some hot spots that the brigades had to extinguish. This avoided any possible reignition with the weather conditions that day," Carl said.

"It was a very difficult and full-on fire but I was very pleased with the outcome and the hard-work from everyone on scene."

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER



Peninsula scrub fire needs air support

When the call came in for a scrub fire in Dimmicks Bushland Reserve at Blairgowrie on the Mornington Peninsula just after midnight on New Year's Day 2021, it wasn't a far stretch to suspect it was caused by illegal fireworks.

The fire was located in dense coastal scrub with access only via the odd walking track, so all that firefighters could do at that early stage was to patrol the area overnight and come back to tackle it in the daylight.

Two tankers from Sorrento Fire Brigade, one tanker from Rye Fire Brigade and Fire Rescue Victoria's Pumper 95 turned out to the fire. Incident Controller and Sorrento Captain Michael Versteegen said the turnout, which included a dozen members from Sorrento, was the brigade's largest turnout in a long time.

"When we returned in the morning, we tried an initial attack with rakehoes and knapsacks, but it was unsuccessful as the wind got up," Michael said.

Water supply was also a challenge and the brigade had to run 250 metres of line from the nearest accessible water source.

The arrival of a waterbombing helicopter and an air crane were a welcome sight.

"We called on aerial support early and they spent almost an hour overhead knocking it down so we could get control," Michael said. "We spent the next three hours blacking out the area with the assistance of FFMVic firefighters and a mulcher."

The cause of the fire was still being investigated by Victoria Police when the magazine went to press, but it was believed to have been started by illegal New Year's Eve fireworks.

STORY LISELOTTE GEARY

Response exemplifies brigade teamwork

Firefighters worked for hours into the afternoon on 9 February 2021 to conduct a washaway following a truck rollover in Waaia, 40 kilometres north of Shepparton. The single vehicle accident occurred at the corner of Waaia-Bearii Road and Katunga-Picola Road at around 4pm.

Four CFA trucks from Numurkah and Waaia brigades attended the incident, as well as Fire Rescue Victoria crews.

Incident Controller and Waaia Fire Brigade Captain Shane Legge said crews arrived on scene to find that a heavy rigid truck had rolled into a dry dam.

“The truck ended up in a dam around 15 feet from the road,” Shane said. “With the help of passers-by, the driver was out of the vehicle by the time crews arrived.

“We were fortunate the truck had a rollover safety feature, which disconnected the power to the truck’s electrical system when it tipped, avoiding a potential fire.

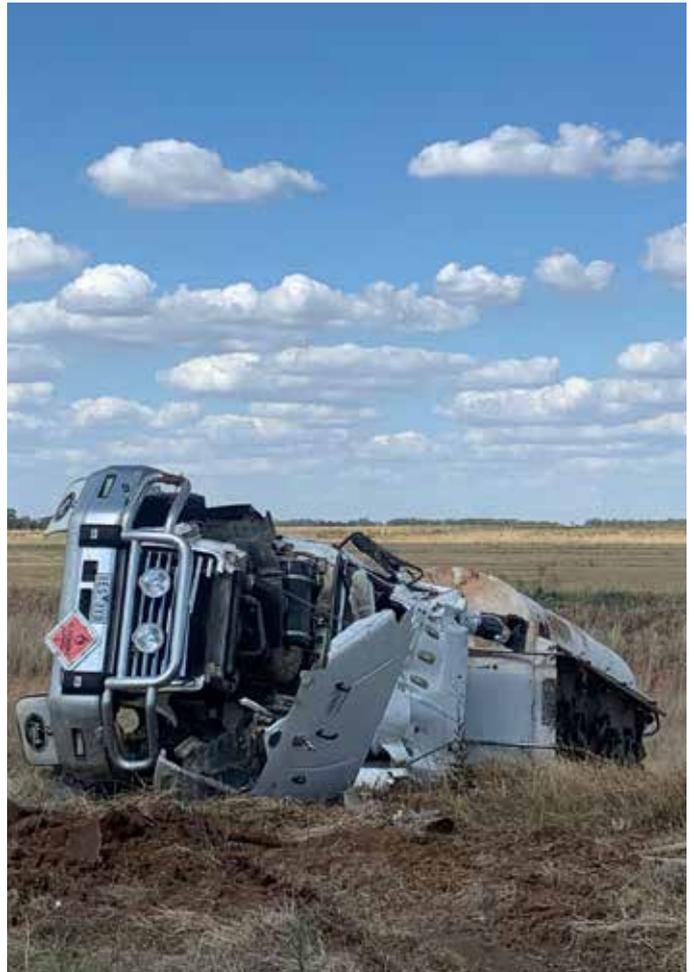
“This was especially important because at the time the truck was carrying about 11,000 litres of diesel and 3,000 litres of petrol.

“There was a minor spillage of both diesel and petrol from the truck which crews cleared during washaway operations.”

Victoria Police attended the scene and the driver was looked after by Ambulance Victoria.

All crews brought the incident under control at 6pm and a tow company helped firefighters get the truck back onto its wheels. At 7.50pm the truck was removed from the dam and moved to the road and a stop was issued on the incident.

“All crews on scene worked really well together,” Shane said. “There was a lot of experience on hand and it was seamless working alongside our neighbouring brigades.”



STORY MITCHELL GASTIN





Horse rescued from dam

On 3 March 2021, a mare called 'Tilley' became stuck in a small dam on her owner's Narre Warren North property. The owner tried in vain to get her out before calling Triple Zero.

Five members of Macclesfield Fire Brigade's large animal rescue team and a crew from Hallam Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) responded to the emergency. When crews arrived at 10.20am, along with a vet, it looked like Tilley wouldn't survive the ordeal.

"Once on scene we discussed how we would carry out the technical rescue bearing in mind the horse was pregnant," said Macclesfield brigade 2nd Lieutenant Phil 'Smiley' Spencer, who was in charge of the rescue. "To protect the unborn foal we had to modify our techniques.

"The scene needs to be calm and quiet so the animal doesn't get distressed. A distressed owner or onlooker will cause the animal to be distressed."

Gruyere Fire Brigade volunteer Andrea Bigham, who receives pager messages for Macclesfield brigade for large animal rescues, arrived just after 11am.

"When I arrived, they were still in the process of putting the strap under the horse's shoulders," Andrea said. "The strop guide was already in place. This is a spring steel semi-circle that helps to get the strap around the animal."

The vet sedated Tilley to calm her down and reduce the risk of accidents. FRV members and Macclesfield brigade members were in the dam, and Andrea helped the team to finish placing the strap. A heavy-duty plastic

rescue glide was placed on the edge of the dam, and while one person looked after Tilley's head everyone else on scene pulled on the rope to drag the mare onto the glide.

"Once on the glide, it was quite easy to manoeuvre the horse," Andrea said.

As soon as Tilley was out of the water, the vet administered fluids through an IV line because of the mare's extremely low blood pressure and gave her antibiotics straight away.

"We were concerned that when the sedation wore off she might stagger back into the dam, so we put down four glides and pulled her further into the paddock. The vet agreed with my suggestion to roll her over and face her uphill to help with blood flow."

After being rolled over, Tilley tried to stand, which was an encouraging sign, but she then collapsed onto the same side. The team rolled her successfully and positioned her head uphill.

"In a large animal rescue like this, the animal is distressed and this is a hazard to everyone because of the sheer weight and size of the horse. Rescuers are in danger so it's important to have specialist training and the right equipment to keep everyone safe and to help the animal more effectively.

"With the wrong equipment and the wrong technique, you can do more harm than good. It's also important to be calm and methodical and slow the rescue right down."

Andrea was impressed with how well everyone worked together to save Tilley.



"There was incredible teamwork between CFA and FRV. It was amazing to watch. There was a job to be done, there was great communication, and it was a very successful outcome."

The owner was very anxious throughout the rescue so Andrea and Smiley comforted her.

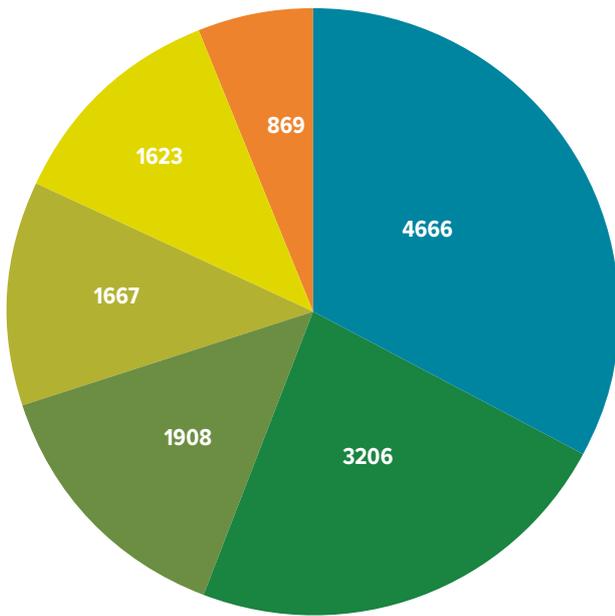
"She'd tried to rescue Tilley before we arrived and she had had nothing to eat or drink. She was upset, wet and shaking. We got her a bottle of water from the Macclesfield ultralight and supported her."

Andrea is passionate about animal rescue and giving a distressed animal the best chance of survival.

"We protect lives and property in all forms, including animals. Pets are lifelong members of a family."

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

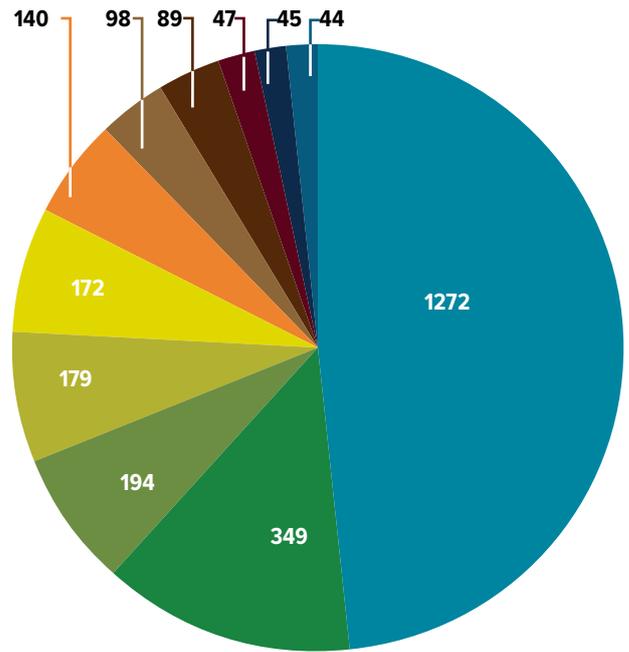
INCIDENTS BY TYPE



Service calls*	
Fire and explosions	
Motor vehicle accidents/rescue/EMS calls	
False alarms/false calls	
Good intent calls	
Hazardous condition	

* Includes 3,903 callouts in support of Fire Rescue Victoria

ORIGIN OF FIRE



Paddock, open area, lawn	
Road, car park	
Engine area, running gear, wheel area of vehicle	
Undetermined	
Kitchen, cooking area	
Scrub or bush area	
Lounge	
Garage, carport	
Court, terrace, patio	
Bedroom	
Passenger areas of vehicle	

INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT



SOUTH WEST

WEST

NORTH WEST

NORTH EAST

SOUTH EAST

District	Incidents
4	98
5	305
6	243
7	1103

District	Incidents
15	830
16	233
17	249

District	Incidents
2	737
14	2111
18	349
20	410

District	Incidents
12	333
13	1448
22	583
23	319
24	327

District	Incidents
8	3163
9	413
10	242
11	288
27	368

Brigades are reminded to submit their incident report as soon as possible after attending an incident. Brigades on strike teams also need to submit a report to the Service Delivery Reporting Centre (SDRC). Call **1800 628 844** between 8am and 10pm.

CEO



Natalie MacDonald

CFA volunteers provide an exceptional and unique service to their communities and to the people of Victoria, and I am pleased to have joined CFA team as CEO. Since I joined in late February, I have had the chance to get out and about and meet many volunteers and staff and to hear feedback on how CFA can support you to protect your communities.

Both the Chief Officer and I will be working every day to ensure that our volunteer experience is at the centre of our decision making. The resilience and determination of our volunteers is evident to me in every conversation I have had, and while CFA has experienced some change as an organisation, the dedication of our volunteers to their communities through that time is unparalleled.

We are focused on how we best support CFA for the future. We want to be an emergency service of choice, which people want to join because they know they will receive skills, training and leadership development which will benefit them in their personal and professional lives and will support their communities to be safe and resilient.

We have a number of programs rolling out including capital programs, vehicle replacement programs, equipment and workwear programs, capability development programs and safety programs and while there is always more to be done, we are pleased to be able to make these kinds of improvements for our local brigades.

We also know that we have work to do to be able to provide better support to brigades to promote and support diversity and inclusivity and to be able to deal with behaviours that are not in line with community expectations.

It is important that all our workplaces are welcoming and supportive for all and this is a high priority for us and we look forward to working with you all as we tackle the challenges we may encounter in this area.

Like our Chief Officer, I was delighted to be able to be at the CFA/VFVB Championships and to see the skill and dedication of those involved. It was an uplifting event and lovely to be able to see people, in person, showing their enthusiasm and talent. Although Championships aren't for everyone, or every brigade, it was a great representation of the CFA volunteer capability which is demonstrated every hour of every day across the state.

Thank you for all that you do to keep your communities safe.

CHAIR



Greg Wilson

Since our last edition, CFA has welcomed new leaders Natalie MacDonald and Jason Heffernan in the key positions of Chief Executive Officer and Chief Officer, respectively. Both are strong advocates of volunteer, community-based emergency services and, since beginning their roles, both have been regularly visiting brigades and district offices throughout Victoria to gain a greater understanding of the needs of our members.

The Board is confident that these appointments will provide stability for our organisation from a leadership perspective and allow us to focus on our future as a key volunteer-based emergency service organisation spread right across Victoria.

An experienced Executive and Board member, Natalie joined CFA in February and brings a senior experience from a number of sectors to the CFA. Natalie also has emergency services experience from her years working with Queensland Ambulance Service, which included oversight of, and engagement with, the state's volunteer community.

Jason took up his Chief Officer role in November last year after performing a number of senior roles in the NSW Rural Fire Service. Jason has extensive experience in leading service delivery for the world's largest volunteer-based fire service, in which he had also been a volunteer for more than two decades.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Catherine Greaves and DCO Garry Cook for their work during their acting appointments in these roles.

Moving forward, the Board is committed to ensuring that CFA's focus and delivery is centred on the volunteer experience and how we can assist volunteers to protect their and our communities. We are deeply committed to ensuring CFA is a safe and inclusive organisation which behaves in a way that reflects community standards and expectations and this is important for our future.

It has been pleasing to see the rollout of the volunteer structural helmets and we expect to be delivering the new CFA workwear in the second half of this year. We are also trialling virtual reality technology to provide more realistic scenario training for our volunteers, and we have heard the message loud and clear that training delivered in a way that suits our communities is critical.

Now that we are all able to move around the state a little more easily, the Board members and I are looking forward to meeting with more of our volunteers and hearing from you about your priorities for CFA.

CHIEF OFFICER



Jason Heffernan

It is an honour for me to have been appointed Chief Officer, and together with our CEO Natalie Macdonald we will lead this great organisation. I am strongly committed to the ethos and values of CFA and upholding these basic principles across our organisation. I expect you to hold me to account on this too.

I share your passion for the role of community-based emergency services, having started as a volunteer firefighter in Wagga Wagga in 1998, before taking on a variety of roles with the NSW Rural Fire Service.

As CFA members, you place the community at the centre of everything you do. As your Chief Officer, I will do all I can to champion your needs.

I've travelled across the state meeting brigades and their dedicated volunteers and listening to their views on what matters most to our members, the challenges, opportunities and areas for improvement within CFA. There are common themes relating to training, resourcing, equipment and leadership. These are the areas we will be focusing on as a priority.

We will be undertaking a review of our training. I have requested the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council (AFAC) to provide an independent peer review with a volunteer focus. We will also be asking our volunteers to provide their input into what's working and what needs to change. I encourage you to be part of that conversation and have your say.

We're investing in our leaders, current and future, so they are equipped and supported to undertake their important roles. Building capability and developing skills are key to CFA being prepared, sustainable and resilient.

While the past fire season was vastly different to the devastating 2019-20 season, we experienced significant challenges with the COVID restrictions. I'm proud of how our brigades were able to continue to respond to emergencies, undertake training and engage with their communities throughout this period.

We are now reviewing the past season and engaging with our district leaders and senior staff to identify what we can do to prepare ourselves for the next season and, more importantly, set CFA up for a successful future following several years of changing leadership.

Over recent weekends, I've been part of the VFBV/CFA State Championships and I was incredibly impressed by the level of commitment, skill and determination displayed by our junior and senior, rural and urban brigade teams. Congratulations to all those who competed.

Both weekends were a fantastic display of CFA at its best. The new approach combined these events for the first time, supported by corporate displays highlighting new volunteer support initiatives, vehicles, infrastructure and innovation.

I have only been with CFA for five months and in that time I have witnessed the passion and dedication which volunteers bring to their roles in support of their communities and I am proud to be your Chief Officer.

DCO SOUTH WEST REGION



Rohan Luke

Since 1 July 2020, CFA has undergone the most significant organisational change in its 75-year history. Fire Services Reform gave us an invaluable opportunity to review the community's needs and redesign our service delivery model as we redefine CFA as a volunteer-focused organisation.

In South West Region we have been focusing on enhancing the engagement between our region and districts and volunteers to understand how we can provide greater support to brigades and, in turn, increase our capability to deliver services to the community.

In December 2020, the Regional Leadership Team and representatives from our four District Planning Committee Chairs came together as a senior leadership group for the region to discuss how we can better engage at a strategic level. While there's still work to be done to establish this forum more formally, the group will continue to meet regularly to increase volunteer involvement in decision-making and strategic development.

Similarly, the District 5 Vegetation Management Advisory Group (VMAG) was formed to provide a forum for volunteer-led engagement on the district's vegetation management service model in conjunction with the SW Community Safety Team and ACFO Richard Bourke. Last year, VMAG developed the *CR1 Burn Controllers Handbook* and a series of burn controller briefings. VMAG continues to work to support vegetation management in the district and is helping to influence thinking at various levels of CFA.

In May 2021, South West Region will hold our third annual Volunteer Forum to provide learning, networking and recognition opportunities for our volunteers. This year we will again host guest speakers, expo-style information stands and a panel of senior CFA leaders for a Q & A session where volunteers can ask questions.

We're also launching a new initiative, the Building Confident Leaders Program, as a pilot in District 6. Developed by the SW Volunteer Sustainability Team in conjunction with volunteers, the program pulls together core CFA leadership modules into one package to build leadership skills and operational training in both current and future volunteer leaders. This is a fantastic initiative and I look forward to the outcomes of the pilot and opportunities to develop the program.

There are many examples of changes for the better occurring throughout CFA, however meaningful change takes time and we won't achieve our goals overnight. The key to our success will be our ability to work together when we come up against challenges and support each other to learn as we go.

GROUP OFFICER MITCHELL GROUP, D11



Nigel Swinn

To say that recent times have been a challenge for our 100 per cent volunteer group of brigades here in East Gippsland is an understatement. If nothing else, this period in history has highlighted the resilience and strength of our dedicated volunteers.

The brigades in our group cover a large and diverse area encompassing farmland, bushland interface, coastal areas, regional city infrastructure and everything in between. Our volunteers have constantly proven their worth in continually supporting the community in need through many tough and challenging times. Mitchell Group has continued to adapt to the dynamic environment by embracing change as required along the way to remain a dedicated group of passionate individuals working towards a common goal.

Although there have been significantly trying times, local brigades have done their best to keep volunteer spirit and motivation afloat. It was great to see brigades find ways to communicate and interact with members while adhering to the often-changing COVID-19 operating environment. Brigades embraced the use of video conferencing, teleconferencing, and the ever reliable one-on-one phone calls to keep everyone informed. Members of all our brigades have done what they do best and adapted their procedures to continuously meet the call for assistance.

The group has been anxiously waiting to begin training in the new General Firefighter (GFF) program. After the horrendous 2019-20 fire season, we had a large influx of greatly needed new members, but because of the COVID-19 situation no training was able to be conducted for some time. Thankfully, the GFF program was implemented just as the new fire season began and brigades have been able to get many, greatly appreciated new members fully trained and qualified. The consistently good rainfall and favourable weather leading up to this past season meant brigades could continue GFF training and assessment throughout the summer.

The Group Executive is looking forward to relocating our local command facility (LCF) operations into a new, purpose-built area that's part of the new Bairnsdale Fire Station. Previously, Mitchell Group's LCF operated from the kitchen of an old house next to the ageing Bairnsdale Fire Station. It's fantastic to be part of this exciting new move and I'm sure all members of Bairnsdale Fire Brigade are equally excited to be operating out of a new station.

All brigades in the group are starting to look forward to some normality in a COVID-normal environment, whatever that is. It will be great to see brigades getting back to training and interacting with their valuable communities again.

ED BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT



Alen Slijepcevic

The Bushfire Management Team has had an incredibly busy and productive 'isolation' period. I am very proud of the massive contribution made by the team and of the sustained effort over the past 12 months despite the difficult circumstances.

Off the back of one of the most challenging fire seasons in Australia's history, the team has led CFA's response to multiple external inquiries, contributed to the ongoing fire services reform and adapted to the COVID-19 world and the changes to both personal and professional lives as a result.

The significance of the 2019-20 fire season was highlighted by the corresponding number of reviews and inquiries conducted across Australia, which included the following.

- In Victoria, two reports by the Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM), *Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian Fire Season (Phase 1)* and *Review of 10 years of reform in Victoria's emergency management sector*, were tabled in State Parliament on 14 October 2020. The 2019-20 fire season report focused on bushfire management arrangements and recommendations related to them. The 10-year review assessed the broader emergency management approach for all emergencies and the progress made since 2009. The government accepted all recommendations and responded to both reviews with a series of sector-wide commitments.
- The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) final audit report *Reducing Bushfire Risks* was tabled in Parliament on 14 October 2020, and the recommendations were accepted by all emergency agencies. Of the 17 recommendations, two were specifically directed at CFA and three were relevant to DELWP and CFA.
- At a federal level, the final report of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (RCNDA) was released on 30 October 2020. Many of the recommendations were relevant to CFA, our partners in Victoria and across Australia.
- CFA also provided information to other state-level inquiries and reviewed the recommendations of these inquiries to ensure we identified those that were relevant to CFA.

A cross-government interdepartmental committee (IDC) was formed to oversee the combined Victorian response to several formal notices and to provide information issued by the Royal Commission. CFA played an active role influencing Victoria's responses to these requests and the propositions of the RCNDA.

After the IGEM inquiries were released, a further IDC was established to oversee the development and approval of an implementation plan for the government response.

CFA will have a significant role in how these plans are adopted in Victoria and on a national level.

CFA workwear to launch soon

The design of the CFA workwear has been finalised following consultation with more than 3,000 volunteers and other stakeholders. The workwear will be rolled out later this year.

The workwear collection consists of long and short sleeve shirts and blouses, cargo trousers, straight leg trousers, cargo shorts, jacket, epaulettes, cap, wide brim hat and a belt.

It features a distinctive colour blue called Patriot Blue which is unique to emergency services in Victoria. The design provides a clear and distinctive identity for CFA members when they carry out duties in the community and as part of their brigade roles. It features a red checker stripe as well as the Victorian State Badge (Crown and shield containing the Southern Cross).

While the workwear gives us some additional opportunities, it doesn't replace existing dress uniform items or personal protective clothing (the 'yellows' or structural ensemble) which is used for operational purposes. But it does provide a comfortable and distinctive alternative for volunteers when they are carrying out their important role of engaging with members of the community. Volunteers can also wear it for brigade meetings, incident management, site inspections and fundraising.

Our Chief Officer, Deputy Chief Officers and other eligible staff will also wear this workwear, where appropriate, to highlight that we're all part of CFA – one organisation with a common purpose of serving our community together. Regardless of their role, all members will wear the same shoulder patch, as shown in the photo, above right. In a survey of members, there was overwhelming support for this one shoulder patch for all.

The workwear will begin production when the current tender process concludes around the middle of the year, and the first sets will be delivered around July or August 2021. CFA will fund the initial rollout of workwear to volunteers, which will be about 9,000 sets statewide. Based on the advice of brigades, we will prioritise the distribution to those members with critical community-facing roles.

Our intention is to make the workwear available more broadly across the organisation and we are seeking additional funding to achieve this. After the initial rollout it's planned for the workwear to be a regularly stocked item available for purchase at cost from CFA's State Logistics Centre.

Following the rollout we plan to review our current workwear, uniform, corporate apparel and other items of apparel.

Thanks to the CFA/VFBV working party for its assistance during this process.





Understanding how well we suppress bushfires



Five years ago, the Victorian Government released its Safer Together initiative to set out the future direction of bushfire management across the emergency services. As part of this work, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC and CSIRO established a research project to assess how effective our resources are when suppressing fire.

A CFA team is leading the practical trials and it's the first time that this level of accuracy and real-time data has been collected.

By quantifying how well we can suppress bushfire, we will better understand the time and effort needed to complete tasks and be able to develop systems to help us select the number and type of resources deployed to bushfires.

CFA Engineering and Ballarat District Mechanical Officers (DMOs) recently fitted a Creswick tanker with several instruments in readiness for the 2020-21 fire season. The technology includes:

- Flow meters on the deck outlets
- GPS tracking every five seconds
- Notification when the vehicle's ignition and pump ignition are switched on
- Cameras mounted on the front, sides and above to monitor fire behaviour and water suppression effectiveness.

The project is a significant collaboration between CFA's Bushfire Research and Development team, Fleet, Engineering and DMOs.

All video footage is stored on a hard drive on the truck, while the GPS and flow rate information is transmitted to a secure website for registered users to review. The system has the capability to send email and SMS notifications to project personnel to let them know when the truck is on the fire line undertaking a suppression activity.

This project will not assess driver behaviour or what the truck is doing away from the fireground. Only video footage taken on the fireground will be analysed. CSIRO will evaluate the data to compare fire intensity, application flow rates and firefighting tactics.



It's likely that the project team will need to collect data from several fire seasons to have sufficient representative data.

"We're at the very early stages of understanding what benefits these systems can provide CFA and how we use the data," said CFA Engineering Project Manager Joel Read. "It's likely it will have implications for vehicle design, operational considerations and the work of DMOs who maintain and service the fleet."

"This project's success is thanks to the collaboration between Creswick brigade and District 15. The brigade was involved during project scoping and installation, and brigade members are looking forward to seeing the results and being involved in what may help shape future CFA planning. A big thanks to the brigade for their involvement."

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

Leading the way to an inclusive CFA

In November 2020, the Inclusion and Fairness (I&F) team completed the planning to establish an Allies of Inclusion Network (AIN). The aim of this network is to build a visible, inclusive and supportive environment where all members can feel safe and comfortable to bring their whole self to CFA.

The AIN connects like-minded people who have a passion and willingness to demonstrate, educate and advocate for an inclusive and diverse CFA. The AIN has three levels of participation, or tiers, so that members can choose how they participate in the network based on their particular circumstances. Member involvement can be a little or it can be a lot.

In December 2020, the Inclusion and Fairness team held several information sessions for members interested in joining the network. These sessions were well attended, and the enthusiasm and experience of all participants was exciting to see.

The first meeting of the founding members of the AIN was held in February 2021. Executive Manager Organisational Development Louise Anderson welcomed members to the meeting.

"I look forward to hearing the ideas, feedback and opportunities that the network brings," Louise said. "Thank you for your commitment to being ambassadors for inclusion across CFA."

Member-led discussions set the scene for the network moving forward.

"The best thing about this network is that any CFA member interested can join," volunteer AIN member Nicky Haslinghouse said. "You don't need permission from anyone to be involved, to have your voice heard or to be a part of creating positive change at CFA in this important space."

Beth Taylor, North West Region staff member said, "If being involved means you wear a pin and have a conversation with someone, that's fantastic. If you're vocal about meaningful change, that's supported too."

If you've thought about joining the AIN, it's not too late to express interest and get on board. It's open to all volunteers and staff. Inclusion and Fairness Coordinator Terri Wright encouraged members who are supporters and advocates for diversity and inclusion to put their hands up to join the network.

"As members of CFA we hold an important role in the community to lead and challenge bias and discrimination," Terri said. "This cannot be achieved alone. A network of allies will be valuable in advancing inclusion and fairness for all members, regardless of their background."

You can join the network by emailing the Inclusion and Fairness team: inclusionandfairness@cfa.vic.gov.au.

For more information about AIN go to Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pageId=InclusionFairness

STORY LIBBY SYMONS

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Australia Day 2021 Honours

Congratulations to the four CFA volunteers who received the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) for their work in emergency services.

Mark Roberts

Cobden Fire Brigade member Mark Roberts (on the left of the photo below, pictured with Group Officer Mark Billings) said he was initially reluctant to accept the award.

"I had to process the initial shock and I realised there must have been people who had thought long and hard about this nomination," Mark said. "You'd think the award is more for people who've been around for 50 or 60 years and have done an exceptional job, so that really puts it in context.

"You don't do this for the awards or the accolades, but I guess this is recognition of the position I was in after the St Patrick's Day fires."

The fires which started on 17 March 2018 burned through more than 40,00 hectares around Cobden and Terang, with more than 10,000 stock lost across 219 farms.

"The biggest problem was the peat fire which just kept going for 10 weeks afterwards. I never took over the incident but played a role of constant contact with the local community.

"Such a drawn-out process like that means there are many different incident management team changeovers, so it was important to help keep everyone on track."

Mark's leadership skills developed beyond his own brigade when he took on the Cobden group officer role in 2007, as well as many years of coaching Juniors throughout the area.

"We've got some good lieutenants that I coached 20 years ago who are moving through the ranks. If that helps keep them around then it's good for the town and good for the brigade."

Despite more than 30 years with CFA, which includes outstanding leadership in the community, the modest volunteer firefighter said he accepted the award to honour those he works with.

"This is really for the brigade, the community, and the people around me."



Ross Coyle

The long-serving Wodonga West Fire Brigade volunteer and former CFA Board member said he was truly humbled to receive the AFSM.

"To be considered worthy of being recognised alongside so many incredible CFA people is a real honour," Ross said.

"The importance of the award is certainly not lost on me, as I previously served on CFA's Honours and Awards Committee and have a great knowledge of its significance."

The award comes as Ross marks 35 years since becoming an operational member as a 14-year-old, with a short period as a Junior member before that.

"CFA is a real family affair for me. My grandfather was a charter member of CFA when it was formed in 1945 and was a member of the same brigade that I am, as was my father who was captain for many years."

Ross has played key leadership operational roles in north-east Victoria and on interstate strike teams, but he said the 2009 fires will always stay with him because of the damage and tragedy.

"I also experienced some of the fiercest fires in the 2019-20 summer. It was a level of fire intensity I'd never seen before and we were just incredibly fortunate we didn't encounter the same levels of tragedy as 2009."

Ross was a CFA Board member for six-and-a-half years and he said it was a period of significant change for the organisation.

"I came onto the Board in 2010 which was just before the Black Saturday Royal Commission report was handed down. There were numerous other reports that followed for the Board to oversee, as well as managing challenges including the Fiskville training campus situation and the beginnings of the renewal of Victoria's fire services."

Ross has now stepped back from his official leadership positions, giving him the opportunity to refresh and renew and simply get back to just fighting fires.

"CFA is known for red trucks and fire sheds, but it's more about the people involved, and I've been surrounded by wonderful people both locally and around the state who have made this experience so rewarding for me."





Ian Hay

Gisborne Fire Brigade firefighter Ian Hay has been a CFA volunteer for more than 43 years. He began his volunteer firefighting career in 1975 at Bullengarook Fire Brigade, before transferring to Gisborne.

Ian was brigade secretary and was then elected to represent Gisborne brigade as the Mount Macedon Group communications officer. He then moved up the ranks to become group officer and now continues to serve as a senior firefighter, regularly attending emergency incidents.

"When I started at Bullengarook brigade I didn't anticipate my involvement would lead me this far," Ian said.

"I have met so many amazing people over the course of my CFA journey and looking back I am grateful for every interaction."

Ian has maintained his operational qualifications as a Level 2 incident controller, a Level 3 operations officer and as a divisional commander and sector commander. Throughout his volunteer career, Ian has been highly respected by all levels of CFA.

CFA is grateful to Ian for his ongoing commitment to serving his community as part of his local fire brigade.

"I've formed lots of friendships across CFA. I can go anywhere in Victoria and bump into someone I have met during my time as a member.

"CFA is a family and I am happy to be a part of it."



Leighton Wraith

CFA volunteer Leighton Wraith (pictured second from the left) said he was thrilled to be awarded the prestigious AFSM. Leighton has protected and served the communities of south-west Victoria for 40 years.

While he has accomplished many things through a variety of roles during his time at Bochara and Dunkeld fire brigades, his greatest recent accomplishment was establishing the Hamilton CFA-EMV Air Base and its facilities.

The 2013 Grampians fires highlighted the need for better ground support and arrangements for deployment. As a licensed pilot Leighton is passionate about aviation and he was adamant there should be a permanently established airbase to service and support firebombing aircraft at Hamilton Airport.

"It took me seven years to complete, with several trips to Parliament and Local MPs' offices," Leighton said. "It's the largest CFA-operated airbase in Victoria and is run by a great group of volunteers."

Leighton has been vital to the recruitment, training and management of the members that operate the air base. He recruited about 40 volunteers and then managed them into six loading crews, which enables him to manage fatigue during major periods of operation.

Leighton said he often positioned the volunteers at the base full-time during high-risk fire days to ensure they have the best possible aerial firefighting operations and the greatest chance to protect communities.

Leighton is a well-respected leader whose hard work, dedication and ongoing management of the air base means it's now recognised as the primary aerial fire support facility across western Victoria.

While Leighton has attended many incidents across his 40 years with CFA, he said last summer stands out the most.

"The 2019-20 summer was a long one. We were on duty ready to go every day," he said.

"On some of the busiest days, the airbase crews reloaded 52 aircraft in a day. Over a six-week period during those devastating fires, Hamilton airbase carried out 330 reloads.

The effective deployment and efficient reloading of firebombers from Hamilton prevented the need to obtain resources from elsewhere in Victoria.



Strategy and Outcomes Framework 2020-30

The new CFA Strategy and Outcomes Framework 2020-30, **Our Community Our CFA (the Strategy)** has now been released.

The Strategy sets out a strong pathway for our organisation for the next 10 years and makes clear our ongoing commitment to build and maintain a sustainable and effective volunteer-based, community-centred emergency service.

The Strategy makes clear our renewed focus on volunteerism and, importantly, includes our strong commitment to delivering our four strategic goals.

1. We put the community at the centre of everything we do
2. We provide programs and services that make a positive difference

3. We provide a great place to volunteer and work
4. We are a progressive emergency service.

It also incorporates the recently published Outcomes Framework to support performance monitoring against the delivery of the CFA Strategy.

To implement the Strategy, a set of multi-year strategic plans will be developed, which will provide strategies, priorities and key initiatives to achieve the 10-year goals and outcomes. Developing these multi-year plans will be a key organisational priority for the next 12 months.

To read the Strategy go to Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelid=ourCFAstrategy



Goals and Outcomes

- 1.1 The community has confidence in our advice and services
- 1.2 The community is educated, engaged and empowered to manage its fire risk
- 1.3 The community changes its behaviour to manage their fire risk

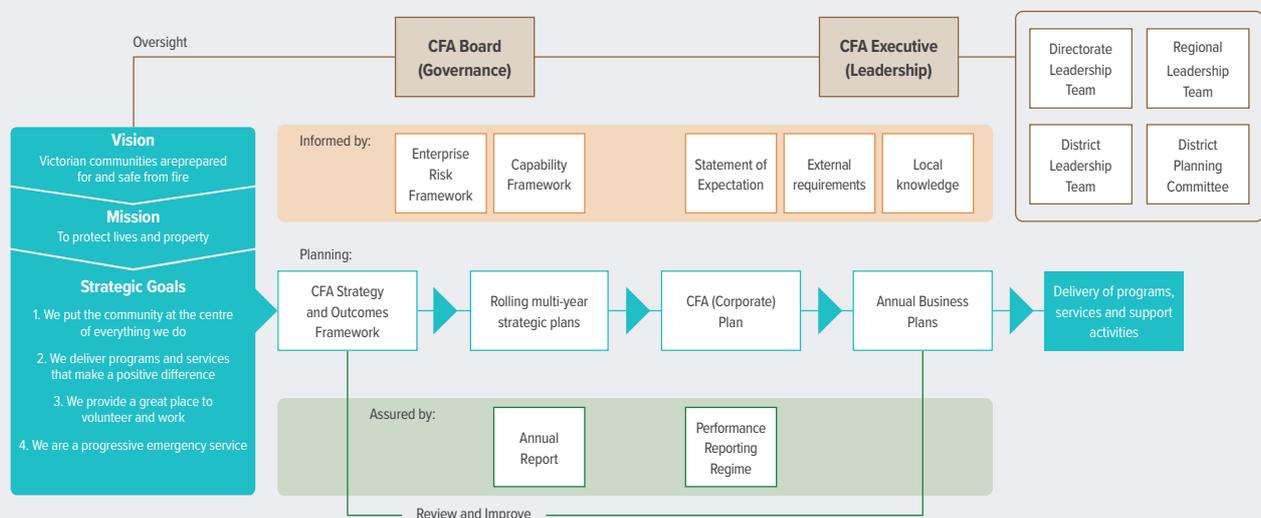
- 3.1 Our workplace is safe
- 3.2 We have a volunteer and paid workforce that reflects the community it serves
- 3.3 We uphold the CFA values and are held accountable for our behaviour
- 3.4 Our volunteer and paid workforce is appropriately skilled, resourced and empowered and is continually learning



- 2.1 Fires are prevented
- 2.2 Fires are suppressed quickly and effectively
- 2.3 Fires are less harmful to the community
- 2.4 There are zero fire related fatalities or injuries in the community

- 4.1 Our investment decisions are transparent and achieve the greatest possible impact
- 4.2 Our corporate governance arrangements are based on evidence and evaluation to maximise the benefits for our people and our community
- 4.3 We collaborate with Fire Rescue Victoria and other service delivery partners to promote interoperability and build stronger relationships that lead to better community outcomes
- 4.4 We work with Emergency Management Victoria and other government departments and agencies to support government objectives and emergency management reform
- 4.5 Our service delivery and corporate performance is continuously improving

Implementing the Strategy



Reducing road trauma through education

In 1994 a small group of people whose lives had been directly impacted by road trauma founded Road Trauma Support Services Victoria (RTSSV). These people understood the need for a specialist service that supported those who, like themselves, were suffering because of the injury or loss of a loved one on the roads.

This not-for-profit organisation runs a number of programs including the Road Trauma Awareness Seminar program and offers unlimited, free counselling for anyone who's experienced a traumatic incident on our roads.

RTSSV is committed to educating the community and raising public awareness about road trauma and how it affects people's lives. It believes that people who've been personally impacted by road trauma play a critical role in raising awareness. Its team of volunteers tell their stories about the road trauma they experienced in a safe, supportive environment to people who engage in risky driving behaviours.

Each RTSSV volunteer has a unique story and perspective on road safety. By drawing on their experiences, the volunteers aim to influence the behaviour and attitude of drivers, so they make better decisions when they get behind the wheel.

During each seminar, the participants hear stories from two volunteers. One volunteer uses their personal experience with road trauma to discuss the impact it has had on



their lives, and the second volunteer is a first responder who describes road trauma from their perspective.

"When I begin talking and I see faces change and emotions show, I know attitudes are shifting. It feels great! There is no doubt these sessions make an impact on those who attend," said one volunteer.

"My story gives meaning and significance to the person who died and ensures they are remembered as significant. Even in death, they continue to have purpose and meaning," said another.

After attending a seminar, 95 per cent of the participants commit to changing the way they approach driving.

RTSSV volunteers receive comprehensive training and are fully supported by RTSSV's dedicated staff and counsellors. If you're a CFA volunteer who has attended a road accident and would like to become an RTSSV volunteer, phone 1300 367 797 or go to rtssv.org.au.

STORY ROHAN MARLOW, CFA VOLUNTEER AND GRAMPIANS REGIONAL COORDINATOR OF RTSSV

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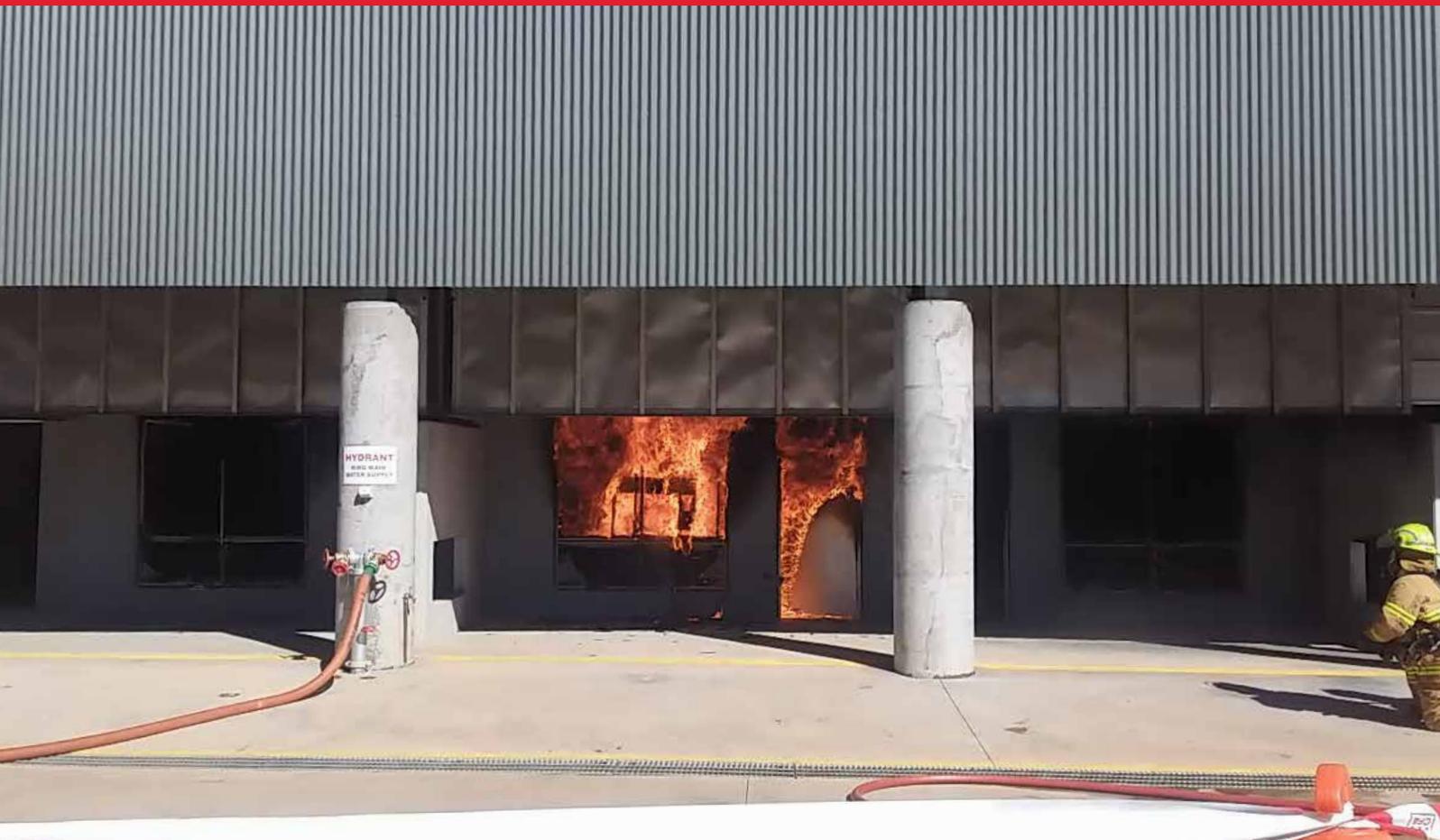
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NEW FIRE INVESTIGATION TRAINING FACILITY



CFA has reinforced its commitment to deliver fire investigation courses by constructing a new purpose-built training facility at the CFA-owned and managed VEMTC Huntly training campus.

With the increasing number of requests for fire investigators to attend incident scenes each year, it's critical that fire investigators have the specialist skills and practical knowledge to conduct investigations and determine the origin and cause of fires. By taking fire investigation courses, CFA can ensure the fire investigators are well trained and equipped to undertake this task and identify fire trends.

The facility was specifically designed to optimise learning and development opportunities through both theoretical classroom-based learning and practical training. It focuses on real-life specialist training using the latest technology, so fire investigators have the required specialist skills.

As part of the inter-agency and interoperability partnerships, the fire investigation training courses at the campus will be available to all agencies involved in fire investigation in Victoria and fire services from across Australasia.

Before the design stage, extensive research was carried out to determine the types of fire investigation training props used by fire services colleges and fire testing research centres in Australia, New Zealand, the US and the UK.

Combining this information with the existing knowledge and experience from conducting fire investigation courses at Fiskville Training College, the project team produced a comprehensive concept design paper. This paper outlined the design requirements for the burn rooms and practical area drill (PAD) location.

This project proposal was successful, and funding was allocated as part of the 2016-17 Victorian Government budget, and construction of the facility began in June 2018.

The design, engineering, construction and operational functionality of the new facility was a major project involving several CFA departments including Fire Investigation, Training, Land and Building Services, and the CFA and UFU Fire Investigation Training Working Party.

During the design and construction phases of the burn room facilities, CFA project team members worked closely with CSIRO and technical experts in the fields of fire engineering and thermal oxidisers.

FACILITY FEATURES

The facility is an impressive building containing four burn rooms and a carport designed to study fire behaviour. It also allows scene examination investigations to determine the origin and cause of structural and vehicle fires.

The burn rooms have several key technological features, including one which allows fire dynamics to be studied. Thermocouples can be installed in each burn room at three levels – ceiling, mid-level and floor level – to record the temperatures generated in the rooms. This data is displayed and recorded and used to teach firefighters and fire investigators about fire dynamics and fire behaviour.

Each burn room has a sprinkler system that can be operated at various times to demonstrate the impact of early detection and suppression of room fires.

A briefing area will be used to carry our briefings before starting the practical components of the fire investigation courses. This facility also has a large-screen TV linked directly to cameras inside each room to observe and record in real time the ignition and development of the fire, as well as ventilation effects, burn damage and patterns from pre- and post-flashover fires.

A large storage shed and workshop have also been constructed to store the furniture, appliances and equipment used to style the rooms for the scenarios.

Huntly campus has also been upgraded with a modern classroom, a dining room with kitchen and change room facilities. These new amenities will benefit all those who attend the campus for training courses.

The training facility incorporates best-practice environmental management features including:

- thermal oxidiser and associated duct work to capture and treat the smoke and gases produced from the room burns and vehicle burns
- minimal water use to suppress fires in the room and vehicle burns
- a waste water management system that captures all water used and stores it in tanks for off-site treatment.

ROOM BURN SCENARIOS

As part of the specialist training for the scene examinations, scenarios have been developed to reflect real-life structure fires in lounge rooms, bedrooms, offices and vehicle fires in carports and garages.

The room setup and design requirements allow a number of fire scene scenarios and ignition methods to be used to produce a variety of realistic situations with varying levels of complexity.

One of the features of the burn rooms is the flexibility to create a dual room to allow for fire transfer between rooms, providing realistic scenarios of fires that occur in homes and offices.

Before the rooms are burned, they are fitted with plastered walls, carpet, windows, doors, fittings and fixtures. The rooms are also fully furnished with furniture, appliances and items that are commonly found in lounge rooms, bedrooms and offices.

The rooms are videoed before the ignition of the fires to record the placement of furnishings and items before the fires occur. The rooms are then videoed from the ignition of the fire through the stages of fire development to the extinguishment. This means the training is realistic and a scientific method can be used to determine the origin and cause of fires.

SAFETY GUIDELINES

To ensure everyone is safe at the training facility, CFA has produced detailed set-up and clean-up work practice procedures, practical training guidelines for room burns and post-burn rooms and drill briefs.

In addition, to ensure the investigation scenes are safe for instructors and course participants, atmospheric monitoring of the rooms will be conducted before and during the scene examination process.

The sprinkler systems in the rooms are an added safety feature which can, if required, deliver a deluge of water to suppress a fire.



DELIVERING THE TRAINING

When the facility is operational, the training rooms will be used as part of the delivery of courses in structural and vehicle fire investigation, skills maintenance, professional development and scene reconstructions. The facility will be used by:

- CFA Fire Investigation Team
- FRV Fire Investigation Unit
- Victoria Police Arson and Explosives Squad
- Victoria Police Detective Training School
- Victoria Police Forensic Services Department – Fire and Explosion Investigation Unit.

These courses will reinforce the key lessons learned to continue to improve the existing inter-agency and interoperability relationships between organisations involved in fire investigation in Victoria.

All the courses and sessions use the latest knowledge and operational practical applications relating to fire scene examination procedures and origin and cause determination principles.

Key findings from fire investigations are reinforced and included as part of the courses with the focus on:

- fire scene safety for fire investigators
- key lessons from investigations conducted
- fire investigation techniques and strategies
- results of fire causation analysis from previous years
- outcomes that are achieved from conducting fire investigations
- fire investigation case studies.

The courses are delivered by qualified and endorsed fire investigators who are highly skilled and have practical operational experience investigating structural fires. They ensure that participants gain the required knowledge and skills to undertake fire investigation and, in particular, to determine the origin and causes of fires.

To find out how to take a fire investigation course, contact your district fire investigation coordinator.

STORY NICOLE HARVEY AFSM

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

CFA has been busy developing a range of tools and resources to help volunteers and staff engage local communities. We've taken a look at five key projects.

HELPING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

When CFA embarked on the Preparing Vulnerable People (PVP) project in 2019, it was an eye-opening experience. Hearing from older people or those with a disability really brought the message home. Many people in the community just can't respond to our bushfire safety advice the way we want them to – following advice to leave early is a challenge.

For example, imagine how difficult it would be to respond to a 'leave early' warning if you needed two disability workers to help you move about and you didn't have transport.

Research shows that vulnerable people are more likely to die in bushfires and house fires. The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission found that almost half the people who died in the bushfires were vulnerable, and three characteristics accounted for those deaths: being at least 70 years old, being 12 years old or younger, and/or having a disability.

National house fire fatality research has highlighted that almost two-thirds of fatalities were people with a disability, and international research shows that people with a disability are two to four times more likely than the general population to die or be injured in a disaster.

"Last summer, I went into a home on a fire call on a severe fire danger rating day and spoke with the two elderly residents. One was in a wheelchair, the house was cluttered and they were completely disengaged with fire safety," Olinda Fire Brigade member Elissa Jans said. "They were very vulnerable people who blocked themselves out from the world. These are the people we need to reach with this project."

The state has a Vulnerable Persons Register but it focuses on evacuation. This has limitations, especially if there's no time to evacuate during a fast-moving fire, or there are too many people to evacuate at once. So, CFA's PVP project aims to improve how well people who are at greatest risk prepare for fire. These people have a permanent or significant disability, need day-to-day support to live independently, or are older and frail and live alone.

Wendouree Fire Brigade member Don Garlick, who's on the PVP Project Working Group, believes this is a critical project for CFA.

"CFA is all about protecting life and property," Don said. "This project will help those most vulnerable to fire before they get into trouble. We will be saving lives and we won't even know about it, because the vulnerable people will be better prepared to save their own lives in an emergency."

A new program, Emergency Planning Advice Service (EPAS), is being developed to better engage people at greatest risk and focus on their bushfire planning



and preparedness. The program will ensure people have an equal share of the planning and preparedness conversations. The program acknowledges that people with a disability are often the expert in their own lives. They must manage everyday challenges, and bushfire is just another challenge.

Trials of the program, co-delivered with Red Cross, will run this year in Bendigo, Yarra Ranges Shire and Bass Coast Shire.

Mosquito Creek Fire Brigade member Carolyn Addington was one of the volunteers who trained to be an EPAS facilitator.

"I think EPAS is a fantastic idea. I'd just done some PAVS visits and it was fascinating because there are so many people who are isolated and need a hand understanding their fire danger ratings and what that means for their plan," Carolyn said.

A website has been set up about the EPAS program. Share your stories, ideas and suggestions at engage.cfa.vic.gov.au/preparing-vulnerable-people. To find out more about the PVP Project email angela.cook@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY ANGELA COOK

ART 2.0 LAUNCHES

While community engagement will look different this year because of COVID-19 restrictions, it's now easier than ever for CFA members to keep track of their activities.

Launched in 2019, the Activity Reporting Tool (ART) is a mobile-friendly application. It helps CFA members to record and track community engagement activities delivered in their local communities to raise awareness and encourage action on fire safety and preparedness.

ART has helped CFA to improve reporting on community engagement activity – and ART showed how CFA helped communities get ready for the 2020-21 summer,



PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIN, UNIFORM PHOTOGRAPHY

despite the challenges we all faced. Since July 2020, we've recorded more than 1,400 direct and indirect engagement activities and engaged with many thousands of community members.

ART has recently been updated and with more CFA members connecting with their communities online, the new version includes the ability to report regular programs delivered using Zoom or other online platforms.

Truganina Brigade Community Safety Coordinator Michele Abbott said ART is now more streamlined and even easier to use and each report takes less than two minutes to complete.

"I log on via Members Online then just step through the questions. I've even added a shortcut to my phone's home screen," Michele said.

"If I want to see what activities brigades have run in my district or region, I can go to the ART Dashboard. It's a great way to see which activities are popular, as well as uncover opportunities for collaboration and sharing of resources with other brigades."

ART comes with a digital user guide and new resources will be added to help you report your community engagement activity. You can also get support from your district Community Safety team.

You can find out more about ART, including user guides and FAQs, on Members online: www.members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelid=ART

STORY SOFIE ANSELM

Fire Safety Essentials making a difference

In October 2020, CFA launched Fire Safety Essentials, our first online community engagement program. Fire Safety Essentials is CFA's entry-level fire safety program that aims to challenge participants to recognise their personal risk and survive fire.

Fire Safety Essentials is an updated Fire Ready Victoria program, though face-to-face implementation is still to be rolled out. The program was developed in consultation with representatives from all regions across the state.

CFA's post fire season surveys and community consultation told us that while many people were aware of the fire risk in their area and agreed that fire was a threat to life and property in their area, they didn't think it was a threat to them personally. This program aims to challenge this paradox and help participants to use

tailored and localised information to understand and personalise their fire risk.

The program includes basic explanations of fire behaviour and an overview of last resort options. Pomborneit Fire Brigade Captain Garth Wesson said, "It's great that its adaptable to different brigade areas, fuel types and different risks around the state".

The facilitated program runs for 45 minutes to one hour and uses storytelling and local knowledge as methods to help participants understand their local and personal risk. Fire Safety Essentials is a starting point and a 'call to action' for participants to take further steps to plan and address their risk.

There are about 50 trained facilitators across the state and the program was delivered in all regions last fire season.

The feedback from community so far has been positive, with one community member saying, "It was delivered in a way that I understood, using language that I use every day. The video clips backed up what was being explained and the importance of having a fire plan".

In a survey of participants we found that:

- 89 per cent said that the session gave them a better understanding of bushfire and grassfire risk in their area
- 93 per cent said they would recommend this program to family, friends or neighbours that live in a fire-prone area.

To find out more or if you want to arrange a session in your area, contact your local community engagement coordinator.

STORY LAUREN EUDEY

ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY ONLINE

CFA has adapted to new ways of engaging communities online because of restrictions placed on face-to-face service delivery by COVID-19. To support CFA members in their efforts to safely and effectively engage communities, a range of digital engagement tools and resources were developed and implemented before the 2020-21 fire season.

New tools and resources include Zoom video conferencing, filming and live streaming kits, on-demand training packages and marketing resources that can be tailored. CFA is leading the way in this space, and our new resources have been shared with other Victorian emergency services organisations.

Over the past nine months, CFA delivered more than 270 online engagement activities to the Victorian community. Many of these sessions were recorded and made available to the community via social media after the live event. For example, the number of community members attending an online pre-season information session hosted by Harrow Fire Brigade was comparable to numbers from previous years when they were face-to-face. But the big advantage of recorded online sessions is that locals can watch them on demand. Through promotion by the brigade and local council, the Harrow brigade recording was viewed more than 300 times, which is a fantastic achievement.

Heath McClure, Harrow brigade member and Jilpanger deputy group officer, said the community found the session very informative and appreciated that local information was provided on screen by a local community member and a face they knew.

More than half the community members who attended online sessions of our introductory program, Fire Safety Essentials, had never attended a bushfire or grassfire session with CFA. Plenty Fire Brigade Community Safety Coordinator Matt Dwyer, who was involved in an online session, reported that they connected with residents who they were unable to reach even prior to the pandemic.

A local resident from Montrose said, "I definitely learned something new, it was interesting and good to hear local information. It was great to go online to watch it. With little kids and a busy schedule, I wouldn't have gone to a session at the brigade. This was really convenient."

North West Region Service Delivery Coordinator Rohan Thornton said a new tree changer resident in the Bend of Islands area was initially dubious about how successful an online session could be, but found it incredibly beneficial. Knowing the session was being recorded and made available afterwards, she was able to focus and participate in the session. Watching the recording later enabled her to reinforce messages and pick up information that she missed. The local brigade has since been working with the resident to develop a fire plan.



Using the filming and live streaming kits, a video of a face-to-face event uploaded to Tyers brigade Facebook page received 750 views in just five weeks. Across the state these kits have been used to create content for social media to support campaigns and other local messaging.

"The online training was amazing. Not only did it build on my existing skills, but it pushed me to be more creative in ideas to engage our community," South East Region Community Engagement Coordinator Jodie Burt said. "These skills can be carried on, not only during COVID times but into the future."

'Engaging Communities Online' is available to all members on CFA's Learning Hub (learninghub.cfa.vic.gov.au) to build the skills and confidence when using digital technology to engage communities online in an effective and professional way. Members learn about important aspects of online delivery regardless of the video conferencing platform being used, such as backgrounds, lighting, internet speeds and planning.

The training also covers Zoom-specific training, and best practice methods and techniques when filming on a smartphone or using the equipment provided in the filming and live streaming kits. Comprehensive digital engagement guidelines have been developed to upskill members, while ensuring that privacy, security and online safety standards meet the government policies and community expectations.

The transition to digital engagement in such a short period of time has been a challenging and rewarding experience for both volunteers and staff. There have been incredible success stories and lessons learned from these efforts. As restrictions ease, the advances made in connecting with communities in diverse and meaningful ways will continue beyond the 2020-21 fire wseason.

STORY LISA MACKENZIE



THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONTENT PORTAL

The Community Engagement Content Portal is CFA's one-stop shop for all your community engagement and campaign assets and has been developed to better enable you to engage with your community.

Peter Bullen, volunteer firefighter at Daylesford Fire Brigade, said that he has found the Content Portal easy to navigate and with over 800 resources, he has found "everything and more" to support his brigade's engagement activities.

The Content Portal is organised into different libraries that are categorised by themes and underpinning topics. The libraries include:

- core program resources for presenters to deliver community education programs
- all CFA's main publications available in print ready and web accessible versions
- animations, videos and graphics that are not specifically attached to any current CFA campaign
- resources brigades can use to get involved with current winter and summer campaigns. This includes social media assets, key messaging, animations, GIFs and videos
- a diverse range of tutorial videos, case studies, podcasts, animations, user guides and more, compiled to support your engagement and build your capability.

The Content Portal includes many features found in online platforms: the ability to 'follow' a resource so that you hear about new updates; a 'like' button to let us know what's working for you; and a search function to help you quickly find what you're looking for. All resources can be viewed in the browser or downloaded for you to use locally.

Resources to build your knowledge

Whether you're new to a community engagement role in your brigade or been doing it for a while, there are a number of resources available on the Content Portal to support you to enhance your engagement activities. Among these fantastic resources are eight conversational podcasts that include a variety of topics including having conversations about climate change, enhancing your social media presence, the importance of building relationships, and engaging with communities during an emergency. Also included are two short animations that describe how to create accessible and inclusive content for your community.

Accessing the Content Portal

We understand that accessing the Content Portal can be challenging for some members, so we've developed two instructional videos designed to help you with basic navigation of the Content Portal. These are available on the Content Portal home page – search 'Community Education and Engagement' on members.cfa.vic.gov.au for the link to the Content Portal.

If you feel you still need extra support, please contact your community engagement coordinator at your district office. Any question or query helps us to understand how we can continue to improve the Content Portal.

The Content Portal will be reviewed at the end of 2021. If you are interested in being consulted, email communityengagement@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY DEANNA SIMMONS

New team to boost child safety

In February 2020, applications opened to join the **Child Safety Champions Network** – a team of trained advocates working with CFA leadership and headquarters to boost child safety at the local level.

The network is part of the soon-to-be-launched Child Safety Compliance Strategy, which is CFA's framework for strengthening child safety at every level and all aspects of our work over the next three years.

The network will work closely with CFA leadership and the Child Safety Brains Trust to support the smooth rollout of reforms to embed the Victorian Child Safe Standards. Champions will help translate corporate strategy into practical outcomes on the ground, and to ensure changes are made in a smooth, cohesive way for teams and brigades.

As an organisation made up of members from many generations, and with a widespread interest in ensuring a family-friendly culture that empowers young people, there has been a huge response to the launch of the network.

"Maintaining the interest and ensuring the wellbeing of our future generations of firefighters is essential," said one member, who started as a CFA Junior in the 1990s.



"Now, my teenager is a fourth generation CFA volunteer and my youngest is excited to join this year."

Common reasons members have expressed interest in joining the network include:

- having a passion for mentoring and an eagerness to encourage more young people to join CFA
- recognising areas where child safety measures should be introduced or strengthened at CFA, and wanting to be part of pioneering those changes
- having enacted effective child safety changes within their own team or brigade, they are eager to share details and insights to improve the experiences of children and young people across the whole of CFA.

An incredible range and calibre of members have applied to join the Child Safety Champions Network, and interviews will begin soon. It's one way we are working to ensure a safe, supportive and empowering culture for children and young people in CFA and the communities we serve.

STORY HANNAH CATTANACH

More than three million reasons why CFA benefits

Ritchies supermarkets have raised more than \$3 million in donations for the 170 CFA brigades nominated over its 150-year history.

Emerald Fire Brigade is among the brigades benefiting from the Ritchies IGA Community Benefit Program. The brigade has received more than \$220,000 towards new equipment over the past 28 years thanks to local residents nominating them for donations through the Community Benefit Program.

"The ongoing funding and support from Ritchies has allowed us to provide a better level of service to our community by allowing us to invest in new vehicles, which not only helps us in the operational work but also in community education and engagement," Emerald Captain Paul Yandle said.

Diamond Creek Fire Brigade has also received a huge amount of support from its local Ritchies store and customers over the years, receiving more than \$130,000 to date.

"The funding has meant the brigade has been able to meet the growing expectations of the community and it has equipped us to better service their needs," Captain Peter Clarkson said.

The Ritchies Community Benefit Program is a loyalty program which allows members help raise funds for an organisation while



they shop. Many customers across the state have selected to raise funds for their local CFA brigade.

Ritchies Community Benefit Coordinator Penny Sayer said it's amazing to see these funds going to local communities.

"Currently CFA has received a total of \$3,069,162.39 over the 151 years the program has been running," Penny said.

"This is an amazing way to give back to the community and doing it while you shop makes it super easy. Last year we launched our new Ritchies Card and app making it even easier for community members to support their local CFA brigade.

"Since then we've had a good response from some of the brigades sharing information with their members to encourage them to download the Ritchies app or pick up a card at the nearest Ritchies store and nominate their brigade to benefit."

STORY HOLLY PENKETH

Structural helmets rollout complete

CFA has delivered the new structural firefighting helmets to more than 5,000 volunteer firefighters across Victoria. More than 2,000 were distributed to 179 brigades before distribution was suspended in March 2020 because of COVID-19 restrictions. In September 2020, the remaining helmets were distributed to members of 279 brigades.

The new structural firefighting helmets were funded as part of the State Government's \$60 million Fire Services Statement.

They were given to members who hold qualifications in search and rescue and the use of breathing apparatus to replace the existing structural firefighting helmets for firefighters trained to respond to structure fires and conduct internal search and rescue operations. The helmets feature an improved design and fit to benefit members.

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said the Pacific F15 Premium jet-style structural helmet offered firefighters a range of new features.

"This helmet has specific benefits for internal structure firefighting attack, and we're pleased to have been able to provide it to a large cohort of our firefighters," Jason said.

The helmet includes a one-touch visor, a full-coverage internal face shield, integrated helmet torch, comfort harness and liner, and flame-resistant multi-layer neck flaps. It also has a reinforced composite shell and an advanced polymer chassis.

"These helmets are modern, innovative and effective, and



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM

CFA is excited that they've been rolled out to more than 5,000 members across Victoria," Jason said. "CFA is committed to equipping firefighters with modern protective equipment as well as continuing to empower them following the delivery of fire services reform."

STORY MITCHELL GASTIN

New training props

In late 2020 CFA took delivery of two new pressure vessel mobile training props. These are in addition to the existing 10 mobile training props currently in use.

The new props simulate fires involving a large pressure vessel, such as a bulk LPG cylinder.

There are three burners that can be activated to create a range of realistic hot-fire training scenarios. These burners provide fire under the cylinder, from the pressure relief valve and from a ruptured pipe.

Mobile props are placed at various locations around the state for four weeks at a time, and they can be booked by a group training officer for group training. The Expression of Interest form, which is also the booking form, can be found on Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pageId=mobileTrainingProps

For more information, phone the mobile prop coordinator on 1800 035 211 or email mobile-props@cfa.vic.gov.au.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM

STORY TERRY PRENTICE

Joint State Champs at Mooroopna a

The excitement at this year's CFA/VFBV State Championships was overwhelming with more than 70 brigades across the state coming together to compete.

After the disappointing decision to cancel the 2020 Champs because of COVID-19, members were eager to showcase their firefighting skills and celebrate all that CFA represents.

The Champs kicked off on 21 March with the Urban Juniors, followed by Urban Seniors and Rural Juniors and Rural Seniors over the weekend of 27-28 March.

Brigades travelled from across the state to showcase their firefighting skills at Mooroopna Recreation Reserve – 187 teams from 73 brigades competed across the two weekends – and the Champs hosted about 1,000 CFA members each day.

As well as the competition events, the champs included an official opening ceremony, firefighting sprints, the Chief Chargers, training opportunities, a large corporate marquee, food vans and a children's entertainment area.

Acting Executive Director Volunteers and Capability Peter O'Keefe said it was fantastic to see CFA members able to get together again, celebrate and have fun.

"There has been some really great feedback received about this year's Championships, including having everything together at the one site and the corporate set-up," Peter said.

"Members have said they often don't get the opportunity to see exactly what goes on within CFA and the Championships definitely gave people the opportunity

to speak directly with a range of CFA directorates.

"The 2021 Championships will go down in CFA history because for the first time the Rural Juniors and Seniors and the Urban Seniors events were hosted across one weekend," Peter added. "I think there's a great benefit in having all brigades together to celebrate and understand the width of CFA talent.

"Congratulations to everyone who competed in this year Championships."

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said it was a great achievement having the Rural and Urban Champs together this year.

"My hat goes off to the VFBV organising teams," Jason said. "Bringing the championships together has really meant that this year's championships has been a fantastic celebration.

"For 2022, I'm really looking forward to seeing our community join in with the Championships and the fun," Jason added. "To have members of the public come along and watch out firefighters show their skills, cheer them on and become part of that environment is really going to bring the next level to 2022."

CFA CORPORATE TENT

There was a strong corporate presence at the State Championships including Training, Inclusion and Fairness, Bushfire and Fire Prevention and Preparedness, Volunteer Sustainability team, and lots more. The corporate tent was open throughout both weekends of the 2021 Championships, receiving up to 1,000 visitors a day.

Child Safety Manager Linda Franco said it was such a beautiful event seeing so many young people meeting in one place.

"For us it was really about ensuring we had a child safety presence so that our members could see us in action," Linda said. "Part of the work we've been doing over the Championships is trying to get young people to talk to us and share their views about child safety and their experiences in CFA."

The Safety Compliance team attended with its low voltage fuse removal and safe working at heights equipment, and Infrastructure Services displayed a range of vehicles including FCV, prototype pumper tanker and alpine pumper (pictured below). The recently announced CFA workwear was on show, along with PPE and other wildfire PPE and structure PPC.

Health Services provided information and general health advice and conducted free cardiovascular health checks for members. Health Services Officer Freya Andrews carried out a number of health checks throughout the weekend.

"We had a constant stream of people coming in and getting a free health check, which is great to see," Freya said. "Members who've attended the Champs in previous years said they always get a health check and really look forward to it."

Members of the Fire Equipment Maintenance (FEM) team were on hand to discuss fire equipment information with individuals and brigades. FEM provides brigades the opportunity to engage with local commercial and industrial building owners or occupiers about fire safety maintenance, awareness and training. The money raised by brigades doing this work helps support brigade operations and activities.

Land and Building provided information about newly-built fire stations and the



PHOTO: HOLLY PENKETH



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM

huge success

PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM



types of fire stations we build to support volunteer brigades. An informative time-lapse video was on display showing how a fire station was constructed. It started with a vacant lot and finished with the completed building.

Wellbeing, Emergency Memberlink, Honours and Awards, Performance Improvement, Communications and Stakeholder Relations, Business Improvement, Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Project, Member ID, Inclusion and Fairness, Procurement and Logistics, Youth Programs, Volunteer Recruitment and Retention, ICT, Youth Programs and Merchandise were also present at the Champs.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A wide range of training was available for CFA members at the 2021 State Championships.

In the CFA corporate tent, a Learning Hub display allowed members to set up their account, view training records and access online training opportunities.

Physical training in the learning and development display next to the urban track offered members several training activities. Members could complete the annual entrapment drill refresher, test their firefighting skills in the new hot-fire mobile training prop (pictured left), experience the XVR fire simulation program and try out the new FLAIM virtual reality equipment.

Acting Deputy Chief Officer David Maxwell said it was exciting to be able to bring

training directly to our people so they can get hands-on experience and see what's available.

"We were able to showcase one of our 13 training props at the Championships this year," David said. "The kitchen training prop displayed had been newly commissioned and allows our members to train in a safe and controlled environment. "The training props have a number of different environments including domestic, industrial and vehicle.

"Last year we trained approximately 5,000 members with the training props by delivering them to a number of locations across the state.

"Virtual reality [VR] training is really exciting in the fire services at the moment," David added. "We are trialing some virtual reality sets around each region of Victoria and once again this training will go directly to our brigades.

"VR training allows our volunteers to be in an immersive yet safe training environment.

"The XVR is different to VR as it allows more of an incident management perspective. VR allows this too, but is more of a hands-on experience with firefighters extinguishing or suppressing fires in scenarios including domestic kitchen fires and large aircraft fires.

"We really aim to take our training to members directly and provide them with the skills to become facilitators to further train one another."

STORY HOLLY PENKETH



Results from the Champs

URBAN SENIOR RESULTS

Dry aggregate

1	Kangaroo Flat A	24 points
2=	Kangaroo Flat B, Patterson River/Tatura	10 points

Wet aggregate

1	Kangaroo Flat A	96 points
2	Kangaroo Flat B	58 points
3	Melton	52 points

A Section

1	Kangaroo Flat	124 points
2	Melton	55 points
3	Wendouree	54 points

B Section

1	Kangaroo Flat B	74 points
2	Hoppers Crossing A	39 points
3	Pakenham/ Narre Warren	35 points

URBAN JUNIOR RESULTS

Dry aggregate

1	Melton A	60 points
2	Drouin/Bunyip	22 points
3	Kangaroo Flat A	20 points

Wet aggregate

1	Melton A	34 points
2	Kyneton	26 points
3	Drouin/Bunyip	19 points

Under 14 years aggregate

1	Melton A	48 points
2	Kyneton	38 points
3	Kangaroo Flat A	25 points

Under 17 years aggregate

1.	Melton A	46 points
2.	Drouin/Bunyip	38 points
3	Kangaroo Flat B	20 points

Grand aggregate

1	Melton A	94 points
2	Drouin/Bunyip	41 points
3	Kyneton	40 points

RURAL SENIOR RESULTS

Division 1 aggregate

1	Beazleys Bridge A	78 points
2	Eldorado A	32 points
3	Hurstbridge A	28 points

Division 2 aggregate

1	Sedgwick B	74 points
2	Sedgwick A	54 points
3	Springhurst B	26 points

Division 3 aggregate

1	Beazleys Bridge B	90 points
2	Eltham A	48 points
3	Rutherglen A	34 points

RURAL JUNIOR RESULTS

11 – 13 years aggregate

1	Napoleons/Enfield A	64 points
2	Beazleys Bridge A	24 points
3	Stuart Mill A	20 points

11 – 15 years aggregate

1	Strathmerton A	52 points
2	Springhurst A	48 points
3	Eldorado A	26 points

Champion team

1	Strathmerton A	66 points
2	Napoleons/Enfield A	64 points
3	Springhurst A	48 points



Recognising all CFA members

CFA's Recognition Program appreciates its people for their contributions towards CFA's mission to protect lives and property. It recognises and acknowledges positive behaviour and performance of all CFA people aligned to the CFA core values of safety, teamwork, adaptable, integrity and respect.

Recognition options include instant, informal gratitude using eCards and our more formal Quarterly Awards. Both are easy to participate in by going to Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelD=recognition

ECARDS

ECards are an informal and easy way to appreciate and recognise each other, whether you want to praise an individual or a team. Use an eCard to acknowledge someone for the work they've done, to check in or say thanks.

Members can download and save a card they'd like to send, enter a personal message and then email it to the worthy recipient.

Since the project's launch in October 2020, eCards have been downloaded more than 650 times.

QUARTERLY AWARDS

There are five Quarterly Awards, one aligning to each of our five CFA values. A nomination and selection process will determine the worthy winners who are announced by the CEO.

Nominations are open to all CFA people including those who are on secondment to CFA.

Executive Manager Organisational Development Louise Anderson congratulated the inaugural Quarterly Award winners announced in December 2020.

"Congratulations to all our first quarter winners," Louise said. "What a great achievement to be recognised by your fellow members. This program is a great opportunity for members to be noticed for their hard work throughout CFA."

"I'd encourage all members to nominate anyone they think has shown our CFA values, however big or small. You are best

placed to notice the efforts of the people around you, so take the opportunity to recognise them."

AWARD WINNERS FOR DECEMBER 2020

Safety: Les Carsen, Paul Gray, Celia Wallace, Chris Bayley, Jodie Burt

Teamwork: David Bentley

Adaptable: General Firefighter Program Implementation Team - Pam Twiss, Natalie Kenely, Lois Singleton, Peter Cecil, Geordie Akeroyd, Luke Griffiths, Neil Thompson

Integrity: Mark Kennedy

Respect: Libby Symons

Inclusion and Fairness Coordinator Libby Symons said she was honoured to receive the award for respect and thanked colleague Meghan Ripper for her nomination and support.

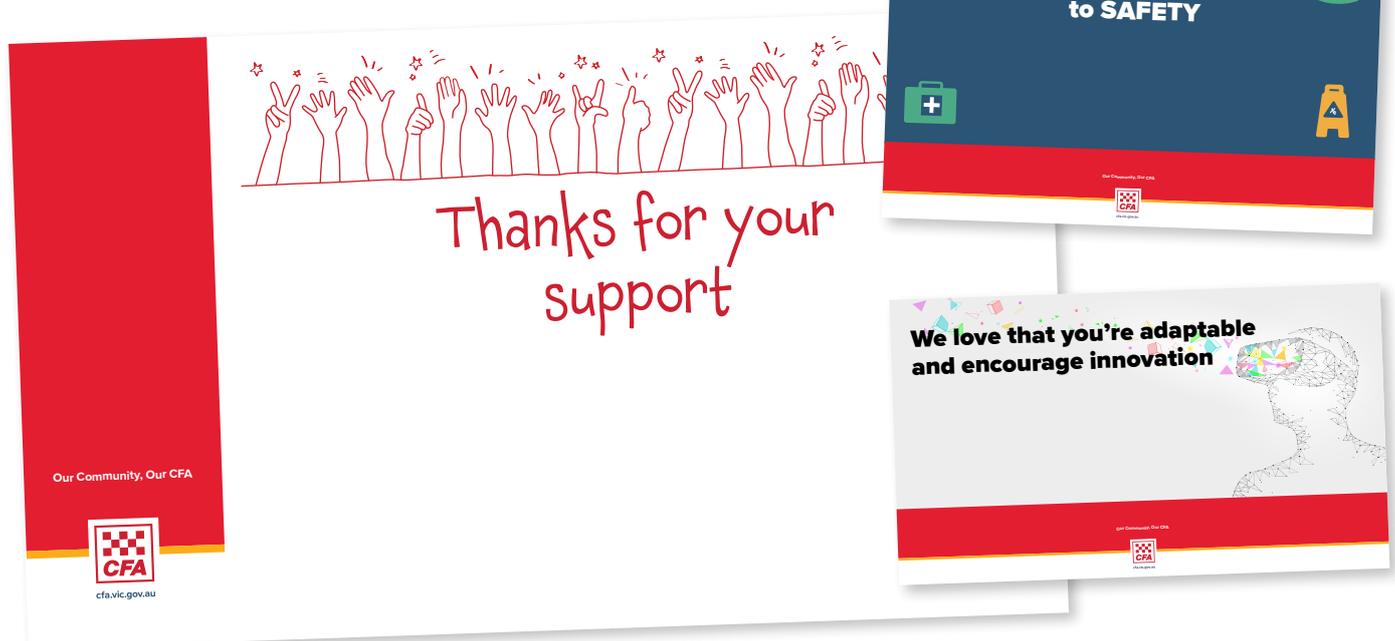
"The most exciting thing is that it demonstrates that being respectful can be as simple as taking small actions to accomplish great outcomes," Libby said.

"This award is for all of us who are working towards helping make CFA a safe, diverse and respectful place to volunteer and work."

The schedule for nominations for the Quarterly Awards is below.

	Nominations open	Nominations closed	Winners announced
Quarter one	1 January	31 March	April
Quarter two	1 April	30 June	July
Quarter three	1 July	30 September	October
Quarter four	1 October	31 December	January

STORY HOLLY PENKETH





Old trucks needing TLC

The fire Services Museum has a warehouse in Newport containing a vast range of old trucks in various states of repair. Here's what some of them look like now and how they looked when in service.

PHOTOS: FROM THE KEITH PAKENHAM COLLECTION

Fordson Blitz tanker (1942)



Austin 3.38N tanker (1964)



LaFrance tanker (1942)



Dodge pumper (1935)



R series Bedford tanker (1962)



How best to burn the bush

New research into the complexities of prescribed burning across Australian landscapes is supporting critical decisions about how and where to use fire to protect communities. With no one-size-fits-all approach to prescribed burning, strategies must be tailored to different environments and budgets.

Drawing on cutting-edge science, the Prescribed Burning Atlas is a website designed specifically to assist and inform prescribed burning strategies. Using the Atlas, land and fire management departments can tailor their approaches in ways that best reduce bushfire risk in their local area and within available budgets.

The Atlas was developed through the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC in partnership with the University of Wollongong, the University of Melbourne and Western Sydney University.

While developing the Atlas, researchers used case study areas to measure the impacts of different prescribed burning strategies on various landscape types across Australia. One of these case study areas was East Central Victoria. You can now use

the Atlas to look at how various factors, such as terrain, weather and climate change, will impact on different prescribed burning strategies in that region – including comparing the costs of different options and their effect on reducing the likelihood of life loss, property loss and landscape damage.

Importantly, the Atlas can also show the likely financial costs of different strategies, and the point at which spending more money on prescribed burning does not have any measurable effect on reducing the bushfire risk.

In addition to East Central Victoria, the Atlas covers 12 areas across NSW, ACT, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland, comprising different types of landscapes, including temperate forests, grasslands, savannas, deserts, woodlands and scrub.

You can learn more about the research behind the Atlas by visiting bnhcrc.com.au/research/riskmitigationsolutions or you can access the Atlas today at <https://prescribedburnatlas.science/>.

STORY BETHANY PATCH



New intranet and website coming soon

Volunteers and staff will soon be able to customise the CFA intranet homepage with links to the specific applications and information they need to carry out their roles.

Subject matter experts will also be able to manage their own content on the website, to help ensure information is up to date, using a new content management system (CMS).

All CFA's websites are currently undergoing major overhauls with redesigns of the main public site, the News and Media site, and Members Online (previously known as CFA Online/Brigades Online).

The sites will be relaunched on the new CMS over winter and will give volunteers, staff, and the wider community easier access to relevant, up-to-date information and more control over the information that's important to them.

On Members Online, an improved menu structure and search functionality will make it easier for members to find relevant people and information. All CFA members will be able to share news, photos and videos in the Members Online news section and several paper-based forms will be replaced with online forms.

On the public website, visitors will be able to set their location and get localised information about the Fire Danger Period, Fire Danger Ratings, bushfire risk, the nearest neighbourhood safer places and any CFA events happening nearby.

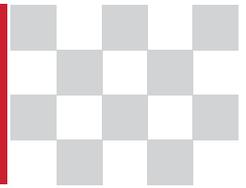
Visitors will also be alerted to any issues of concern across the state with automated links to specific warnings on the VicEmergency website.

Member Communications and Engagement Manager Bradley Thomas said implementing the new CMS is the first phase in improving CFA's websites.

"This is not a 'set and forget'," Bradley said. "The new CMS will make it easier for the CFA digital team to continuously improve the content and usability of CFA's websites, based on feedback from volunteers, staff, and the community."

The new sites have been developed in consultation with stakeholders from across CFA including volunteers, district and region staff and various CFA directorates.

STORY MARTIN ANDERSON



Why after action reviews are important

An after action review (AAR) is a key component of post-incident activities. The purpose of an AAR is to identify key observations, learning opportunities and good practice to ensure learning and improvement occurs within CFA.

It's vital to understand that an AAR is about improving performance and not about assigning blame. An AAR allows participants (either as individuals or as a group) to work through a series of questions that enables them to reflect on an experience to uncover lessons in a non-punitive environment.

The outcomes of AARs will inform the ongoing cycle of learning and improvement within CFA and the sector by validating and evaluating existing doctrine, arrangements, policy, procedure and incident/emergency management application. The outcomes will provide evidence to inform a range of activities including training, exercising, briefings and numerous products.

Throughout CFA many AARs are conducted all year round and we encourage all CFA members to

participate. Ask your brigade, district, and region what they are planning. AAR activities can be face-to-face, online surveys or individual input, so if you have something to share please put your hand up or contact the Lessons Management Centre for information and guidance: Lessons-Management-Centre@cfa.vic.gov.au



Personal experience of an after action review

It was the Queen's Birthday Weekend 2020 when the pager went off notifying of a structure fire in north-east Victoria with the possibility of occupants being trapped. The incident was not without its challenges and I encourage you to read the case study on the following pages if you'd like more detail about the incident.

In the days after the incident, I reflected on what had occurred and what I had done or could have done differently that may have changed the outcome. What surprised me, was that I couldn't think of anything that anyone could have done differently to change the outcome. I struggled with this a little because it was hard to accept there wasn't a lesson to learn from attending a fire of such significance.

This thought pattern led me to discuss the possibility of conducting a formal AAR with the group officer and then contacted the CFA Lessons Management Centre (LMC), both of whom helped us through the process in a changing COVID-19 environment.

After all the information had been collated, clear themes appeared. With the assistance of LMC a report was prepared that identified the key lessons.

Actions were then developed and agreed upon by key people from the brigade, group and district.

Some key actions from the AAR have been addressed to ensure that the lessons identified are learned. For example, the response tables for assignment areas for my brigade's response areas have been reviewed and updated; a review of BA support capability is underway and a case study has been prepared by LMC.

There are also further actions identified that will be progressed at brigade, group and district level, with at least two recommendations being passed onto CFA HQ for action.

I can see the significant benefits to CFA in the AAR process. It takes work and resources, but the benefits will be long lasting throughout the organisation if done properly. You will be surprised what you can learn and what improvements you can make. I know I have learned a lot more than I expected.

I hope that many more brigades will follow a similar process so that we can share what we learn from our experiences.

First lieutenant from a north-east brigade

Structure fire in north-east Victoria

Summary

In June 2020 at 11.30pm CFA was called to a structure fire. There were reports of multiple occupants who were both unaccounted for and injured. The incident was complex to manage, particularly in the early stages, because of the remote location and the number of occupants.

Incident overview

Resourcing plans were established based on the information provided by VicFire and the distance of the fire from the primary brigade. There was an expectation that the structure would be almost fully alight by the time crews arrived and that there may be people trapped inside. It was also considered that water supply and sufficient breathing apparatus (BA) support could be additional problems. A local brigade's pumper was deployed first to ensure some level of BA capability and plans were established to request further resources to provide both water and BA support well in advance.

The initial plan had two components, the rescue and support of the residents and the suppression of the fire. This plan evolved to include sectorisation of the incident including water, suppression and BA, and the setup of an incident emergency management team (IEMT) consisting of CFA, Ambulance Victoria (AV) and Victoria Police representatives. There was also an aim to reduce the impact of this incident on the members in attendance.

Prior to arrival, additional resources were requested, including 10 tankers, two pumpers and BA support from district headquarters. Only at this point was a tanker dispatched from the brigade that was geographically closest to the fire.

When they arrived at the incident, crews could see the building was fully alight and showing signs of structural collapse. However, the initial plan remained applicable. Initial reports of both injured and missing residents prompted further investigation including a size-up and search around the property, because there were no people at the front of the house. At the rear of the property, firefighters found four adults and five children with injuries that included second or third-degree burns, smoke inhalation, lacerations and severe shock.

Neighbours added to the confusion about how many people were staying at the house and the number of people missing. Despite this, one CFA member was able to gather information from an occupant regarding the people who were unaccounted for and confirmed there were 13 people in the house when the fire started. First-aid was priority and AV was informed of the number of patients so it could increase the number of resources sent to the scene.

As the rescue began, it became clear that it would not be possible because of the intensity of the fire. Firefighters in BA were unable to venture any further than one metre inside. Instead, efforts were focused on RECEO – rescue, exposures, containment,

extinguishment and overhaul, to prioritise tasks. The first priority were injured residents.

At this point, it became apparent that two key situations needed to be managed: the actual firefight and mass casualties. Overall incident control was seamlessly passed to a local brigade's 1st lieutenant for the firefight operations and the group officer managed the casualty sector with AV.

Crews began working effectively and cohesively to supply water to the pumper and a water sector was established. In addition, gas cylinders were being cooled as they vented. There was a problem ensuring adequate water supply levels – at one point crews ran out of water until further tankers arrived to relay water to the pumper. Also, the number of trucks on the road made it difficult for the trucks to manoeuvre and made it hard for AV to access the site, so a decision was made to open a paddock to allow tankers to enter and turn around.

A BA crew arrived at the same time as the district HQ brigade FCV and a BA sector was set up. However, it was never fully established, though BA and cylinders were obtained from tankers ferrying water.

After the incident was deemed under control, members were briefed about the likelihood of fatalities because two people were missing. Everyone was told that unless there was an absolute need, members should not go near the structure. A local brigade's catering truck and peer support were requested to attend.

Not long after this briefing, the missing occupants were found inside the house and the police were notified. There was a deliberate effort to keep the number of members near the structure to a minimum, except those undertaking overhaul or other essential activities. The police set up a crime scene logged all members going in and out of the area. After a discussion between CFA members and the police about disrupting the scene, it was decided that some of the hotspots in the structure would be left smouldering until daylight when the arson squad and fire investigators were on scene.

In the morning, the fire investigator noticed flaring of the hotspots and requested a brigade. When the fire was completely extinguished and forensics were finished, the bodies were removed and remaining crews returned to the station.

What went well

Size-up and gathering information: A 360-degree size-up was beneficial in this incident in identifying multiple factors including scene access, fire activity and casualties. In addition, the initial actions of firefighters to collect information such as the details of those who were unaccounted for and communicate it up the chain of command for effective use in incident management was invaluable.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF NORTH CENTRAL REVIEW



PHOTO: COURTESY OF NORTH CENTRAL REVIEW

Operational decision-making: Rapid yet well-considered and adaptive incident management and firefighter decision-making in challenging circumstances played a vital role in controlling this fire and the management of the casualties. This included seamless transfer of control to match incident complexity and experience, and clearly-defined incident priorities using SPADRA and RECEO for the protection and preservation of life.

Early resource request: This incident highlighted the importance of early requests for additional resources such as more pumpers, tankers, BA support, catering and other vehicles to enable effective incident management, crew support and fire suppression. The early request for resources reduced delays in combating this emergency.

Member wellbeing: This incident also highlighted the importance of prioritising member wellbeing and managing it effectively. Steps were taken to limit exposure to members on scene and CFA Peer Support was notified and attended the scene. Peers continued to provide support to firefighters after the incident. During the debriefing and follow-up, there was a focus on members' welfare.

Local knowledge: Local knowledge was described as instrumental in this incident because it allowed for the rapid identification of nearby helicopter landing sites for AV and the police. This allowed helicopters to land safely and closer to the scene than originally planned, which reduced the time it took to transfer casualties.

Lessons identified

Computer-aided dispatch (CAD) resource response: It was identified that the nearest support brigade was not notified of the call in the first dispatch. CAD resource response tables require regular review by brigades, groups and district staff to ensure they are up to date and provide appropriate resource response.

Managing tanker water supply: Planning and task allocation for incoming additional resources such as tankers is important. In this incident, the nature of the scene led to tanker congestion when queuing to supply water to the pumpers. There was a need for personnel to control and manage the tanker water supply, and when this was done there was better coordination and truck movement. Incident controllers could also consider allocating a second fireground channel to help manage resources.

Lighting: The incident took place at night and lighting was a problem because there were inadequate lighting resources available locally. Wherever possible brigades should ensure they have sufficient lighting available or request additional resources to ensure the scene remains safe for all members. It would also be worthwhile for brigades to improve the scene lighting capabilities on board their trucks, as this would have been used early in the incident.

Conclusion

This incident was challenging because of its location, the number of casualties, the number of people involved, the rescue and the time of the fire. Adaptable crews quickly gathered information, maintained a focus on the priorities, carried out an accurate size-up and used SPADRA and RECEO. They also requested additional resources early on to avoid delays in suppressing the fire.

The case study was developed by North East, brigade, group and region members who responded and participated in the incident after action review and wanted to share their experience. If you have any lessons to share, email Lessons-Management-Centre@cfa.vic.gov.au.

Dangers of house fires

Structural collapse

During a fire, a building's load-bearing structural elements, such as walls, may be damaged. In turn, this can exert unpredictable stresses on the rest of the structure, leading to a collapse. This is a significant risk for firefighters.

Many building structures now use lightweight materials and construction techniques in the form of engineered floor joists and roof trusses. These structural members use nail plates and pressed steel open webs designed to 'bite' into the outside of the timber. Although the depth of the bite can vary, it can be as little as 5mm to 10mm which is quickly compromised if the timber member is involved in fire. The lightweight steel used to create the open web is also far more susceptible to heat and subsequent failure.

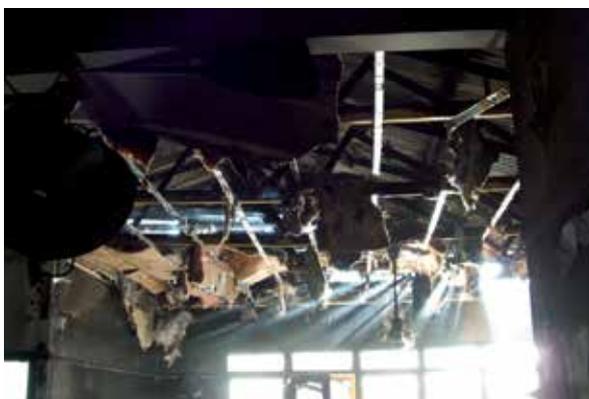
If you see any movement, sagging, cracking, spalling or any other signs a structure might be about to collapse, withdraw immediately to a safe location.

Here are signs that a structure may be about to collapse.

- **Cracks appearing in brickwork:** Smoke (even just a small amount) seeping through cracks or mortar joints could indicate a wall's form is failing. Cracks may appear at high levels or corners.



- **Concave ceilings:** Excessive amounts of water or foam directed into the ceiling area can weaken plaster, and a collapsing ceiling plaster can cause the whole ceiling to break down.



- **Concave floors:** When water is applied to a fire, it may accumulate or be absorbed in the floor. This can increase the weight of the load and cause the floor to sag and then collapse. If possible, avoid directing water onto absorbent materials such as wool, cotton bales, wood pulp and paper.



- **Walls out of alignment:** If walls appear out of line or begin to bulge, move away immediately. They may collapse with little warning, particularly in buildings with a tilt slab construction.



- **Unprotected steel distorting:** If steel framing starts to expand, twist or distort it may cause other parts of the structure to collapse.



- **Movement in a floor or roof:** If a floor subjected to a fire below is springy to walk on, it may collapse. The beams or joists supporting the floor may have been weakened by the fire.
- **Prolonged burning:** Fires burning over a long period of time will breach and weaken the load-bearing elements of a structure which could lead to collapse.
- **Loud noises:** If you hear loud noises and frequent cracking sounds during an intense fire, collapse may be imminent. The cracking sounds could indicate internal structural components are being weakened.
- **Sparks and embers:** A stream of sparks and embers rising in a plume may indicate parts of the internal structure (such as floors) have collapsed.

Personnel must immediately withdraw to a safe location if they see any movement, sagging, cracking, spalling or any other signs a structure might be about to collapse.

Stanhope structure fire exercise

Summary

Three CFA brigades had the opportunity to conduct a live burn exercise of a derelict house in 2019 following careful planning and authorisation. The exercise was an important learning opportunity for CFA firefighters, and Stanhope Fire Brigade identified lessons for future training and response.

Incident overview

In early 2018, the Stanhope brigade captain was approached by a new landowner in the Stanhope area to find out whether the local brigade could remove a derelict house so that a new home could be built. The owners were advised that the brigade could burn the building as a training exercise, however they would need to follow *SOP 6.03 Derelict Houses – Burning Of*, which required complex approval.

The brigade captain established a burn plan including SMEACs and risk assessment. Overall, the process took over 12 months and many hours of volunteered time. In the lead-up to the event, there were significant changes to operational staff at the district, which meant many people had to be briefed about the exercise before the final sign-off could be provided. During the planning stages, it was decided that if the fire was initially lit on the couch in the lounge room at the south end, it would burn slowly for about three hours against the predicted wind, allowing crews wearing breathing apparatus (BA) time to gain inside experience and understanding of internal fire behaviour.

After the planning was complete and approvals were received, Powercor attended the site to relocate the underground power before the burn. Also, a registered asbestos remover attended to remove all asbestos at the expense of the property owner.

In August 2019, all those taking part met at Stanhope Fire Station for a briefing before going to the property. Stanhope pumper and tanker were on scene, along with Girgarre brigade's FCV and tanker and Echuca brigade's support vehicle. About 20 CFA members from the three brigades were involved in the exercise. In addition, a commander from District 20 attended to assist in training members in forcible entry, gas cooling, thermal imaging camera operation and BA search and rescue. Further training was also undertaken in BA skills maintenance, hose relaying and advanced pumping in a rural setting.

The lounge room of the house was lit by the property owner at about 11am. The fire took hold quicker than expected because of strong winds and a wind tunnel along the hallway where a door had been removed by the asbestos removers. As the fire took hold, it was clear from the amount of black smoke coming from the weatherboards in the pitch of the roof that the roof was going to collapse soon. The property was fully alight in 13 minutes and the roof collapsed after 16 minutes.

After the house had burned to the ground, the owners used farm machinery to push the remains up to ensure a clean burn with very little rubble left to be cleared up.



What worked well

Planning: Although it was time-consuming, with many stakeholders needing to be regularly briefed, the planning was vital to the success of the exercise. It was also a rare opportunity to understand the amount of work involved in such an exercise.

Training opportunities: The exercise provided invaluable training opportunities to members in a controlled environment, including truck placement, hose set-ups, pumping, how to set up, how to communicate and understanding fire behaviour.

Teamwork: Involving neighbouring brigades in the exercise allowed members of Stanhope brigade to work with people who would support them in real-life incidents, and for brigades to share knowledge, techniques and skills.

Echuca support: The exercise enabled all members to work with a new vehicle for the first time, the Echuca support, and understand its capabilities regarding rehab and BA control points, and find out what support it can provide in a going incident.

Recognising the risks of structural collapse: The crew at the site of the training burn recognised the changes in fire behaviour and resulting conditions. The change to the pitch of the roof provided crews with clear evidence that structural collapse was likely to occur. Effective hazard identification, such as structural collapse, allows for appropriate safety measures to be implemented to ensure firefighters remain safe. Firefighter safety at any training or emergency incident is underpinned by continuous dynamic risk assessment and a safe person approach by all personnel.

Lessons identified

Prior training: The value gained from an exercise like this would be improved by ensuring members have undertaken additional prior training in internal fire behaviour so a greater focus can be placed on furthering existing skills and higher-level skills.



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED BY STANHOPE FIRE BRIGADE

More exercises: Brigades should actively seek to identify opportunities in their communities to learn about structure fire response in a safe, controlled environment. Without the generous offer from a member of the community and the continued support of district staff, this opportunity would not have been possible. There was some critical feedback on social media platforms which was challenging to manage, however the brigade gained valuable training insight that negated any unwarranted criticism. By increasing the number of these exercises, more brigades would develop skills in a controlled environment.

Structure fire behaviour – flow path: Strong winds can increase the intensity, speed and direction of a fire, especially when windows are broken or, like in this exercise, a door had been removed. In a structure fire, convection currents convey the hot gases produced by combustion up stairwells and through openings, spreading the fire to the upper levels or laterally through the structure. Cooler air moving in to replace the hot gases rising from the fire helps to accelerate the burning by supplying the fire with additional oxygen. Prevailing weather conditions can also have an impact on fire spread in a structure.

Conclusion

This exercise was an invaluable experience for the brigades involved to train together and for less experienced members to experience a going structure fire. Furthermore, this fire highlighted to the brigade members the intensity of structure fires, particularly older weatherboard homes, and how little time you have before the structure begins to collapse. To develop skills and knowledge all firefighters should be encouraged to undertake training exercises that reflect real-life incidents. CFA firefighters are encouraged to review and continuously improve their knowledge of fire behaviour

Brigade discussion points

After reading this case study, consider the actions you would take.

- How would you undertake a risk assessment?
Consider what your risk assessment would be during the planning stages of a structure fire training burn. Then consider what your dynamic risk assessment might identify in rapidly changing conditions during the burn. How do you respond?
- What resources do you think are required at a scene like this one? Are there any specialist skills required?
- Discuss with your brigade heat transfer in structure fires. How does the change in conditions affect your initial plan and what changes do you need to make to the original tactics? Remember safety first.
- Discuss the actions you would need to implement when confronted with the risk of structural collapse. What role does the safety officer perform here? Consider establishing a collapse zone, vehicle positioning, issuing a red flag warning and what changes you need to make in your firefighting strategy.

This case study was developed by Stanhope Fire Brigade who wished to share their experience. Thanks to all the crews who participated in this exercise.

If you have any lessons to share email Lessons-Management-Centre@cfa.vic.gov.au

References

Structural Firefighting Learning Manual: repository.
cfals.info/content/structural_firefighting

SOP6.03 Derelict Structures – Burning of: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pageId=displayDoc&docId=002797

Understanding why people 'wait and see'

When there's a high risk of bushfire, the primary message to at-risk communities is to leave early – either the night before or early in the morning. But anecdotally we've known for some time that many people are likely to 'wait and see'.

To help emergency services' personnel understand why people at threat from a bushfire delay their decision, the Knowledge and Evidence team collaborated on research projects to investigate 'wait and see' and the key factors influencing people's decisions. The findings will help CFA members to tailor advice and support for residents in high risk areas.

Size of the 'wait and see' issue

The research literature shows that at least 25 per cent of residents delay their protective decision-making, and some studies report that between 45 to 60 per cent of respondents delay their protective decisions. The key conclusion to be drawn from the literature is that delay in protective action decision-making is the predominant response to bushfire threat in Australia.

The major reason why waiting to see what happens is viewed as undesirable is that it's associated with late and dangerous evacuation, increasing the likelihood of injury and fatalities or being caught in an undefendable shelter.



Reasons people delay protective decisions

In the simplest terms, people believe that waiting and then leaving if threatened by bushfire is a safe strategy to improve the chance of simultaneously protecting their property and their personal safety. They choose to delay because they want to be safe from bushfire but don't want their property to be vulnerable to threats such as falling embers which may be readily extinguished.

They see delay as the best strategy because they believe the risk is limited because of low fire threat, expectation of survival, and warnings and protection from the fire services. To them, delaying also means less cost, disruption and inconvenience.

People don't tend to defer timely action due to indecision, but because delaying is inherent in their archetypal response to bushfire threat. Delaying reflects how they prioritise actions depending on their predominant archetypal attitudes and responses to bushfire.

Women and men assess the costs and benefits of delay in a similar way. Women are willing to delay protective actions in the same way as men, though they appear to prefer to respond to risk sooner than men.

Implications for emergency services

With so many people delaying action for what they see as rational reasons, combined with the impact of delay on personal safety, bushfire safety policy and programs should better address the reasons for delay and offer solutions. Community bushfire safety policies and programs that take into account this predominant 'wait and see' behaviour are more likely to be effective than just requiring certain behaviours determined by emergency agencies.

It's essential that emergency agencies are more adaptable and responsive to individual and local differences and identify, assess and challenge the assumptions they have made in the past about individual and community needs and responses.

Agencies need to better understand and take into account people's needs and values including the archetypal behaviour that may be inherent in their decision to delay protective action. This would include changing people's risk-reward assessments through more targeted:

- information and warnings about bushfire risk and impact
- information about property preparation to reduce vulnerability and enhance survivability
- support for evacuation planning including pre-event organisation and safe escape routes
- development of sophisticated individualised evacuation triggers.

How CFA is using this research

The findings of this research are an important contribution to the social science literature on the vexed issue of 'wait and see'. The evidence points to the need to destigmatise the decisions people make before and during bushfires, and for agencies to adapt their approaches to better take account of how people will continue to behave. To this end, CFA has been exploring ways in which bushfire archetypes can help us understand the needs and issues faced by individuals living in high bushfire risk areas.

Bushfire archetypes

Archetypes are a lens that can be used to understand human behaviour and decision-making by grouping key characteristics together. In the context of bushfires, Dr Ken Strahan identified seven self-evacuation archetypes based on a variety of influencing factors including risk perception, stakeholder perceptions, the perceived effectiveness of preparedness actions, self-reliance, experience and intended response.

Through a Safer Together-funded research project, it was possible to work with a range of key stakeholders at CFA and DELWP to start to devise ways to use the archetypes in community engagement and education approaches. There were also sub-projects exploring the potential for the archetypes to assist with predictive services and modelling of evacuation during bushfires and exploring the implications of the research for how we monitor and evaluate community safety programs.

Next steps

A video has been developed to communicate the key findings of the research to CFA members and other interested stakeholders. An initial key focus will be internal capability building around the archetypes and exploring ways the research can be used to enhance existing community safety programs or integrated into pilot initiatives.

A range of opportunities exists to collaborate across CFA and with DELWP to use the findings to inform how we address the challenges we face in adapting our overall approach to better meet the needs of the people living in the communities we serve. This will require thinking outside the square, trying new things and learning from both the successes and failures. It doesn't simply mean better targeting of information to communities. It requires more of a paradigm shift in our approaches.

It's an exciting prospect and one that builds on the latest evidence from social science research, combined with the collective knowledge and experience of CFA members, and collaboration with individuals and households living in Victoria.

For more information email John Gilbert, Program Manager Research and Evaluation: j.gilbert@cfa.vic.gov.au

Thanks to Woodend locals and CFA volunteers for helping to make this video.

STORY JOHN GILBERT

References

Strahan K, Gilbert, J. The Wait and See Literature: A Rapid Systematic Review. Fire 2021, 4(1), 4: <https://doi.org/10.3390/fire4010004>

Watch our video about how people behave when there's a bushfire threat, and then think about the implications for how you engage with residents in your community: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTzx7G390_M&feature=youtu.be

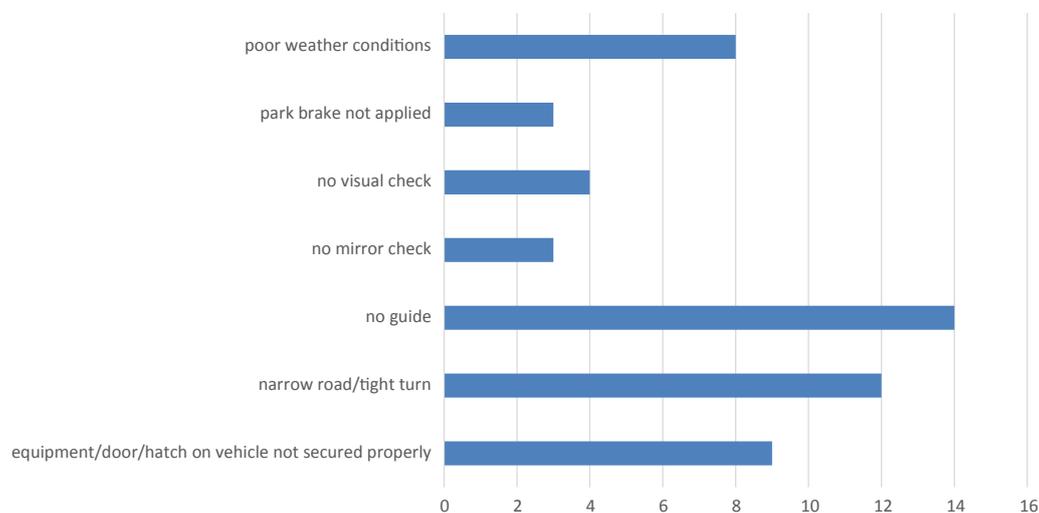
CFA vehicle collisions

Between January 2016 and September 2020, CFA vehicles were involved in 194 reported collisions. The incidents share common contributing factors and we've outlined some important lessons to remind drivers how they can mitigate some of the risks.

About 58 per cent of CFA vehicle incidents result from collision with a stationary vehicle or object. Other incident types included:

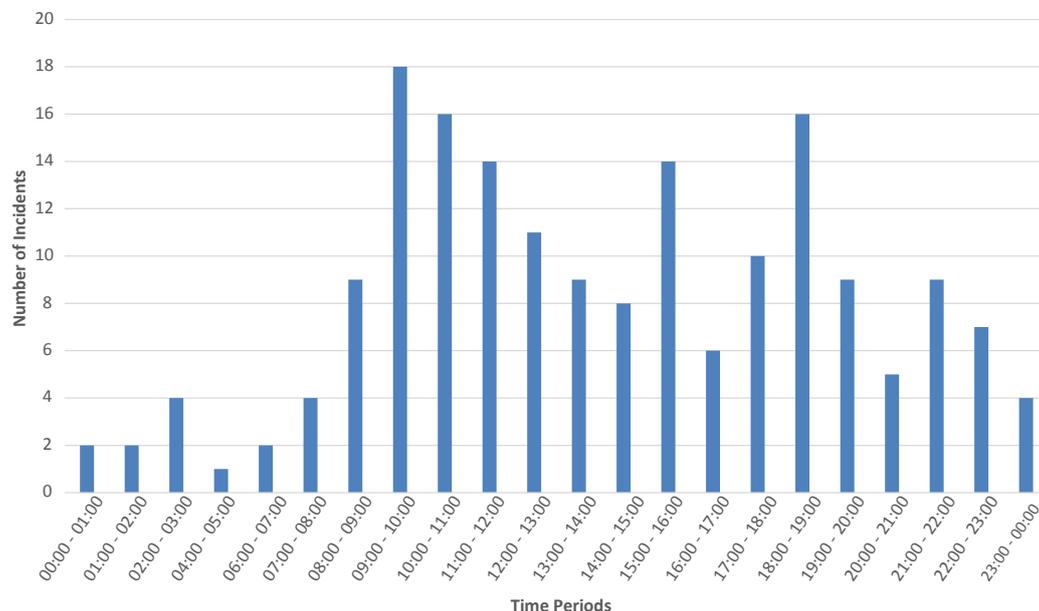
- fire station engine bays and doors (30 accidents)
- CFA vehicle hit by another vehicle or object (22)
- moving vehicle hit by CFA vehicle (11)
- CFA vehicle hit kangaroo (7)
- bogged vehicle (3)
- equipment falling from vehicle (1)
- impacted by fire (1)

Several contributing factors were identified in these incidents including: failure to use a guide or spotter; no visual check by driver; unsecured equipment/hatches/doors; failure to conduct a mirror check; failure to apply the park brake; equipment failure; other drivers not maintaining situational awareness and causing a collision; road debris; time of the day; and poor weather conditions. The bar chart below shows the most common contributing factors to CFA vehicle collisions.



Of the reported collisions between 2016 and 2020, 70 per cent occurred between 9am and 8pm. This isn't surprising given that most collisions happened while turning out to incidents, and more incidents occurred during the day. Also, there's a higher volume of traffic during the day which increases the risk. Collisions involving a CFA vehicle travelling Code 3 were just as common as vehicles travelling Code 1, which shows that drivers need to focus at all times.

The bar chart below shows the time the incidents occurred.

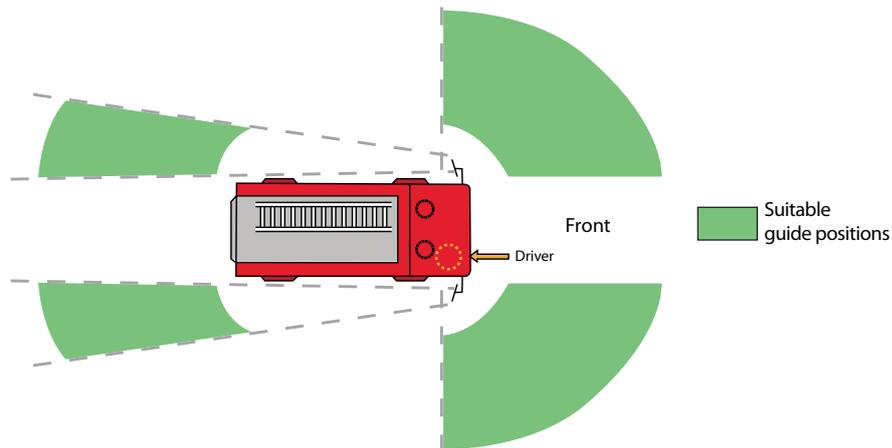


Lessons identified

Secure equipment, hatches and doors: It's important to check that all equipment is stowed correctly, and lockers, hatches and doors are securely shut. Ensure there is no risk of equipment falling from the vehicle or there are protruding objects that could cause a collision.

Manoeuvre with a guide or spotter: There will be times when you need to manoeuvre a vehicle with the aid of a guide who uses recognised arm signals. The guide can see areas that are invisible to the driver and it's better if there are two people watching for hazards. Don't rely on shouted instructions in a noisy environment. The guide should position themselves either at the front or the rear of the vehicle, facing the vehicle and remaining visible to the driver at all times.

Reversing a large vehicle is usually more difficult than controlling the same vehicle moving forward. Ensure the mirrors are correctly adjusted. If you have a person available who may not understand the hand signals to be used as a guide, you should use them as a spotter to help identify possible hazards and provide general guidance via voice instructions. Always use a guide or spotter if one is available.



Observations while moving: Be alert to the actions of other road users and to events taking place around you by regularly checking the road ahead and your mirror for other traffic and vehicle speed. Be aware of blind spots and check over the appropriate shoulder. Check the load and equipment through mirrors. Listen for unusual sounds. Maintain situational awareness and visually check the environment around you for hazards, such as partially lowered doors when leaving the fire station.

Driving in wet weather conditions: Driving on wet roads, particularly after an extended hot spell, can create certain hazards. Visibility may be impeded and traction may be reduced especially if the vehicle has heavy lug (off-road) tyres. After a dry spell dust and oil on the road make it slippery. Skidding is also possible when you change direction suddenly, brake sharply or accelerate quickly. In these conditions and in rain consider your speed, reaction time, braking distance and visibility.

Driving at night: To maximise vision at night, it's important that the windscreen and rear window are clean on the inside and outside. When there are no oncoming vehicles, the driver should use high-beam lights to give visibility over a maximum distance. You must, of course, lower the beams (dip them) when there's an oncoming vehicle.

Resources

For more information read CFA's *Drive Vehicles Under Operational Conditions* manual on Members Online: repository.cfals.info/content/drive_vehicles_under_operational_conditions



Strike team vehicle collision



Situation

A strike team was operating in a different part of the state from their home district. During a night shift, the strike team was divided into smaller groups so it could work over a distance of about 60 kilometres. One group consisting of two ultralight tankers (ULT) was tasked with meeting up with the strike team leader (STL) and a crew from DELWP to help extinguish spot over fires along a dozer track.

To meet the STL and DELWP crew, they had to drive along a dozer track that had recently been dozed to create a fire break. The track soil was very fine and loose and could be described as bulldust in many areas. The track varied in gradient from flat to about 21 degrees.

When the crews arrived at the meeting point late at night, the two ULTs parked behind the stationary STL's field command vehicle, with the first ULT stopping about 15 metres from the FCV. The driver of the first ULT applied the park brake, left the engine running and exited the vehicle.

At the same time, a member of the STL's FCV was walking around the vehicle to adjust the work/scene lights. While walking around the rear of the FCV, he noticed the first ULT rolling towards him. He was struck between the two vehicles and thrown out to the side. First-aid was given at the scene for a leg puncture and then the member received additional first-aid at the division command (DivCom) before being transported to hospital. He was released the following day after having several stitches in the leg wound.

Contributing factors

In most collisions there are a series of contributing factors that result in the incident. This incident involved the following.

Logbook

In the days leading up to the incident, several people from different districts had driven the ULT. One of these drivers made an entry in the logbook that stated 'handbrake'. There was no further explanation, but the team investigating the incident assumed the entry meant the handbrake may have been faulty. The investigation team couldn't determine whether the fault was reported and who it was reported to. As the strike team was operating from a DivCom and not a staging area, there was no district mechanical officer present.

The vehicle logbook was not checked at the start of the shift.

Unfamiliar vehicle and terrain

The crews involved in the strike team were operating in terrain that differed from their home district. They were also operating in vehicles that belonged to other brigades. Operating in an unfamiliar environment, especially at night, can present some challenges. At night gradients don't look as steep as during the day, so it's important for drivers and crew leaders to monitor local conditions and be aware of and adjust to the driving environment.

Vehicles have different park brake operating systems and drivers can't be expected to know all of them. In this case, the ULT is based on a Toyota Landcruiser ute. The investigation team spoke to many people who regularly drive Landcruisers and all stated that it's well known that the park brake must be fully applied to hold it on a gradient. The vehicle was inspected the following day and the park brake complied with roadworthy standards and was within the manufacturer's specifications. This incident highlighted the need to fully apply the park brake.

Ground conditions

The soil was very loose with fine dust causing bulldust conditions in many parts of the track. This dust resulted in a build-up of fine soil in front of the wheels which initially kept the vehicle stationary. However, some minor movement allowed the vehicle to roll over the dust and start moving down the gradient.

Lessons identified

Vehicle logbooks: These should be checked at the start of every shift and all appropriate entries made.

Report faults: If a fault is recorded, drivers and crew leaders should ensure the fault has been reported and rectified before use if immediate attention is required.

Night conditions: Drivers and crew leaders need to be aware that gradients don't appear as severe at night and ground conditions and hazards are more difficult to identify.

Remain with vehicle: Unless operations determine otherwise, drivers should remain in their vehicles when stopped or parked on gradients if the driver cannot guarantee that the vehicle is secure.



Living with chronic pain

In 2020, 3.37 million Australians were living with chronic pain, including about one in five people aged 45 years and over. National Pain Week (July 27 – August 2) aims to raise awareness of the problem and advocate for Australians living with chronic pain.

Chronic pain is pain that lasts beyond the time the body is expected to heal following surgery, trauma or another condition. It can also exist without a clear reason. Living with chronic pain generally restricts the activities people can undertake.

Management of chronic pain will vary from person to person, though physical activity and exercise can be great ways to help manage the pain and its associated impacts. Physical activity may improve the severity of chronic pain, improve overall physical and mental health and physical functioning. Beneficial activities include:

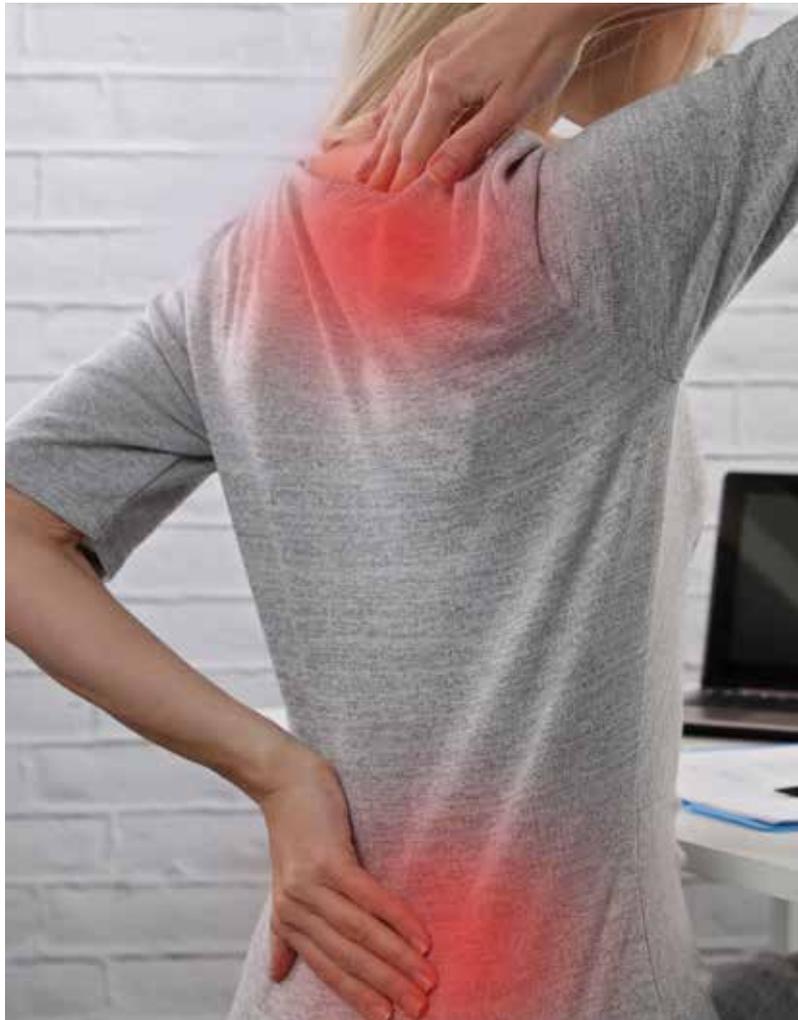
- aerobic programs
- pilates
- tai chi
- yoga
- swimming
- strength programs
- flexibility programs
- core and balance programs

It's important to work with healthcare professionals to establish the best options for you.

CFA Health Services has developed exercise programs on Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pageld=Health_Services

If you have any questions about chronic pain and exercise, email healthwatch@cfa.vic.gov.au

To find out more go to nationalpainweek.org.au



Report accidents and hazards on CFASafe

It's vitally important to ensure that accidents, near misses and hazards are reported to CFA so that improvements in safety can be made to CFA locations, equipment, processes and procedures. CFASafe is a web-based system that records details of CFA incidents and hazards, so that actions can be taken to eliminate or minimise the likelihood of them reoccurring.

After a report is recorded in CFASafe, notifications are sent to the relevant CFA people including the employee's line manager or volunteer's commander. Information about the progress of the report can be found by logging into CFASafe and looking at your own report, or by asking your line manager or commander. It's important to note that CFASafe is a record keeping system, not a communications system, so the relevant people need to communicate about the report to ensure information is up to

date and the status is known by all those involved.

CFASafe report numbers and trends have been reasonably similar for the past six years, not taking into account major events such as the Hazelwood mine fire 2014 and the 2019-20 fire season which showed dramatic increases.

There was a significant decrease in CFASafe reporting in 2020 and more specifically the last six months of the year probably because of COVID-19 and Fire Services Reform. After reform the average number of monthly reports dropped by almost 35 per cent.

To help CFA prioritise actions to improve member safety, always report accidents, near misses and hazards online.

STORY DAVID MACFARLANE

New Peer Support Operations Manual

The Peer Support Program has been providing vital wellbeing and mental health support to CFA members and their families for more than 30 years. The importance of this support was clear during the 2019-20 fire season, when peers were deployed alongside strike teams to give them a consistent point of contact.

Peers have also been invaluable throughout the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The program, a key pillar within Organisational Wellbeing, is provided to all members of CFA, including their immediate families, who may require support in response to difficult or potentially traumatic life events. The event may be related to a member's involvement with CFA or personal.

In 2018, an independent review of CFA's wellbeing services identified a lot of positive sentiment for the program. CFA members appreciated the work of peers and the peers themselves unanimously found it rewarding to connect with and help others. The review also highlighted that the program lacked up-to-date operating procedures around peer processes.

During 2020, CFA partnered with AP Psychology and Consulting Services who have a lot of experience working with emergency services organisations. This project partnership allowed CFA to critically evaluate and update existing peer support materials, including the Operations Manual which was last updated in 2012. The Operations Manual outlines the operating procedures and guidelines for delivering peer support.

The main aim of the project was to produce a common set of practical resources for members of Peer Support to ensure the program was delivered more consistently across the state and in line with current best practice. A working group of CFA volunteers and staff consulted with key stakeholders to develop new content for the manual.

Peers are trained to provide individual and group-based psychological first-aid and deliver the Wellbeing Services Awareness Package. They are trained to remain flexible when they deliver



Above: District 13 Peer Coordinator Pat Bigham handing over the new manual to District 13 Peer David Miller

the services and respond to the needs of the people they are supporting, with all interventions being a partnership between the parties involved. As a result of updating the resources, members may notice subtle changes in the way peer support is delivered across CFA.

One of the key enhancements of the updated manual is a change to the model of psychological first-aid in which peers are trained. This model is 'Prepare, Look, Listen, Link and Leave', which will streamline support for both individuals and groups. It's easy to use, backed by evidence and endorsed by the World Health Organisation.

District 13 Peer Coordinator Pat Bigham, who was a member of the working group, said times have changed and CFA needed to update its methods.

"The times of sitting in a circle and everyone having a say are long gone and having guidelines that are clear and easy to understand will really help our peers support members after potentially traumatic events," Pat said.

"Being in attendance at an incident allows peers to support those who need immediate support, but also provides an opportunity to give further information about what members may experience over the coming days, including how they can access psychological support after the event."

Another key change based on research is to ensure that peer support is offered to members before they carry out an after action review. Further to this, it's encouraged that any group-based psychological first-aid session is conducted within 72 hours of the potentially traumatic event or incident. This allows members to deal with their own wellbeing first and then be able to focus objectively on the after action review without the added pressure of potential trauma.

Organisational Wellbeing is also working with the Inclusion and Fairness team to ensure services delivered by Organisational Wellbeing are accessible and sensitive to the needs of people from diverse backgrounds.

If you have any questions about the revised Peer Support Program Operations Manual, phone Wellbeing Services Adviser Tim Rogers on **03 9262 8904** or email **Peer.Program@cfa.vic.gov.au**.

STORY TIM ROGERS

Our new medical provider and medical officer



Based on your feedback asking for a medical provider that has better coverage across Victoria, CFA has appointed a new medical services provider – InjuryNet.

InjuryNet has provided medical services to a range of emergency services organisations including Victoria SES, Ambulance Victoria, NSW Fire Rescue and NSW Rural Fire Service.

InjuryNet is well-positioned to provide all CFA members with a range of medical

services, including physiotherapy and psychology, with more than 350 clinics statewide.

The new medical provider will help deliver CFA's medical programs including vaccinations, medical referrals, pre-employment medicals, new volunteer member medicals and the CFA Medical Officer 24/7 on-call triage service.

We would also like to introduce the newly-appointed CFA Medical Officer Dr David Milecki. David has more than 30 years' experience in occupational health and will be supported by an experienced medical advisory team with extensive expertise in public health, infectious disease and occupational medicine.

CFA's Health Services Department seeks to continuously adapt and improve its services to enhance the experiences

of members. Its objective is to mitigate illness and injury, promote wellness and optimise the health and safety of our members through the delivery of confidential, fit-for-purpose, effectively coordinated programs. Engaging an appropriate medical provider will help to ensure long-term viability of our programs.

Compliance with CFA's medical programs is essential for maintaining the safety of CFA people while contributing to CFA's mission of protecting lives and property, and it's important that you notify CFA through the medical referral program if there's been a change in your medical condition.

For more information about our medical programs go to members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelId=HealthSurveillance

STORY JOANNE KERR

World Heart Rhythm Week

Cardiac arrests occur when the heart's electrical system malfunctions and the heart stops beating. This malfunction causes arrhythmias, which can include an increase or decrease in heart rhythm.

World Heart Rhythm Week (7-13 June) focuses on raising awareness about the detection of potentially life-threatening arrhythmias. Find out more by visiting heartrhythmalliance.org/au/heart-rhythm-week

A simple on-the-go 30-second pulse check could help you identify an irregular heart rhythm. To do this, gently place two fingers on the outer aspect of your opposite wrist.

Count the beats for 30 seconds, then double it to get the beats per minute (bpm). On average, this should be between 60 to 100bpm.

These beats should be a consistent rate and rhythm the entire time. If you're concerned you may have an arrhythmia, visit your GP as soon as possible.

Symptoms of arrhythmias

- Chest pain
- Fainting
- Fatigue
- Light-headedness or dizziness
- Racing heartbeat
- Slow heartbeat
- Fluttering or pounding in your chest
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating

Lifestyle risk factors that may increase your risk of developing a heart arrhythmia include:

- being overweight
- excessive alcohol and caffeine consumption
- drug abuse
- smoking
- stress or anxiety
- electrolyte imbalances.

CFA Health Services provides confidential cardiovascular health checks with personalised health and lifestyle advice for members.

To book a session, email Healthservices@cfa.vic.gov.au.

For more information about heart health, visit the Health Services pages on CFA Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelId=Health_Services

For more information on arrhythmias, visit heartfoundation.org.au/conditions/heart-arrhythmia





PHOTO: SAMANTHA SUNDERLAND

The power of the safety share

In early February 2021, an enthusiastic group of District 10 leaders and future leaders gathered at a greyhound racing club in Sale. Despite the strict COVID-19 safety compliance measures, the snaking line moved quite easily through contact tracing details, temperature checks, sanitising and mask issue.

After a keynote address by the deputy chief officer, it was time to discuss safety. The aim of the session was to gather ideas and plan for the introduction of a district Health and Safety Committee that will give volunteers a two-way consultative platform to share issues, views and concerns.

To begin the discussion the regional health and safety adviser asked for someone in the audience to contribute a safety share. A safety share is a specific health and safety subject at the beginning of a meeting or shift to remind people of the importance of being safe and protecting the environment. District Mechanical Officer Steve O'Shea volunteered to talk about the importance of the road safety legislation, which refers to drivers requiring clear visibility.

He noted that when after-market instruments and tools such as navigational devices and dashcams are fitted by brigades onto trucks or vehicle dashboards, they can inadvertently do more harm than good. Steve appealed to the District 10 Leadership Group to consider the procurement and installation of aftermarket products, which he understood were purchased with good intentions but were of concern to DMOs.

"When items are mounted on dashboards they can: impede airbag deployment; become missiles in the cabin if an airbag is deployed; become unsecured during a vehicle rollover and cause injury; and can prevent curtain deployment during a burnover," Steve said.

These anecdotal revelations certainly made the audience reflect on their own brigade vehicles and potential hazards of dash-mounted accessories.

"I will definitely remember the advice from Steve the next time opportunities for funding and brigade purchasing come up," Golden Beach Captain Paula Grosveld (pictured) said. "The last thing we should do is introduce a hazard where none existed before."

The primary purpose of a safety share is to bring safety to the forefront of conversations and it can also provide an opportunity to demonstrate leadership on safety matters. Safety shares aren't supposed to be management lectures. They are organic and are based on the experience of the speaker. Anyone can start a meeting with a safety share. It usually includes a key message and a focus on how we can build a better, more proactive health and safety culture in CFA.

A safety share can be anything from practical need-to-know information, to recounting a personal experience (from work or elsewhere) and any lessons learned from it. Including personal stories is a very effective way for leaders to communicate and demonstrate how their own values and beliefs are consistent with CFA's values, and it can positively influence the team's safety culture.

A good safety share should focus on critical messages pertinent to the time and should aim to contribute to a culture that values and reinforces safe people and practices. The HSEW team produces a theme every month to stimulate discussions about health and safety – leaders can use this theme to help their teams' safety share discussion. See Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pageld=healthWelfare. Member-driven local safety shares should also be encouraged from meeting participants.

The power of these safety shares is that they show a willingness to share so that others can learn, and they demonstrate a commitment to action which can inspire action in others. This type of leadership has a tremendously positive impact on the safety culture of the team. Is your brigade in the habit of harnessing the power of a safety share?

The District 10 event, which focused on safety, was the perfect environment to reflect on the role and purpose of this style of safety conversation starter. Everything you need to know about safety shares can be found in the *Safety Share Guideline HSEW-GL-005*, which is on Members Online.

STORY SAMANTHA SUNDERLAND

It's tough, but think about *you* for a moment

When a friend says they are in pain or struggling with personal issues we listen, maybe offer some advice and then try to get them some help. Increasingly, through better knowledge and awareness this is also how we would support someone with a developing mental health issue.

What's surprising, however, is evidence suggests that although we are supportive, non-judgemental and caring about the problems and concerns of others, we are not so compassionate when dealing with our own issues and support needs. In short, we tend to be kinder to friends and family than we are to ourselves.

The term self-stigma is about an individual's own internal judgements about mental illness. This can range from thoughts that I will be a burden, to thinking others just won't understand me or will judge me poorly. This can occur despite there being no evidence of others holding that point of view.

We are starting to understand that self-stigma can be a powerful determinant of whether we get the help when we need it – that is, early on when we start to experience an issue with our mental health.

Sometimes we can even take the view that this shouldn't be happening to me and that it indicates a sign of weakness, rather than this is an illness that can be treated. All the things that we are capable of saying to others to be supportive can be the things we simply do not say to ourselves.

We know that seeking help early in relation to a developing mental illness is critical to speedy recovery, but stigma can delay or prevent this action, sometimes until a crisis point is reached.

If you cut your hand badly or break a leg, you visit a doctor straight away because you know early treatment will get the best results. The same rule applies to a developing mental illness.

However, unlike a physical injury, with mental illness there can be a sense of shame, stigma and avoidance associated with getting the necessary support.

If you feel you're struggling with day-to-day challenges, experiencing a low mood for extended periods of time or feel like withdrawing from friends and associates, you may need some support. Sometimes the best approach is to think about what you would say to a friend and then follow that advice yourself.

Perhaps think about the conversation you might have with a colleague in a similar situation. Also, think about how supportive you would be if the situation were reversed and your colleague needed help, then talk to someone you trust.

If everything is OK, being informed about mental illness is a great step for everyone. This can be as simple as understanding that mental illness can be treated just like any other illness. Also, that getting help for mental health issues involves varied methods and many are about self-help.

Challenging the stereotype that mental illness is associated with dangerous and unpredictable behaviour can also help. Keep in mind we are exposed to unrealistic extremes through media and movies.

Also, avoid using derogatory or colourful language when discussing mental health. You never know who may hear and be impacted, and the follow-on effect this can have on them dealing with a mental health issue now or in the future.

We can find it tough to think about our own needs on occasions, however looking after ourselves is the first step towards ensuring we are able to be there for others. Remember we all have our ups and downs, so reach out for support if you're going through a difficult stage.

STORY GRAEME BYE



The Health Watch Program has received a makeover. When making a booking, the improved program now offers a menu of session options for brigades to choose from. This helps brigades tailor the session to their needs and interests, including both online and onsite session options.

Session options range from healthy eating and developing healthy habits, to group fitness and functional breathing sessions.

We still offer our standalone heart health check sessions, though health checks will be delivered differently from this year. Members will have a one-on-one, private 15-minute health check, instead of the original health check circuit.

We hope this will reduce the amount of time you have to wait during Health Watch sessions, and provide members with the opportunity to have more time with health check staff to chat about their results.

For more information, visit the Health Watch page on Members Online, members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagel=Healthwatch, or contact healthwatch@cfa.vic.gov.au.

You can also check out the Health Watch Facebook page where we share a range of evidence-based health information.

STORY GEORGIA THACKER



Faces of CFA

LEONIE TURNER, HODDLES CREEK FIRE BRIGADE, DISTRICT 13

What is your CFA role?

Captain, District 13 peer, Junior leader and catering team member.

Why did you join?

In 1991 a large fire came close to where we lived and the primary school my boys attended was evacuated. After that I started to think about the people on the trucks and asked others about CFA. With the support of my family I joined a local brigade.

What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

As a firefighter and peer, the 2009 fires had a significant impact on me. Our strike team turned out in the afternoon and worked through the night. When we were released the following day, we started to hear of the devastating loss of life and property. As a peer, along with many others, I spent time with the brigades, members and their families directly affected by the fires.

Who have been your mentors in CFA?

Like all captains, a lot of people have given me advice and helped me including current and past captains, group officers, commanders, CFA members and my peer coordinator. At Hoddles Creek the brigade is fortunate to have Rob Worlley. He's a quiet man with a wealth of knowledge, particularly his bush skills, natural navigation, sixth sense when it comes to reading the weather and the valley winds, which is invaluable for us.

What have been the highlights of your time in CFA?

High on my list would be the great friendships I have made as a firefighter and a peer.

I have the honour to teach and watch the Juniors grow, going on to become valued senior members, Junior leaders and officers in their respective brigades. The Juniors have an abundance of enthusiasm, a have-a-go attitude and a willingness to learn.

I'm very proud to be a peer support member and helping other members and their families when required. And being a firefighter helps me to better understand what the brigade or member have been through. The highlights can be as simple as when a person feels comfortable enough with you to tell

you honestly how they feel, to helping strike team members when they're a long way from home.

My number one highlight from 2020 was a phone call from North East Region Assistant Chief Fire Officer David Renkin, who told me the brigade would be receiving a new fire station through the CFA capability funding.

How do you motivate your brigade members?

I hope by just doing my job, having a go, and keeping a positive attitude. Every member has a different skill set, knowledge and ability. When crewing our vehicles, we make sure our newer or younger people are well supported by more experienced members. Mentoring makes new recruits feel welcome, they learn faster and settle into the brigade more quickly.

At times, motivating a person can be challenging but keeping a brigade motivated is a team effort. Over the past 12 months we've all had to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Junior brigade face-to-face activities stopped and went online, and our active members only came together when their pagers went off. We all had to learn to embrace Zoom or Teams meetings and training online. I'm lucky to have a great BMT and the officers all stepped up, particularly my 1st Lieutenant Graham Boyd and 3rd Lieutenant Brett Kerford.

What lessons are you most keen to pass onto other members?

Family first, communication, respect and good teamwork. If you don't have the support of your family, it would be impossible to be a CFA volunteer.

You will never please everyone all the time but if you're fair, involve your officers in the decisions being made, and keep your members as well informed as you can, everyone is usually happy.

Not all people join the brigade to become a firefighter. We have a catering team that does a fantastic job looking after our crews and other emergency services at incidents. Other members help out around the station with the general maintenance and cleaning. No matter what role a member has, respect and teamwork play a huge part. Coming together is a beginning, keeping it together is progress, and working together is success.

When two become one

Two brigades in the Shire of Southern Grampians in District 5, Knebsworth and Byaduk, recently amalgamated following Board approval. The new brigade is called Byaduk and the Knebsworth brigade name has been withdrawn.

“The surrounding area is rural and mostly farming community,” Victoria Pullen from the South West Region Volunteer Sustainability team said. “Knebsworth is a very small community and the brigade has been struggling to recruit operational members for some time.

“To make matters worse, an ex-captain’s family left the area and the brigade lost two key members. Also, only a couple of members had a truck licence making turnouts more difficult.”

Given the small number of brigade members, each person on Knebsworth’s brigade management team (BMT) had to carry out several roles. Former Knebsworth Captain Craig Dettling (pictured on the left with Byaduk brigade Captain Will Kinghorn) said the administrative duties were overwhelming the brigade.

“The workload was being done by fewer and fewer people, and they got burnt out and didn’t want to do it,” Craig said. “Also, organising an event for a handful of community members takes just as much time as it does for a larger community, so having a larger brigade means things are easier to organise and there’s less pressure on members.”

The brigade knew it couldn’t continue in the same way.

The catchment team looked at the viability of the Macarthur Group, which Knebsworth brigade belongs to, and found that several brigades had viability issues. A proposal was made to amalgamate Knebsworth and Byaduk. The team met with the brigades to explain the process and support the assistant chief fire officer who wrote an endorsement paper.

In 2019, Victoria was tasked with progressing the amalgamation.

“It was important for the brigades and local community to make decisions for themselves,” Victoria said, “and work out the best options for the group. The challenge moving forward will be to support the new brigade members to work cohesively as one.”

The Knebsworth Fire Station (pictured below) will retain its name and will be a satellite station to the Byaduk brigade, with a tanker remaining at the station.

“One of the most important things for our community was that we kept a tanker here,” Craig said. “It’s valuable to have a quick response.”

Will Kinghorn could see other benefits to the amalgamation.

“In a small brigade it’s hard for the training officer to do any meaningful training. With a brigade like ours, even if only half the members turn up for training it’s still worth doing. But at Knebsworth if that happened only one or two would turn up.

“Also, with a larger core group we can have a truck testing roster to share the load.”

Original Byaduk members who live closer to Knebsworth will turn out on the Knebsworth satellite station truck.

“In the past we’ve supplied drivers to Knebsworth and helped man their truck,” Will said, “so the amalgamation is just formalising that.”

The BMT elections for Byaduk brigade were held on 1 March 2021 and Will was re-elected as the captain. Three former Knebsworth officers were elected into BMT roles, including Craig as 1st lieutenant.



PHOTO: TRACY CHAPMAN



The Chief tours the regions



Meeting CFA volunteers has been a top priority for CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan since he started on 30 November 2020. During his first month in the job, he met members across the organisation and kicked off a regional tour in North West Region in December.

Over four days in mid-December, Jason visited brigades and district headquarters in Bridgewater, Ouyen, Mildura, Swan Hill, Kerang, Echuca, Bendigo and Melton.

In Ouyen, he met group officers and captains to listen to the challenges of fire service delivery in remote and rural communities.

In Swan Hill, he met staff, captains and group officers from District 18. In Echuca, he listened to and shared in the experiences of upcoming CFA leaders who recently completed the CFA Mentoring Program.

Jason said it was great to meet with CFA volunteers in particular, whose passion and commitment are second to none, and hear their thoughts on the organisation's challenges, opportunities and areas for improvement.

"It was a pleasure to travel around the north-west, meeting some of our incredible members and receiving a warm welcome to our organisation," Jason said.

In early January, he toured West Region, making stops at Horsham, Ararat and Wendouree, visited the new station site at Dimboola, and met with captains, group officers and other volunteer members from brigades including Warracknabeal, Stawell, St Arnaud, Beaufort, Willaura, Daylesford, Blackwood and Ballarat.

"At St Arnaud brigade, our volunteer members raised with me the importance of diversity and the role it plays in the longevity and capability of CFA, which I strongly agree with," Jason said.

At the end of January Jason toured South West Region over three days. He visited volunteers and staff at Portarlington, Winchelsea, Lismore, Koroit, Heywood, Casterton, Cobden and the Hamilton Air Base which is run entirely by CFA volunteers.

"It is grounding for a chief officer to be among our members to listen to what matters most and share in their experiences," Jason said. "In the south-west I discussed the importance of roadside vegetation management, safety, and the role of private farm fire units in rural areas," Jason said.



5



6



7



- 1 Beaufort
- 2 Ouyen
- 3 Wannon Falls
- 4 Warracknabeal
- 5 Swan Hill
- 6 Daylesford
- 7 District 7
Headquarters

Exciting developments in recruitment

The Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Project team is developing a wide range of initiatives to support brigades with the crucially important tasks of recruitment and retention. Some of these initiatives will result in new and innovative resources, while others are new online versions of paper-based resources or expansions of existing online resources.

Stories by Niki Habibis

case study

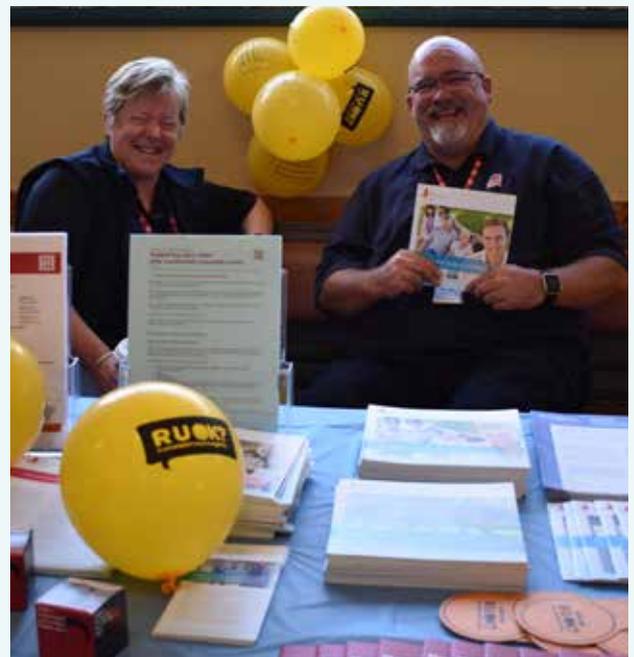
Thank You Day for Leigh Group

The commander and BASO for Leigh Group in District 7 wanted a way to say thank you to their CFA members. They believed that local brigades were suffering because of rural decline, yet still had to try to recruit new members and engage existing ones.

The catchment team reached out to local companies to help fundraise for a 'Thank You Day'. They received \$5,000 from the local wind farm company which allowed them to book a venue and hold a free barbecue to thank members and their families for their dedication to the brigades. This included food, drinks, activities and games for children, music and various stalls. Local community groups were also invited to participate.

Members and their families felt appreciated for their dedication to CFA and also felt connected to their community.

It was a very positive day for CFA. It not only promoted CFA's activities and encouraged people to get involved, but also strengthened relationships between CFA members and other community organisations.



and retention

Volunteer Onboarding Platform

The Volunteer Onboarding Platform (VOP) is one of the most exciting developments we're working on in the Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Project. In a nutshell, it's a new purpose-built online platform comprising two components:

- The redevelopment of the existing online new member expression of interest (EOI) platform, including an enhanced admin dashboard to help manage new EOIs.
- A new online member registration system that replaces the current paper-based registration process.

The team has been working closely with regions, VFBV and directorates to plan, scope and develop the VOP so that it meets the needs of brigades.

"Anything we develop must have our end user in mind, and in this case it's both members of our local communities who want to join CFA and our brigades who are onboarding new members," Project Manager of the Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Project Niki Habibis said.

"Joining CFA is a positive experience and our systems must support that."

The first phase of the EOI platform redevelopment went live in December 2020, and since its launch there have been more than 900 applications submitted through the new system. Phase 2 was released at the end of March.

This phase will give brigades access to an EOI dashboard and the ability to oversee and manage new applications for their brigade.

It's important to note that the introduction of the VOP doesn't change the way brigades manage and oversee their recruitment – local recruitment processes remain in place. The VOP is designed to help streamline the administrative components of onboarding new volunteers, with support staff always here to help.

Some of the exciting enhancements for the EOI platform are:



- Address search capability. New applicants can select a brigade based on either their home, work, or 'other' address allowing great flexibility.
- Built-in mapping to identify the closest brigade(s) based on an address, making it easier to connect new potential members to brigades – including those in Fire Rescue Victoria areas.
- A brigade assessment process to inform decision making around new member applications.
- Brigades can set their recruiting status for both operational and non-operational roles, as well as activate a wait list.
- Brigades will have oversight of the status of new member EOIs.
- New members expressing interest can check the status of their application, leading to a reduction in multiple EOIs being submitted.

"The successful recruitment and onboarding of new members is integral to brigade management and the VOP will help make this easier for brigades," Niki said.

The project team has developed a range of resources, including FAQs, user manual, demonstration videos and quick reference guides to help members understand and navigate the EOI system and dashboard. These can be found on the Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Project page on Members Online.

Work has already begun on building the next stage of the VOP – the online registration component.

We anticipate this will take time to complete because of the complexities of new member registration, but it's important we get it right.

To keep up to date with the progress of the VOP, check out Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pageld=recruitRetainProject.

If you have any questions about VOP email vopmailbox@cfa.vic.gov.au.

Flexible volunteering

The aim of the Flexible Volunteering project is to develop a model of volunteering that's adaptable to suit brigades across the state and will allow members of the community to volunteer with CFA in new ways.

The first step of the project is to engage with our members to understand the challenges they face with the current membership model as well as identify any possible solutions and lessons learned from previous experiences. This will be conducted through regional workshops, where key volunteers and staff who manage membership will be invited to attend, and through an online survey which all members can access.

It's imperative we engage with field-based staff and volunteers throughout the project, because their feedback and ideas will shape the flexible volunteering model we develop.

While gathering evidence from our members, research will be carried out into existing models in other emergency services agencies which could be adopted by CFA.

A project management plan will be produced to identify key outputs and outcomes, with the aim to implement a pilot in the 2021-22 financial year.

To submit your thoughts, insights or experiences please visit the Flexible Volunteering Your Say CFA page: yoursay.cfa.vic.gov.au/flexible-volunteering.

Information for Families resource

We all know that volunteers play a crucial role in CFA, but many volunteers say they couldn't do it without the support of their families. To recognise the importance of the support, patience and encouragement of their families, CFA has recently launched the *Information for Families* resource aimed at families and caregivers of new CFA volunteers.

The family member may not be holding a hose or conducting a community engagement session, but they are very much a part of our CFA community and play a very important role in brigades.

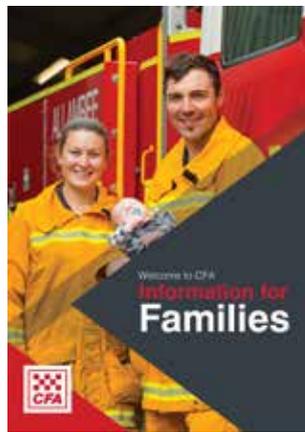
Information for Families gives family members tailored information about the activities and time commitments of CFA volunteering. It includes sections on what to expect when the pager goes off, information about preparing a home fire safety plan, keeping up to date with community messaging and accessing wellbeing support for themselves or their family member.

Existing members can access an online version which can be passed onto families. It's on the CFA website here: cfa.vic.gov.au/volunteer-careers/volunteers/information-for-families.

New members will receive a hard copy booklet with their 'Welcome to CFA' letter. This booklet should be passed onto family members, who can then access the online resources by using the QR code or website link.

If you've recently joined CFA and haven't received your booklet, request one from your district headquarters.

We hope volunteers' families think the guide is a useful resource that helps them understand the important role they play in the CFA community.



Knowledge Sharing Platform

The Knowledge Sharing Platform (KSP) has been expanded to include a wider range of topics covering situations members will experience during their time as a volunteer. There are now 23 themes including recognition, health and wellbeing, partnerships, technology and social media, engaging diverse communities, fundraising, mentoring and succession planning.

Sharing knowledge stimulates innovation and growth and can help brigades find inspiration for activities or overcome issues they may be facing.

The KSP can be accessed through Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelD=KnowledgeSharingPlatform

The recruitment and retention tips, right, can be found on the KSP.

Volunteer Toolkit

The Volunteer Toolkit has transitioned from a paper-based guide to an online toolkit. It contains new and updated resources and templates to support the various stages of a volunteer's life cycle, from attraction to the brigade, their time as a member, through to exiting the brigade.

Check out the resources in the Volunteer Toolkit on Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelD=volHome.

Brigade recruitment and retention tips

Recruitment tip 1: Recruitment officer

Creating a recruitment officer role will give potential new members a direct contact in the brigade who can share specific information and answer any questions about joining. The recruitment officer can introduce new recruits to the brigade and support them as they settle in.

Recruitment tip 2: Community information day

Hosting a community information day is an effective way to educate the community about fire safety, talk about the brigade and what the brigade does, while also recruiting new members. Rowsley Fire Brigade advertised extensively and held a successful community information day which resulted in three new members.

Recruitment tip 3: Juniors to seniors

An effective way to recruit is transitioning Junior members into the senior brigade when they are old enough. Kiewa Fire Brigade demonstrated the importance of having a close relationship between the two by introducing 16-year-old Juniors to the seniors and allowing them to watch their training. This led to recruiting three Juniors into seniors.

Retention tip 1: Keep members active

Brigalong brigade illustrated how even a brigade that has only around 50 callouts a year can retain 56 members by engaging them through methods other than turning out for fires. Offering a variety of activities for members to participate in is an effective way to maintain member involvement.

Retention tip 2: Appreciate members and their families

Hosting an event to recognise the role of members and their families allows brigades to show their appreciation for the time and effort people dedicate to CFA. Leigh Group, featured on page 56, held a barbecue for its members and invited local community groups to participate, which meant members felt valued by and connected to their community.

Retention tip 3: Recognition through social media

Social media can be used to recognise members' hard work and to promote the brigade within the community and deliver fire safety messages. This can allow members to feel valued and increase retention in the brigade. A good example of this is Horsham Fire Brigade's 'Horsham Hotshots' posts on its Facebook page.

Regional Brigade Administration Support Officer and Brigade Member Sue Martin said Horsham brigade wanted a way to recognise members for their hard work.

"A short post is made once a week. It's dedicated to members, introducing them and giving information about their role in CFA," Sue said.

"The posts acknowledge members for any significant efforts they have made. For example, if they have recently received an award or praise.

"It has been a great positive form of recognition for brigade members and helps the community understand more about CFA and its people. It has also helped to build Horsham brigade's social media presence and reach more of the community.

"It provides a more personal approach and delivers community safety messages to members of the community."

New home for Nagambie brigade



Nagambie Fire Brigade has embraced its new High Street station. A \$1.4 million investment to build a new fire station, which included \$1.35 million in government funding and \$50,000 in community donations, has been a welcome addition for the community.

The brigade had outgrown the old Vine Street fire station and needed more modern facilities to house its four operational vehicles and to carry out other activities.

Brigade members moved into the new station in August 2020 and Nagambie Fire Brigade Captain Allen Treble said it has been a positive experience responding to emergencies from the new site.

“At the new site, we have a large three-bay engine room, separate male and female turnout rooms, a breathing apparatus room, a kitchen area, office spaces and multiple bathroom facilities including disabled toilets,” Allen said.

“Since August we’ve become familiar with the new site and the facilities have proven to be very helpful during large fires. We had strike team crews pull in and be accommodated in our station and that wouldn’t have been possible at our old site.

“This has been really exciting for our members and a great reward. We couldn’t be happier.”

After funding for the new site was announced in October 2018, construction started in January 2020 and was completed in July 2020.

“I can’t thank the Nagambie community enough for the

donations they have provided our brigade over the years through our fundraising efforts,” Allen said.

“It all goes towards helping our brigade obtain modern facilities and vital equipment, which will help us service the community.”

Previously, community groups and organisations used the old Nagambie Fire Station for meetings and other functions where needed, and now they will be able to use the improved facilities.

“It’s a win for the community because when we return to normal arrangements, organisations such as Nagambie Ambulance and Nagambie Landcare can continue using our facilities where necessary for their meetings.”

Prior to occupying the new station, Nagambie brigade members had to travel up to an hour to participate in some training courses held by CFA.

“These modern facilities now give us the opportunity to host training activities in our local area of Nagambie, including thermal imaging camera training, the General Firefighter course and potential for others to be run at our station as well.

“I would like to thank District 22 Assistant Chief Fire Officer Tony Owens, Strathbogie Commander Peter Dedman and the Land and Building Services team for their hard work and support to see this project through.”

STORY MITCHELL GASTIN

ROAD TO RECOVERY

The south-east and north-east were hit hard by the 2019-20 fire season. Here's how two communities are getting back on their feet.

ALL-IN EFFORT TO HELP WAIREWA



Just before the 2020 New Year, Wairewa was struck by the East Gippsland bushfires. Thirty-two properties were impacted, with 11 homes lost in the fire. The bushfire was predicted to move through Nowa Nowa, but a wind change during the early hours of the night meant that Wairewa was directly in its path. Fortunately, no lives were lost but the fire affected everyone in the community.

"No one could have stopped or fought that fire," Wairewa Fire Brigade Captain Julian Davies said.

"The community knew we wouldn't be able to get a truck to every house, so most people did the right thing and left early."

CFA members have worked together over the past 12 months to support their fellow firefighters and the Wairewa community. Julian said the overwhelming support shown by neighbouring brigades in the wake of the fires helped Wairewa through a tough recovery process.

"Our community has had so many offers to provide help to those who need it," Julian said.

"During my time in CFA, I've found that my fellow members, no matter where they're from, are always willing to help in a time of need.

"This help isn't just for the brigade either. The assistance is also for the general community because CFA members understand that in times like this it's so important to help the township get back on its feet."

Notably, Westbury Fire Brigade was pivotal in helping the Wairewa community rebound from the devastation.

Westbury brigade began a tool drive, encouraging people through social media to donate any tools they could to the Wairewa community. From there, people began to donate money which was used to buy local supplies to deliver to

the township, including fencing materials worth \$10,000.

"There were many truckloads of fencing materials, posts, power tools, nuts, bolts, screws – you name it," Julian said.

"This was first offered to those who lost their homes and the leftovers were distributed by the brigade among the remaining 21 families who owned properties directly impacted by the fire in some way."

As well as the generous CFA brigades, Julian said a whole range of charities, agencies and services offered a helping hand.

"Many community groups and charities have donated money in the past year, which has helped the town in a big way," he said. "The township didn't have power for around nine days during the fire, and it was identified that the local town hall, which was used as an evacuation centre, didn't have an available generator to use.

"We've since been able to secure funding for generators for the local hall and the brigade as well, which couldn't have been done without the help of many.

"Nobody is ever going to forget that fire. We have to keep our chins up, move on and try to rebuild. Some have already rebuilt, some are still rebuilding and others have moved away after their homes were destroyed, but people have continued to make themselves available for those who need a hand.

"It has been a hard process for so many people to take on, but our community is so resilient. We are moving forward. Although we are tough, resilient people out here, that doesn't mean we aren't deeply affected by what's happened. But we're helping each other to keep pushing on."

STORY MITCHELL GASTIN

A SLOW PROCESS AT CORRYONG

Driven by hot and windy conditions, the fires that swept through the north-east of the state started at the end of December 2019 and continued well into January. Emergency warnings told people in the Upper Murray, Upper Ovens, Kiewa and King valleys to leave for regional centres, and sixteen months later many communities are still struggling to recover.

Conditions were horrendous in the Upper Murray, with wind gusts up to 65kph, temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius, very low humidity and fire everywhere you looked. Hundreds of firefighters and support staff fought the Upper Murray fire including Corryong 2nd Lieutenant and Deputy Group Officer Colin Brown.

“The Corryong community was absolutely devastated by what happened,” Colin said. “Brigades had been warning the community over many years that it could happen, but none of us expected that level of devastation.”

“At first it was difficult to see how bad it was because of the thick smoke. The fire had so many runs. We had put it out in one place, and it would spot into an unburnt patch. It was just continuous and full-on for what seemed like weeks.”

The Upper Murray fire burned more than 225,000 hectares – one third of Towong Shire – and destroyed 40 houses. More than 6,300 stock had to be buried.

After the fires had gone through, Colin (pictured on the left in the photo with 1st Lieutenant Ron Pynappels) and a team of local people including his son put together a program to clean people’s water tanks which were polluted with ash. Some tanks had melted entirely. Colin travelled up and down the valleys to see what was needed.

“The Corryong Group has a huge amount of area to cover and that made it challenging,” Colin said.

“Much of the telecommunications infrastructure had been destroyed so there were no phones, no internet, no radios, very patchy CFA comms, no electricity, and very little fuel. Only those with satellite internet or sat phones could communicate. We contacted those people in the valleys and asked them to spread the word to find out who needed help.”

Over a 10-day period, Colin and his team visited between 30 and 40 properties in the area to give them drinking water.

“Our team replenished about 60,000 litres of domestic water and repaired pipes, and in between that I was still helping to put out fires.”

Colin, who runs a plumbing business, closed the business for three weeks. “We did the best we could to help the community and it was all volunteer work – there was no income while my business was shut.”

Brigade members delivered food and carried out welfare checks while still maintaining a presence in the town.

“We maintained the security of the hospital and town in case the land behind and to the north caught fire, and we had to put fire breaks around the temporary power station and unburnt areas of town.”

Four generators were set up to provide temporary power to the town, while AusNet Services tried to repair



infrastructure. Other community members helped sort out stock, which were all mixed up in paddocks and on the roads, and mended fences temporarily.

“For several days after the fire, all the roads were closed so we couldn’t get outside help,” Colin said, “but we were especially grateful to a guy from DELWP who oversaw organising plant. He supplied the water tankers for deliveries and other critical plant like bulldozers, excavators and graders to clear roads. He did very well.”

But despite the massive effort in the first few months after the fire, “we are not even close to being back to normal. It will take years to recover. Many people are still in temporary accommodation and only two houses have been rebuilt.”

The problem is there are no builders in the local area to construct new houses, and many locals are struggling psychologically because they cannot see light at the end of the tunnel.

Towong Shire Council, funded by Bushfire Recovery Victoria, established the Upper Murray Community Recovery Hub in Corryong. The Hub has 11 staff including four local area recovery officers.

From the outset, the focus was on community-led recovery and to that end 11 community recovery committees (CRCs) were established to represent each of the towns, villages and valleys in the shire. CRCs are setting their own priorities to decide which projects should be funded.

“One positive is that we’ve had a lot of help from District 24 staff. A lot of resources have been put into peer support and peers have been available at any time,” Colin said.

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

Central Highlands training just a few

CFA is preparing to open its state-of-the-art training facility at Ballan, with the finishing touches now being put on the Central Highlands Regional Training Campus.

The \$31 million facility has been taking shape for the past two years, with the 35-hectare site set to open later this year. Deputy Chief Officer Training Gregg Paterson said people have already started moving into the facility.

“Stage one is complete, which is the administrative building, meeting rooms and classrooms, and we’re already occupying some of the storage facilities,” Gregg said.

“We’re looking at mid-year for an official launch of the Central Highlands and are set to commence training in the next financial year.”

Also finished is the off-road driver complex, which is expected to be used heavily when the facility opens.

“It’s built to the same standard as the latest one we built in Longerenong, which is great but we have the advantage of having learned from that so it really is top of the range for a driver education facility,” Gregg said. “We expect it will be used just about every other weekend.

“It’s got the typical challenges that you’d normally see off-road like a water trap, different side slopes, moguls and a sand bed.”

Another highlight will be the PADs (practical area for drills), which will feature live-fire training in a safe environment.

“There’s a range of PADs which will allow our volunteers to train in basic structural firefighting through to advanced structural firefighting,” Gregg said..

“There’s also a petrol station, tanker, a gantry and a range of other options. We can even move training props around.”

Gregg said the live-fire exercises will be gas heated, and the PADs will use theatrical smoke to give trainers the ability to use a range of options.

“In basic training we can have a low level of smoke in the building, but if we want to test some more experienced operational firefighters we can really fill the building up.

“There are no health and safety issues because it’s theatrical smoke.”

The design of the water management and water treatment systems means firefighters can be assured that the water they’re using for firefighting purposes is potable (drinking standard).

“When brigades and groups come to Central Highlands, they’ll drop their water out at a dedicated area before trucks go in, then they’ll use water that’s of drinking standard and be filling up with that as well when they leave.

“At the moment, there’s a whole range of work that’s been completed on the PADs, and the gas fire props and things like that will be commissioned in the first half of this year.



months away



The facility will not only provide an additional regional training campus that's state-of-the-art in its water management, health and safety, and firefighting training capabilities, but it will also have a fire station and an area for breathing apparatus and protective equipment maintenance.

"We're just excited with how it's coming along," Gregg said.

"The work the Infrastructure team has done in terms of designing this facility is amazing.

"It's really going to be a world-class training facility."

STORY MARK BLACKMAN



- 1** Admin and workshop
- 2** Specialist props
- 3** Overall site
- 4** Front of admin building

Fish Creek captain Citizen of the Year

Fish Creek and District Fire Brigade Captain Kerry Senior was crowned Corner Inlet Citizen of the Year in February 2021.

Kerry said it was a real honour to be recognised for her contribution to her local community.

“Being part of a community gives you an opportunity to meet interesting people, learn new skills and feel safe and secure,” Kerry said. “I hope everyone I meet during either my volunteering or my professional career can feel the same way through my interaction with them, and that I may even inspire someone else to get involved in a local community group or pursue a lifelong career dream.”

She was nominated by MICA Paramedic Ambulance Victoria John Barrie, Leongatha Brigade Captain Gary Burns and Fish Creek and District firefighter Birgit Senior for her commitment to the community.

“Kerry has been an active member of her local community for many years,” Gary said. “She started as a Junior member of the Fish

Creek and District Fire Brigade 21 years ago and has gone on to hold a number of positions in the brigade.”

While volunteering for CFA, she has been part of the Road Accident Rescue Unit and helped many members through her role as a training officer.

“By day Kerry is an advanced life support paramedic with Ambulance Victoria,” Gary added. “With that training she’s been able to train members of the community on CPR and other resuscitation techniques. This is held as part of the annual Restart a Heart program.

“Her paramedic training has also allowed her to volunteer at the Fish Creek Tea Cosy Festival as a first-aid responder. She has even used her paramedic training to help new paramedics learn the ropes.

“During the Royal Children’s Hospital Good Friday Appeal, Kerry is out in the community collecting donations and has done so for many years. She’s also passionate about fire safety and each year takes the time to deliver the Fire Safe Kids program.



“Despite Kerry’s demanding shift work job, she continues to devote considerable amounts of time to her community through her leadership and commitment to Fish Creek and District Fire Brigade, and becoming its first female captain.

“Give Kerry an opportunity to participate in anything and she will give it her all. From fire training and information evenings to CPR and public AED training, Kerry will do it all. In 2020 she even took the time to sew over 150 face masks, donating many of them to be sold to raise funds for the South Gippsland Hospital with the remainder given to CFA members and the local community.

“Her caring and compassionate nature makes her a great asset to her local community.”

STORY HOLLY PENKETH

Brigades pumped about new equipment

Thanks to a donation of \$100,000 from Gandel Philanthropy, many CFA brigades across Victoria have received new quick-fill pumps to help protect lives and property.

The 48 quick-fill pumps are part of CFA’s \$4.8m District Pick List Program, made possible by last year’s generous donations to CFA from all over the world.

Tintalra Fire Brigade in District 24, and Mossi-Tambo Fire Brigade in District 11 were two of the brigades to receive funding for quick-fill pumps. Mossi-Tambo Captain Christine Bittner said

it will be an important piece of equipment because there are not many hydrants to fill their tankers.

“We use the two rivers that run through our area, and there are a lot of dams we can use as well as a couple of concrete tanks, which actually had quick-fill pumps from other brigades attached to them during the summer,” Christine said.

Tintalra Captain Kevin Whitehead said his brigade currently uses a quick-fill pump but the additional resource will significantly help the brigade in the large area it covers.

“You can fill a tanker in about five minutes instead of draughting which requires setting up structure lines and priming the pump and sucking it up, which can take 15 minutes or more,” Kevin said.

Gandel Philanthropy CEO Vedran Drakulic said the Gandel family thought it was necessary to help in any way they could during the national bushfire crisis last year.

“It was a simple decision to help affected communities and fire services across NSW, SA, Queensland and of course Victoria,” Vedran said. “As it became clear that the scale of the fires was rapidly growing, the family felt it was important they do their bit to help.”

More broadly, Gandel Philanthropy donated \$1 million during the 2019-20 fire period to a range of charities and organisations that helped tackle the bushfires.

STORY MARK BLACKMAN



Refreshing the CFA brand

OUR COMMUNITY • OUR CFA



cfa.vic.gov.au



As we enter the next phase of CFA's history, we have the opportunity to refresh our brand and emphasise our central role as a trusted emergency services organisation. We emerge from reform as a proud volunteer-based organisation focused on our people and our connection to our communities.

We've introduced a new style which will be used on our corporate templates, publications, posters and pull-up banners. The main features of the style are:

The logo We haven't changed our logo because it's so recognisable and well respected. In fact, because our brigades are often seen as the centre of their communities, shouldering responsibility, we've placed the logo proudly in the centre of our documents rather than off to one side. You will also see our website address underneath the logo to remind people where they can find trusted information.

Colours Red remains our corporate colour. The logo red hasn't changed, however the corporate red is lighter and brighter to give it more prominence. We've also introduced a yellow strip into the header style along with the red as a symbolic acknowledgement of our volunteers and their yellow turnout gear.

OUR COMMUNITY • OUR CFA We are focused on preparing and protecting communities across the state, and to emphasise this central role we've placed 'Our Community. Our CFA' at the bottom of our documents, posters and publications.

Colour palette We have also refreshed the range of colours used in publications and on our website. As well as a range of bright colours, we have warm and cool neutral options.

These design changes are available

now on the Template Toolkit – cfa.vic.gov.au/templatetoolkit – where you'll find new report templates, posters, letter templates, meeting templates, PowerPoint presentation, executive and Board papers, to name a few.

We're also now producing publications and posters using the new style. Some example templates are shown above.

The CFA Style Guide and summary guides covering our logo, fonts and colour palette have been updated to reflect the new branding, and these are also available on the Template Toolkit. The Style Guide not only covers the visual aspects of our publications, but also has a comprehensive section about writing for CFA.

If you have any questions about the new templates or Style Guide email brigademagazine@cfa.vic.gov.au.



Victorians are being given the opportunity to become ‘citizen scientists’ and supply CFA with critical information about the state’s fire risk.

A new online module provides simple information about grassland curing – the rate that grass dries out – and how CFA uses the information in fire analysis.

The new course was launched during a season with a high risk of grassfires, following significant rainfall and exceptional grass growth across the state.

Barmah resident and CFA volunteer John Jackson (pictured) has been helping with the grassland curing program for almost ten years. He said updated training is fantastic for new and existing volunteer observers.

“I’ve completed the new course and it’s excellent,” John said. “It teaches you what you need to become an observer.

“You walk out to a point that you’ve set, have a look at the grass, then use some helpful tools to work out the curing rate.”

CFA remote sensing analyst Danielle Wright said those ground observations are combined with satellite images to produce a map of Victoria showing how dry the grass is across the state – see the map, opposite.

“Green grass is 0 per cent cured, while grass that’s totally dried out is 100 per cent cured, and those numbers can help calculate the grassland fire danger index,” Danielle said.

“It’s very important for identifying fire danger ratings, and also feeds into fire behaviour modelling.”

Danielle said observers are crucial because satellite models can sometimes overestimate or underestimate curing.

“A paddock might have tall, dry grass but after some heavy rainfall there could be green shoots coming through which wouldn’t affect fire behaviour but would still be picked up by the satellite.”

CFA has been recording grassland curing measurements in Victoria for decades and has been delivering grassland curing maps for other states since 2015.

“Our information will also soon be feeding into the Australian Fire Danger Rating System,” Danielle said. “That’s the big fire danger system that will be used across the country from 2022.

“It’s great we’ve built a model that will be used on a national scale.”

Project coordinator Angela Gardner said the training course covered a wide range of environments.

“It touches on the fact that grass cures at different rates at different times of year around the state,” Angela said.

“It also talks about some different species such as kangaroo grass which turns red before it’s bleached.

“You don’t only have to report on native grasses, though. We also included crops as something you can report because they have a similar life cycle and a similar fire behaviour output.”

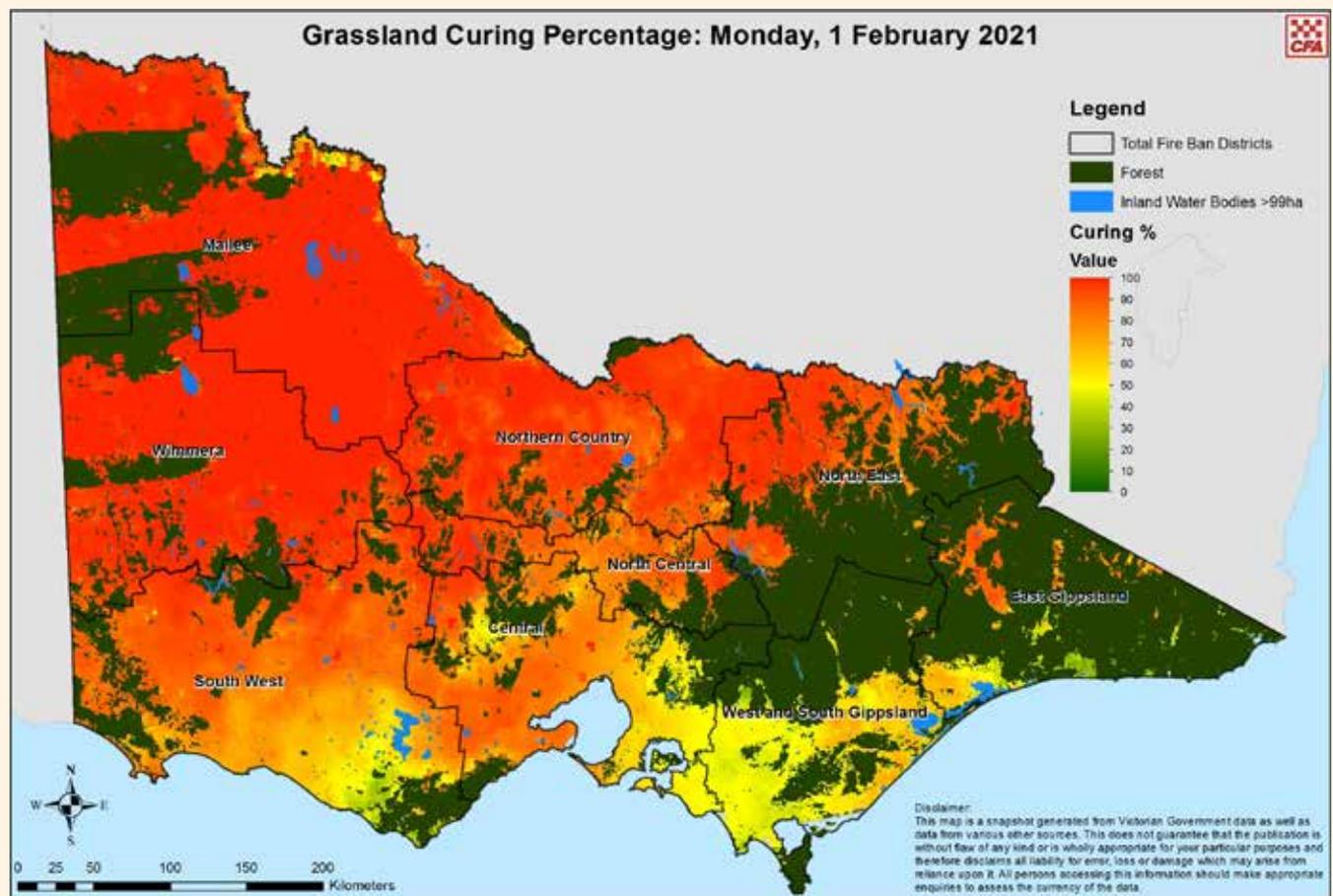
CFA has observers in every district, though some areas have fewer people than others, and it’s hoped the new training module will encourage new volunteer observers to participate.

“We have about 125 active observers at the moment, and while a lot of people who do it are CFA members it’s open to anyone from the public,” Angela said. “People can take the course just for their own awareness, but if they’d like to sign up as an observer at the end, we send a more detailed booklet to support them.”

People can register for the Grassland Curing Observer course at learninghub.cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY MARK BLACKMAN

Curing the grassfire risk





Buninyong station well underway

Construction of the new Buninyong – Mount Helen Fire Station is well underway and the brigade is looking forward to its completion. The station is expected to be completed mid-2021.

The new 571 square metre station will include a three-bay engine room, a workshop, breathing apparatus room, laundry, men and women turnout changing rooms, as well as an office and kitchen space.

The \$2.16 million build began in late November 2020 and at the time of writing in March 2021 was 50 per cent completed.

The new station is on Learmonth Street, Midland Highway, just a few blocks from the old station.

Buninyong – Mt Helen Captain James Witham said brigade members are excited to move into their new home in the coming months.

“The brigade’s current station was built in 1955 and the members are really looking forward to an increase in space at the new station,” James said.

“An important component of the new station will be the large glass display of an 1899 Merryweather horse-drawn manual pump [pictured], which will be visible from the street and inside the station.

“It’s intended that the new station will be used as a local command facility to assist with incident management and support for complex or protracted fires and incidents.

“We’re also looking forward to being able to conduct training and other brigade activities in a large outdoor and car park area.”

“Our members are thrilled to soon have modernised facilities available to them which, in turn, will improve the brigade’s service to the community.”



STORY MITCHELL GASTIN

From one brigade to another

Mt Taylor Fire Brigade recently received Lakes Entrance Fire Brigade's support vehicle as a donation.

Last fire season \$5.3 million in donations was received by nominated brigades or districts across the state to spend at their discretion. Recipients were predominantly brigades impacted by the summer's fires.

With these donations Lakes Entrance brigade members bought a new field command vehicle, which meant they no longer needed their current support vehicle, which they generously donated to Mt Taylor brigade.

Mt Taylor brigade will make a few upgrades to the vehicle before using it to respond to incidents.

More than \$20 million in donations were received by CFA over the extreme 2019-20 fire season. Funds were allocated in consultation with the CFA volunteer representative body Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria and in line with suggestions and requests from members.

Mt Taylor brigade Captain Geoff Crane said it was fantastic that local brigades help each other.



"A big thank you to the Lakes Entrance brigade and to everyone involved who made this happen and to the community members, businesses and general public for their generosity in making these donations," Geoff said.

STORY HOLLY PENKETH

Virtual firefighting training

CFA is developing a virtual reality firefighting training package so our firefighters can train effectively and safely. This new innovative training will help volunteers to more accurately assess risks, which is the key to staying safe while fighting fires.

"For the past 20 years, CFA has been at the forefront of computer-based learning for operational skills and improving people's natural ability to perceive risks in the field," CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said.

"But we're always looking for more innovative ways to help our volunteers. That's why we're developing virtual reality firefighting training."

We're developing this training following requests from volunteers to give them a real-life experience to assess their skills without exposing them to danger.

The training package is based on FLAIM Trainer and FLAIM Extinguisher – unique training systems developed specifically for firefighters by FLAIM Systems and Deakin University researchers.

FLAIM Systems Chief Technology Officer and CFA volunteer James Mullins said FLAIM Trainer worked in a similar way to a flight simulator for pilot training, but is designed specifically for firefighters.

"It combines virtual reality technology with real-life industry standard equipment, such



PHOTO COURTNEY WALKER

as a fire nozzle, breathing apparatus, hose reel, and automated sense-perception devices such as a fire-proximity heat suit to simulate both the visual and sensory feelings of being in a fire," he said.

Different scenarios are available including house fires, grassfires and airplane fires.

Initially, CFA will buy five FLAIM Trainer and 10 FLAIM Extinguisher systems which

will be stored at the State Logistics Centre when not being used for training.

"CFA volunteers from across Victoria piloted FLAIM Trainer for six months to see whether it suited our operational requirements," Jason said. "The feedback from members was very positive."

STORY MITCHELL GASTIN

Celebrating diversity in CFA

More than 4.4 million people in Australia have some form of disability – that’s one in five people. Yet disability discrimination accounts for the highest number of complaints to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Ruffy Fire Brigade member Colleen Furlanetto (pictured) is a passionate advocate for more diversity in CFA.

“I have worked hard to avail myself in roles and committees to ensure diversity is present at the decision and planning table,” Colleen said.

Colleen is a member of the District 22 Planning Committee, a member of the District 22 Health Monitoring Rehab team, a member and co-chair of the North East Region Inclusion and Fairness Advisory Council and taken part in working groups that support inclusion.

“I’ve had the privilege of working on so many important committees as well as being part of the Preparing Vulnerable People project which aims to improve fire preparedness planning for people who are at greatest risk.

“It’s essential that the diversity in CFA reflects the communities in which we live,” Colleen added. “Diversity helps to build holistic, responsive and accountable plans that will ensure we all continue to build quality and best practice across the organisation.

“My acquired disability offers insight and diversity in thinking. I’m not an expert on disability, I’m an expert on me. My lived experience, however, sees opportunities for me to contribute.

“As a CFA volunteer there are potential perceptions or concerns around capacity of people with a disability, but there’s a role for everyone in CFA. We don’t all have to be operational or offer the same skills. We can offer what we can.

“As a person with a disability, I strive to be an effective volunteer who makes a contribution and is respectful, and I expect the same respect in return.

“I love being a volunteer because I’m part of a community. I’m committed to CFA and will continue to advocate for diversity and the value of having diverse volunteers.”

STORY HOLLY PENKETH



Creative tribute to first responders

A stunning mural called ‘Thanks, first responders’ has been created on the toilet block in the Prince Street Reserve, Rosedale. It was funded by Emergency Management Victoria as part of the community’s recovery from the Rosedale bushfire which struck on 4 January 2019.

The fires impacted the Holey Plains State Park and a nearby pine plantation, which had a significant effect on the local community.

Rosedale Fire Brigade Captain Stu Burley said the mural reflected the overwhelming local support for the brigade, particularly over the past couple of years.

“It’s really humbling for our community to recognise the work all local firefighters do to keep the town safe,” Stu said. “This bushfire started around six kilometres outside Rosedale on a very hot day and many of our members were first to respond.

“The fire ended up growing to around 12,000 hectares, which obviously had a lasting impact on our community.”

The \$10,000 grant was intended to be used by the community for an event to show their appreciation for first responders. But because of COVID-19 restrictions the project instead supported local artists and developed two murals – one of which was dedicated to local firefighters.

Stu said the mural was a very realistic depiction of the fire CFA and Forest Fire Management Victoria crews faced on 4 January 2019.

“I encourage all members of our community and travellers to take the time to admire the mural,” Stu said.

STORY MITCHELL GASTIN





Bairnsdale Brigade on the move

Bairnsdale's newly-constructed fire station has brought excitement to the local brigade. The move from Main Street to Calvert Street will ensure the station is fit for purpose and make it easier for trucks to pull out onto the road when responding to incidents.

The total cost to construct the new state-of-the-art facility was \$2.65 million, of which \$150,000 was raised by the brigade through community donations.

Bairnsdale Fire Brigade Captain Aaron Lee said the brigade had occupied the old station for 90 years and it was time to move to a new location.

"Our brigade has outgrown the old station and it will be beneficial for us to respond on a street with a lower traffic volume than Main Street," Aaron said.

"The station is a drive-through facility with a four-bay engine room with a position for every operational vehicle, as well as larger meeting rooms and a breathing apparatus compressor facility.

"The breathing apparatus facility is a big-ticket item for us. It will allow brigades to use the facility and conduct breathing apparatus training at our station."

The brigade has been fundraising for decades and saving the generous community donations to eventually put towards a new station. Aaron is thrilled the day has finally come.

"Every fundraising event we've held and every time our great community members have contributed donations in some way, we've set aside the money for this new station," he said.

"There were substantial donations from last year's bushfires as well and we thank our generous community for all their help."



He said there will be a couple of small changes that may need some getting used to in the new station.

"It will be different for us to get changed in a dedicated change room rather than behind or right next to a truck when we turn out.

"Also, given the size of the new station we have security cameras to ensure we can see if there are any members arriving at the station, so we don't leave anyone behind when responding.

"It's a great addition and we'll see some very happy members as we start to settle in."

STORY MITCHELL GASTIN

Small community embraces tech to stay safe

Thanks to a \$40,000 donation from Inner Wheel Australia, Bemm Fire Brigade is leading the way when it comes to the latest in sprinkler technology.

The money was donated by German clubs of the international association after last year's devastating bushfire season, with a proviso it be used to protect communities affected by bushfire.

Inner Wheel is an International women's volunteer service organisation which promotes friendship, the ideals of personal service and to foster international understanding.

Inner Wheel Australia Council Member Kate Luxford said she was proud Inner Wheel Australia chose to fund the project from international donations.

"With many of our international clubs keen to help aid the bushfire recovery, donations came from across the world," she said.

"A large donation came from members in Germany who earmarked their money for use by the volunteers in the more rural fire brigades that were affected by the devastating bushfire season.

"After numerous phone calls around the districts, I spoke to Bemm Fire Brigade Captain Russell Pardew. After hearing about his wish to install a proven sprinkler system, I knew some of this donation would be spent well and be greatly appreciated.

"I was proud when my submission to the Inner Wheel Australia Executive was accepted and they chose to fund the project for the sprinklers."

Captain Russell Pardew said the brigade wanted to make the most of the donation to help future-proof their station.

"I talked to Kate about what we could do with the donation to make it meaningful. I felt it was important that we invested that donation wisely and stretched it as far as we could," Russell said.

"I came up with an idea a while ago to have a sprinkler system installed at our station. After getting quotes, I realised the donation would actually cover more than one system and I thought of a couple of smaller brigades in District 11 that could use some help.

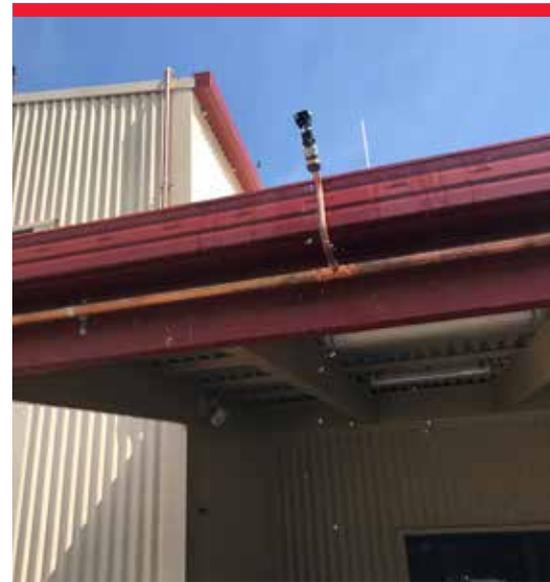
"One small community that has been belted by fire over the past 10 years is Goongerah. We also thought we could help out Wariewa, a small rural community between Orbst and Lakes Entrance."

The sprinkler system is tailored for each location. It runs for two hours and is a reticulation system where half the water used runs back into the tank.

In Bemm they will be able to activate it remotely using a mobile phone. Where there is less mobile coverage, such as at Goongerah, there's a heat sensor that will activate the sprinkler when it's needed to protect the building.

For more remote brigades, a diesel pump powers the sprinklers. At Bemm brigade they have an electric power generator that kicks in if the power fails.

Russell said this was important in any small town where the fire brigade often becomes the central emergency point where people gather, particularly with tourists around.



"Someone said it's an insurance policy for a CFA property, and I think that's a good description," he said.

Russell said smaller communities had to find innovative ways to be more resilient, because outside help was not always readily available.

Bemm has a permanent population of around 65 that rises to about 400 to 600 people in the peak tourism seasons of Easter and Christmas. It has one road in and one road out so can easily become isolated during the fire season.

"You have to think outside the square. Bemm was the first brigade to use slip-on units," Russell said.

"We're keeping that up by being the first to create our own 100-metre firebreak. We have also created our own helipad.

"Communities should decide what best suits their needs. It's a lot of work and effort to maintain and keep up interest in a local fire brigade. I'd encourage communities to support their local brigades.

"Our local relationships with councils, DELWP and other agencies is also critical to this mission. We work together to keep up the persistence and momentum to make our communities as resilient as possible."

CFA supported the sprinkler project with an additional \$11,000.

STORY MIRANDA SCHOONEVELDT



Eaglehawk Citizen of the Year 2021

Former Eaglehawk Fire Brigade Captain Eric Smith, who was instrumental in protecting the community during the 2009 fires, has received the honour of Eaglehawk Citizen of the Year for 2021.

The award recognises Eric's service to CFA for more than 50 years, his involvement in various community events, and membership of organisations including Eaglehawk Dahlia and Arts Festival, Canterbury Carols and Australia Day Committee.

Eric is a highly decorated CFA member having held several roles at Eaglehawk from training officer and coordinator, second lieutenant, group delegate and captain for six years.

"Eric is a fine example of putting service above self and he's highly regarded for his community passion and people skills," said Geoff Gallagher, Community Services Director with Rotary Eaglehawk.

"In 2009, Eric was on the first fire truck to fight fires on what became known as Black Saturday, and he worked on the ground for several weeks to protect our community.

"On behalf of the Eaglehawk community and the Rotary Club of Eaglehawk, I

congratulate Eric on becoming this year's Citizen of the Year and thank him for his dedication to his community."

Several brigade members caught up with Eric, commonly known as Uncle Eric, to have a chat about the recent announcement.

"I received a phone call from the organiser of the Eaglehawk Australia Day Committee saying I had been awarded Eaglehawk Citizen of the year for 2021," Eric said. "It really caught me off guard, quite a shock really.

"I try to keep a low profile and just work along in the background helping with what needs to be done," he continued. "It's for the Eaglehawk Community, it's what you do being part of the community, but I do humbly appreciate the award."

Eric reflected on the time after Black Saturday and noted how the community of Eaglehawk "fell into place and helped the brigade immensely.

"It really helps having a great team and family supporting me, and I find it satisfying seeing the community come together, whether after a fire or at the Dahlia and Arts Festival."

"On behalf of Eaglehawk Fire Brigade, we congratulate you Uncle Eric on becoming this year's Citizen of the Year and thank you for your dedication to Eaglehawk Fire Brigade and the Eaglehawk community," brigade Captain Kylie Davis said.



Fire station becomes a power station

Maiden Gully Fire Station has a new solar energy installation comprising 6.6kW of solar panels on the engine bay roof along with a 13.5kWh Tesla Powerwall battery.

This was made possible thanks to funds from the Australian Government's Energy Efficient Communities Program, Bendigo UFS Healthier Communities Program and Maiden Gully IGA Community Chest Program.

"Rather than needing an emergency generator, this power station provides electricity for lighting, communications and other equipment during power outages," Captain Peter Dole said. "It has already proved itself on the first extreme fire danger day last season when there was a power outage for almost three hours.

"Normally the station uses a minimum of energy, so it's now a net exporter of power to the grid, virtually eliminating power bills.

"In effect, our fire station has become a power station."

A key partner in the project was the Bendigo Sustainability Group (BSG) which identified the grant opportunity, sorted the technical specifications and arranged quotes.

"Together, we've delivered an installation that will greatly reduce our environmental footprint through saving at least 6.8 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually," Peter said.

You can watch the system being installed on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/ZnL7LFJcqtO>.

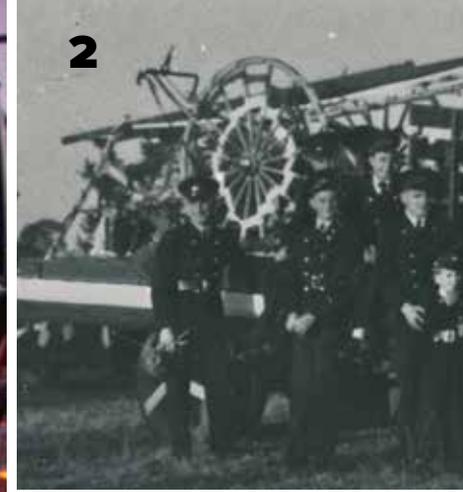
STORY ANDREW HOWLETT



Left: BSG's Colin Lambie with brigade Captain Peter Dole in front of the battery



Below: Lisa Chesters MP, Member for Bendigo, with firefighter John Ham and Lieutenant Holly Franchina





THROUGH THE AGES KOO WEE RUP

- 1 Main drain flooding, 2011
- 2 Township celebrations, 1953
- 3 Ladies Auxiliary
- 4 Fire station built in 1958
- 5 Current fire station
- 6 Blind BA training
- 7 Champs team
- 8 Brigade-owned ultralight
- 9 Koo Wee Rup railway station fire, 1994
- 10 Working with SES during floods, 1990s
- 11 Brigade fire education with schoolchildren

COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM



9

10

8

11

A Beacon of light in Beaconsfield

It's been a tough 12 months for Junior brigades. While some adapted to running Juniors online, others found that young members were being overloaded with screen time through school and put their Junior Program on hold – which is what Beaconsfield Junior Brigade did. But that didn't mean the Juniors were forgotten about.

The Junior leaders shared ideas about how to engage the Juniors remotely and turned to social media to stay in contact.

"We all kept in touch through our private Facebook group, offering peer support and help when required," Junior Coordinator Jason McKenzie said.

However, when the green light was given on meeting together, Juniors were contacted and they had their first session that same week. What made it even better was the addition of new recruits despite the program not running as normal during 2020. Jason's daughter, Brooke, pictured right, was one of them.

"I joined the Juniors to have fun and learn about firefighting," Brooke said. "I love spending time with my dad and it's something we can do together. It also gives mum a night off with peace and quiet."

"Recruiting members is always hard but we were fortunate to have siblings of existing members coming though," Jason added. "We also approached Beaconsfield Primary School and carried out an information session about the program."

The Junior leaders continued to use the brigade Facebook page to advertise the Junior brigade and encourage young people to join. This combined approach resulted in four new Junior members who started at the beginning of the year.

Beaconsfield Juniors Program focuses on making sure the kids have fun while learning core firefighting activities. Sessions are built around normal duties but tailored to suit the Juniors' skill levels.

The Juniors enjoy activities that involve hands-on running the pumps and using heaps of water. They also have a special love for the brigade's ground monitor, which is always fun for them to set up. It's not all just about having fun though, as Jason



explained. "A lot of the Juniors are also really pleased to be doing something that can help the community."

The Junior leaders at Beaconsfield believe a varied program is key to keeping the Juniors engaged. Plans are in the works for a visit to Eildon Fire Brigade to explore its fire boat and maybe even go for a ride. In the past, the Juniors have been visited by the Chief Officer and have toured Dandenong Fire Station including a trip up the ladder platform.

The Juniors program has good support from neighbouring brigades Berwick, Officer and Upper Beaconsfield, who help with training nights and refer local young people to the program because they don't have one.

So what's Jason's advice to any leader who wants to develop plans for their Juniors?

"Get on the phone and make it happen. It's amazing how helpful other brigades are when it comes to helping the kids."

STORY JEN CLEMENT AND JASON MCKENZIE



A heads-up on mental health

Grady Tyson, a young volunteer from Tatura Fire Brigade, is representing CFA volunteers on the Young Volunteer Advisory Committee. He's involved in a research project being done by the University of Adelaide looking at identifying effective strategies to maintain the mental health and wellbeing of young fire and emergency services volunteers aged 16 to 25.

"I thought getting involved in a mental health research project and sharing opinions over Zoom as an emergency services volunteer would be an easy way to stay social and engaged through lockdown," Grady said.

The project has gathered youth representatives from the SES, RFS, QFES and CFS, among others, to discuss how different organisations respond to trauma situations such as traumatic callouts, debriefing processes, counselling services, and attitudes about the importance of good

mental health. The Advisory Committee meets every two months to explore how to address mental health barriers in volunteer emergency agencies.

The 12-month project is past the halfway point, and is on track to develop a wellbeing framework that will support the positive mental health of young volunteers. There will also be information for young volunteers about supporting mental health.

As a firefighter, Grady explains that his "awareness of mental trauma and its possible negative effects on the people around me has developed substantially. I'm more acutely aware of the trauma we can face as first response protectors of life and property in Victoria," Grady said.

Grady hopes that a wellbeing framework will help change the standard of expected behaviour and care.

"Improving mental health and wellbeing shouldn't be complicated. Studies

show that positive mental health can be influenced by doing things that help others, like serving and protecting our community. All CFA volunteers understand this, and so now there's an opportunity to further support those who we stand with. You can help too."

If you have any thoughts about what a mental health framework could look like for our community of volunteers, you can contact Grady at gradytyson01@gmail.com. He's specifically interested in hearing about what brigade members do to promote good mental health and how they provide solid support services for those who require help in a time of trauma.

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health issues, support can be found here: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelid=MentalHealth

STORY JEN CLEMENT AND GRADY TYSON

CFA Junior in Mint condition

Royal Australia Mint recently ran a series of design competitions for under 16-year-olds. To celebrate the launch of the special 2020 'Brave – Australia's Firefighters' \$2 coin, one of the competition's design themes was a coin that honoured Australia's firefighters. This was the perfect challenge for Ashlee Davis, a Junior member at Maldon Fire Brigade.

"My mum saw the competition on the Next Generation CFA Facebook page and she encouraged me to enter because she thought I had a really good chance of winning," Ashlee said. "I've been drawing since I was really young – probably since I was four years old. People have always said my



drawings were really good. I find drawing very relaxing."

Ashlee designed and coloured her own firefighter coin then submitted it for judging. "I didn't expect to win. I had forgotten all about it until we got an email saying I was the winner. It felt really good."

Rather than becoming an artist, Ashlee hopes to be a police officer one day. In the meantime, she's enjoying being a Junior and helping out in her community.

"I joined CFA because I thought it would be fun, something new to do and because my mum is also in CFA. When I turn 16, I'd like to become a volunteer firefighter with my mum at Campbells Creek Fire Brigade."

STORY JEN CLEMENT



Clancy leads the way to recovery

Clancy Quirk joined Morwell Fire Brigade as a Junior member just over four years ago and has served as the brigade's Junior crew leader for the past two years. He was also awarded the Junior Firefighter of the Year in 2019.

In 2019 Clancy was selected, along with 12 other Junior members, to represent CFA at the Australian Fire Cadet Championships in Sydney. At the Championships, CFA competed against other agencies in a range of firefighting and strategic events which developed their teamwork skills and knowledge of firefighting tactics.

"I think our teams demonstrated that CFA has a strong Juniors program that strives to practise CFA's important values of safety, teamwork, adaptable, integrity and respect," Clancy said.

More recently, Clancy was selected to be a member of the Youth Affairs Council Victoria's (YACVic) Bushfire Recovery Working Group. YACVic is the peak body and leading policy advocate for young people and the youth sector in Victoria. The main goal of the working group is to enable the Victorian Government to hear directly from young people in rural and regional communities about the response to, and recovery from, the 2019-20 bushfires across Eastern Victoria.

The working group also seeks to build on members' experiences and ideas to develop better ways to support affected youth in future disasters. As a result of COVID-19, the meetings were unable to be held face-to-face and instead took place through online video.

Describing the work of the group Clancy said, "We are also running training workshops on youth advocacy and leadership. These workshops enable young people to have a voice, ensuring they are included in important aspects of decision-making, project design and delivery.

"My new-found role with YACVic has been a great experience, and I hope the work we've done will strengthen ties between CFA, YACVic and smaller regional communities."

Reflecting on his time with CFA Clancy said, "So far it has been a great experience. I've developed good friendships with some fantastic people and have been fortunate enough to have been able to participate in some great opportunities with CFA."



Clancy can see himself continuing his involvement with CFA. "My time with CFA so far has taught me a lot. I enjoy what I do and I hope that moving forward as a career I can somehow be involved with CFA. In the meantime, I hope to continue my involvement with my local brigade."

You can find out more about the work Clancy is doing with YACVic and the Bushfire Recovery Working Group at yacvic.org.au/get-involved/are-you-12-to-25/bushfire-recovery.

STORY NATHAN LINTON AND CLANCY QUIRK

New Juniors recruitment resources

Recruitment is always at the forefront of brigade members' minds. To help them recruit new Juniors, whether they follow the Junior Volunteer Development Program (JVDP) or mainly focus on running and Championships, CFA's Youth Programs Team has released new recruitment resources that will help all brigades.

The new recruitment set includes:

- three posters
- a postcard/flyer
- two social media banners
- a new recruitment video.

The resources are editable and printable, allowing brigades to localise the posters with brigade-specific information. They've been designed to reflect the importance of using digital technologies to engage with and recruit young people. Features include high-quality video production, links, social media banners and QR codes to ensure they can be easily shared and integrated seamlessly into CFA's recruitment and onboarding processes.

A parents' FAQs has been developed to give parents and guardians of prospective Juniors additional information about the program and what it means for their child when they join CFA as a Junior member.

This is supported by guidance and tips on how to successfully recruit and engage young members aged 11 to 24 years old in the updated *Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Guide*.

To access the new recruitment materials, go to the 'Young People in CFA' page on Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelid=youth



If you have any questions about the resources email juniors@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY NATHAN LINTON

Countdown to Cadets

The soon-to-be-launched Cadet Program will provide structured learning and practical training opportunities for CFA's 16 and 17-year-olds to gain the necessary skills and experiences needed to become senior members.

Since 2000, there has been an accelerating decline in 16 and 17-year-old membership, 6.6 times higher than general membership. Exit surveys have revealed that some young members left because they didn't feel valued or accepted or had negative experiences transitioning from Juniors. Sadly, some members had also been subjected to bullying and harassment.

The Cadet Program is being designed to provide a safe environment and supportive experience for CFA members who are transitioning to senior membership. It will embed child-safe practices and set clear expectations of appropriate behaviour for everyone involved in the program.

A blended learning model will include project-based, face-to-face and online delivery to build capability in Cadets, and will include accredited training in leadership, personal development and operational skills.

A working group, which includes representatives from functions across CFA, is advising on the design and development of the program. In the meantime, work continues to develop the content and learning pathways and creating a transparent application process.

A pilot program will run in two regions, and we look forward to welcoming 20 Cadets from each region who will form the inaugural intake.

STORY JIANN HUGHES



Emergency Memberlink

The Emergency Memberlink program is a way for us to recognise your commitment and contribution to emergency services and Victorian communities.

By using Emergency Memberlink, you can receive discounts and benefits on a wide range of products and services in Victoria and interstate.

Details of the offers and full terms and conditions are at emergencymemberlink.com.au.

To join Memberlink phone 1800 820 037 or register online at emergencymemberlink.com.au. You can also access your Memberlink card on the website.

The Memberlink team welcomes feedback about the program and your suggestions about new benefits you think would be of value to you, your family and your colleagues. Phone the team or leave a message on the Emergency Memberlink Facebook page.



- Save 3% to 7% on pre-purchased **Gift Cards** including Woolworths, Coles, Myer, Kmart, Target, David Jones, Rebel Sport, JB Hi-Fi, Supercheap Auto and BCF.
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- 4% discount on the Emergency Memberlink Health Plan through **Bupa**.
- Commercial pricing on a range of household appliances and electronics through **The Good Guys Commercial Division**.
- Free small soft drink, small orange juice or small McCafé coffee with any purchase over \$4 at **McDonald's** restaurants in Victoria.
- Discount of up to 20% on standard rates at the **Radisson on Flagstaff Gardens Melbourne**.
- **The Athlete's Foot** offers 10% off full price footwear when you present your Memberlink card in Victorian stores.
- 20% off Bath House bathing during off-peak periods (Monday to Friday outside of public and school holidays) at **Peninsula Hot Springs** on the Mornington Peninsula.
- **mycar Tyre & Auto** offers 10% off servicing, mechanical repairs and TCP tyre purchases.
- 20% off flowers from **Petals Network**.
- 15% off the best rates of the day with **Thrifty** car rental.
- **RSEA Safety** offers members 15% off full-priced items online.
- Up to 20% discount on the public website price on the entire range of **Lenovo** Notebooks, desktop PCs, monitors and accessories.
- Access to **Nissan** Partner Program pricing on a range of passenger cars, 4WDs and SUVs.
- 15% off the best available rate at **Best Western Hotels and Resorts** across Australia.
- Plants, trees and garden products at wholesale prices at **Plantmark**. Locations include Langwarrin, Thomastown, Werribee and Wantirna.
- **Searoad Ferries** has a 10% discount on ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff.
- Exclusive pricing on whitegoods, kitchen appliances, audio visual, computers and mobile phones, home appliances and furniture through **Harvey Norman Groups & Associations Division**. Contact the Emergency Memberlink Team to arrange a quote.
- 20% discount on unlimited ride tickets at **Luna Park Melbourne**.
- **Isubscribe** offers an extra 10% off the listed price of any magazine subscription. Popular titles include Better Homes & Gardens, National Geographic, Gardening, Home Beautiful and New Idea.
- 20% off day admission tickets for members and their immediate family at **Moonlit Sanctuary Wildlife Conservation Park**.
- Preferential rates at selected **Accor Hotels**.
- Discounted passenger fares on **Spirit of Tasmania**.
- Discounted rates and reduced insurance excess on car hire with **Avis**.
- **Latrobe Health** offers a 6.5% discount on the Gold Hospital Choice Members corporate cover (direct debit premiums).
- 10% off accommodation plus a free petrol offer with **Innkeepers Tasmania**.
- **Experience Oz** offers 10% off and even more on hot deals on a range of experiences such as day tours, attractions, zoos and aquariums, theme parks, extreme activities and skydiving.
- **Departure Lounge** has up to 50% off accommodation at Peppers, Mantra and BreakFree properties throughout Australia.
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