

# Brigade

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New generation  
at Nagambie

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PHOTO KEITH  
PAKENHAM AFSM

## Autumn 2022

# IN THIS ISSUE

### INCIDENTS

- 04** Near Year fire ravages Wimmera townships
- 06** Grassfire prompts swift emergency warning
- 07** Car park disaster at Great Western Racecourse



- 08** Firefighters protect factory from huge almond hull fire
- 10** Incident statistics

### LEADERS' NEWS

- 11** Latest news from the CEO, Chief Officer and senior leaders

### STATEWIDE NEWS

- 14** Chief Officer's Quarterly Operational Update
- 20** New equipment benefits fire investigators
- 21** CFA Citizens Commendation Awards
- 22** Australia Day Honours
- 24** State-of-the-art training at Central Highlands



- 28** Research into wet forest flammability
- 29** Get involved with the Chief's Volunteer Forum
- 30** Realistic fire training close to home



- 31** Mural honours local heroes
- 32** Safer Together – ongoing boost to fire services
- 33** New smoke alarm campaign
- 34** Upgraded DMO service truck is full of innovation
- 36** Latest communications and warnings research
- 37** Book your virtual reality firefighter training

## LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

- 38** Case studies including a serious truck crash and Apollo Bay structure fire



## HEALTH MATTERS

- 46** Work continues on 2019-20 wellbeing recovery
- 47** Hazard identification and situational awareness
- 48** Preventing sprains and strains
- 48** Stay hydrated

## BRIGADE NEWS

- 49** Faces of CFA
- 50** Journey of a new firefighter



- 51** Plenty's new fire station nears completion
- 52** The Perry family's legacy in Nagambie
- 54 FEATURE:** How diversity benefits our brigades
- 56** Adam Damen gets his special wish
- 57** EchUCA brigade's 150 years of service

- 58** State Championships at Mooroopna
- 61** Coldstream's new station now operational
- 62 FEATURE:** The many skills of CFA volunteers



- 64** Youth driving the way at Moe Fire Brigade
- 65** How first-aid training saved a life
- 66** Fuel reduction takes teamwork
- 68** Kelly Krajnc's intense start as an air attack supervisor
- 69** Resurgence for Cann Valley Fire Brigade



- 70** Mentoring program reaches milestone
- 71** The changing face of Captain Koala
- 72** New modern home for Buninyong-Mt Helen brigade
- 74** Through the Ages: Beaufort Fire Brigade

## YOUTH

- 76** Update on the Cadet Pilot Program
- 77** Young brigade members tell their stories



# Wimmera townships ravaged by grassfire over New Year

**A grassfire that was started by a car fire in South Australia near the Victorian border at about 1.30pm on Friday 31 December 2021 spread quickly in an easterly direction into Victoria. It impacted the Meereek State Forest and more than 7,300 hectares of grassland, timber plantations and scrub was burnt.**

Emergency warnings were issued, with residents of Langkoop, Poolaijelo and Powers Creek advised to leave and a relief centre opened in Edenhope.

Although no homes were lost, hay sheds and fences were destroyed as well as 5,000 sheep and 70 cattle. Local timber plantations also had significant losses of about 800 hectares, valued at more than \$10 million.

Nineteen strike teams from CFA, Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) and South Australia Country Fire Service battled the fire until it was contained at 3.30pm on 2 January 2022. They were supported by waterbombing aircraft and FFMVic used heavy machinery to build containment lines. CFA crews continued to patrol the area for a week and existing containment lines were reinforced.

Agriculture Victoria staff worked with property owners to help manage their stock losses. There were also wildlife losses and old native forest (famous for its red tail cockatoos) was burnt.

Some local roads were closed until crews had assessed and removed hazardous trees that were a risk to the public, and about 70 properties lost power.

Simon Robinson was the incident controller and is also the Apsley Group Officer and a member of Langkoop Fire Brigade. He saw the incident pop up on his phone on Vic Emergency, and thought that because it was only a car accident there would be nothing in it. But he decided to drive the short distance to take a look.

“As soon as I cleared the trees, I could see smoke straight away,” Simon said. “As I arrived on scene, trucks from South Australia were arriving and I made a fire call because the Victoria side hadn’t been paged.

“This fire was a ‘perfect storm’ because it was right on the border so there was confusion over who should take control of it and what radio frequencies we would use. My dashboard thermometer read 40 degrees and there was a strong wind with a wind change forecast. We couldn’t talk to the SA trucks because we were on one channel and they were on another.

“We heard that the fire on the Victoria side was enormous and moving at a fast pace, so I pulled all the CFA tankers out and sent them to Poolaijelo,” Simon said.

Many houses were threatened by fire, but none was lost.

“CFA tankers saved seven houses, but in some cases we couldn’t get a tanker to a house and through good luck the fire spared them.

“I could see many firefighters moving too quickly, so I told them to try to control their adrenaline, slow down, work as a team and leave nothing alight. When they slowed down, everyone did a better job.”

A wind change at dusk was also a stroke of luck. Simon heard there would be a strong wind change in mid-afternoon to the south-west, but fortunately the wind only came around slightly to the west.

“We tried to get to the fire front at Poolaijelo and I led the strike teams to the far eastern area. We waited for the fire to come out of the scrub, but the wind changed and there was no longer a threat. The strike teams then went to wait for the fire at the northern flank. We waited by the edge of the scrub as aircraft waterbombed the fire, but very little fire appeared.

“We patrolled every day and night for the first week blacking out everything on the ground within 500 metres of the fire edge and trees one kilometre from the edge.”

For more about this fire, see the story about Air Attack Supervisor Kelly Krajnc on page 68.

## STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL







PHOTOS: CHRIS TOMS

# Grassfire prompts swift emergency warning



**It didn't take long for the Beaufort-Caramuir Road grassfire near Beaufort on 2 February 2022 to move to Emergency Warning. Beaufort Group Officer Rod McErvale was one of the first on scene and recalls the fire was moving rapidly.**

The rate of spread, coupled with wind conditions and visible smoke, prompted Rod to jump on the radio straight away to 'make tankers 5', as soon as the pager went off.

Immediately after Rod got off the radio, an ex-captain from neighbouring Lake Goldsmith brigade called and told Rod to get more trucks.

"He was three to four kilometres away with a better viewpoint, and he told me it was going and going fast, so we jumped back on the radio to 'make tankers 10' and call for air support," Rod said.

"When I got there, I couldn't see any flames looking south from Caramuir Road. It looked like it hadn't come across the hill yet, so I drove down the road and did a U-turn to get a better look."

In the short time it took Rod to do a U-turn, the fire had come across the top of the hill.

"At first, I thought the fire had started on the other side of the hill, which is about 300 metres away, when it had actually started one kilometre further south.

"Later on, we realised the fire had burnt two-thirds to three-quarters before we

even got there – that's how fast it was moving.

"We called for an emergency warning within the first 30 minutes because we knew how fast this thing was moving."

Beaufort brigade tanker was the first truck on scene, followed closely by trucks from Crossroads and Lake Goldsmith brigades.

"The good work of these first few trucks bought us 20 minutes and helped stop the fire jumping Caramuir Road straight away," Rod explained. "By the time the fire did jump Caramuir Road, we had more trucks and a Helitak on scene. If they hadn't held it from the road and attacked it from the paddocks, it would've been a different story.

"The next fallback line would've seen it move into the back of Beaufort township, leaving us with nothing but asset protection."

At the time of the fire, the Grassland Fire Danger Index (GFDI) was low to moderate, wind speeds were about 30 km/hour, the temperature was 18 degrees and relative humidity was 50 to 60 per cent.

Given the GFDI of low to moderate, Predictive Services Specialist Musa Kilinc said the conditions weren't favourable for a fast-moving fire and a simple head attack would usually be enough to control a fire like this.

"This fire was travelling at 15 km/hour at

its peak, running uphill, fully exposed to wind," Musa said. "Fuel loads were relatively high and continuous, consisting of natural grasslands which in some areas were 90 to 100cm high. The area of high fuels coincided just before the fire was moving at its fastest.

"Due to the wind conditions, spotting from ribbon bark was igniting grasses 60 to 80 metres downwind of Caramuir Rd. Six to eight fires merged very quickly to establish a head fire that grew to six hectares within a matter of minutes on the opposite side of the road. The total area impacted was 69 hectares."

Rod credits strong local relationships with a nearby wind farm as a contributing factor in controlling this fast-moving fire effectively.

"We made a phone call and it only took 10 minutes for the affected turbines to be switched off, which allowed aircraft to respond quickly," Rod said.

Beaufort brigade Captain and Incident Controller Col Gerrard also praised the combined efforts from the local community.

"Private units responding during the early stages of this fire were invaluable. We were also grateful to landowners for continuing to patrol the area, ensuring no reignitions in the days that followed." Col said.

**STORY NAOMI GALVIN**





## Car park disaster at Great Western Racecourse

**Firefighters and waterbombing aircraft battled a grassfire that destroyed 18 cars at the Great Western Racecourse in late January 2022. The fire was started by a car with a hot engine parked over straw.**

CFA was called to the grassfire on Moyston-Great Western Road just after 1.30pm. Incident Controller John Carman said the incident was complex and firefighters had to manage the burning cars, a spot fire in the centre of the racecourse and all the patrons at the event.

“The car park is quite separate from the rest of the event area, which worked well on the day for the safety of the patrons,” John said.

“It was a dynamic situation with cars burning and engines and tyres exploding. It was quite a toxic environment with thick black smoke, so we called in BA crews quickly so they could get in closer to suppress the car fires.

“As a result of some of those explosions, the fire spotted into the centre of the racecourse. We had waterbombing aircraft from Stawell which did a great job in helping us get that outbreak under control.

“It was a really fantastic team effort to bring the incident under control and avoid further spread of the fire.”

Crews brought the fire under control in about an hour, but remained on scene for some time blacking out and ensuring there were no further hotspots.

As a result of the fire the race day was cancelled. No racegoers were injured but two firefighters on scene received minor injuries.

Nine CFA vehicles were on scene supported by FRV crews and Victoria Police.

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER



PHOTOS: ROBNORTON



PHOTO: IAN MORLEY



# Firefighters protect factory from huge almond hull fire

**More than 100 people worked hard to make sure a large almond hull fire caused minimal damage to a factory at Bannerton, north-east Victoria. On scene were CFA volunteers from 17 brigades, Fire Rescue Victoria firefighters from Mildura, firefighters employed by the factory, Swan Hill Rural City Council's bulk water tanker and Sunraysia's field operational vehicle and rehab unit.**

Emergency services were called to the fire at about 5.30pm on 26 December 2021 after employees noticed about 5,000 tonnes of hull in two piles spontaneously combusted 300 metres from a Select Harvests' factory. This outer cover of the almond is removed during processing and stacked away from the plant.

Radiant heat and embers from the piles set fire to a large stack of plastic fruit boxes and 6,000 wooden storage bins, allowing the fire to impact the walls of the factory. Thanks to a sustained effort by firefighters over several hours, there was only minor building damage and the equipment inside was saved. However, the plastic boxes, wooden bins and fumigation chambers were destroyed and some outside walls were damaged.

Robinvale Fire Brigade captain Andrew Knight, who also works at the almond factory as processing field manager, was first on scene and was the incident controller until Robinvale and District Group Officer Kevin Ryan arrived. Andrew then continued in the role of sector commander of the structure fire. Big fills were immediately set up on a drainage dam.

"Before I received the pager message about the fire, I received a call from work saying there was a problem with the almond hull," Andrew said. "I'm also in charge of the company's firefighting equipment – two tankers and a pumper – and as soon as I arrived on scene I organised hoses and ground monitors onto the almond hull attempting to stop embers from blowing towards the factory."

As Robinvale Group brigades arrived on scene, they concentrated on asset protection – the factory and wooden bins – while crews from the factory tackled the hull fire using company-owned equipment. A south-easterly wind blowing at about 35 to 40 km/hour carried the fire from the hull stacks to the rear of the factory.

"The fire spread into 6,000 empty wooden bins used to store almonds. The fire started in the middle of the bins and we quickly tried to pull the stack apart with factory machinery to access the fire and extinguish the bins. Unfortunately, there was no chance of stopping them from burning," Andrew said.

The fumigation chambers and all associated cooling equipment and infrastructure including chiller and dehumidifier units on the outside of the warehouse wall were destroyed. On-site fire systems worked effectively and saved the infrastructure.

"The outside walls of the warehouse that were exposed to most of the heat buckled. This is a fire-rated wall and you couldn't tell on the inside that it had been impacted by fire," Andrew said.







An aerial pumper from Mildura Fire Rescue Victoria, supplied water from a small storage dam, was tasked with extinguishing the fumigation chambers. This knocked down the head of the fire.

"The FRV crews were up to the task," continued Andrew, "asking 'where do you want us and what do you want us to do'."

While all this was happening, embers travelled about 600 metres and set fire to a 200-tonne compost pile. Other CFA tankers arriving on scene were tasked to extinguish the compost fires, ember attacks to the roadside on Hattah-Robinvale Road, and the paddock north of the road. The compost piles were pulled apart by Select Harvests' loaders and then distributed across a bare area and extinguished by CFA tankers.

"We had three fires going at once, the compost, the hull and the bin area, but everyone worked hard and worked well together."

With Andrew in charge of the structure fire sector, Kevin tasked brigades and liaised with Andrew and other members to set about extinguishing the compost fire.

"It was a big job. We had to plan where brigades were to be placed," Kevin said. "Crews from our group were at least half an hour away and other groups up to two hours away. The Robinvale Group managed the incident very well."

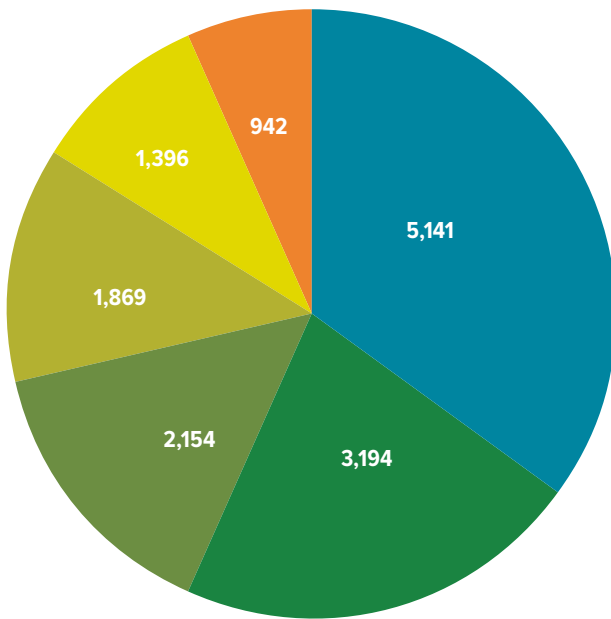
CFA crews continued to patrol the area in shifts until about 10pm the following day to ensure embers didn't start further fires. Watch and Act warnings were issued throughout the evening of 26 December, with the first one at 7.20pm and the last at 11.15pm. Select Harvests' CEO Paul Thompson said the firefighters did a great job controlling the fire.

"It was a pretty serious situation," he said. "The wind wasn't our friend that day. It's been a pretty challenging season with the rain and then the hot, windy conditions that followed, which is probably what caused the event to occur."

Select Harvests generously donated \$50,000 to CFA for helping to minimise the damage to the factory.



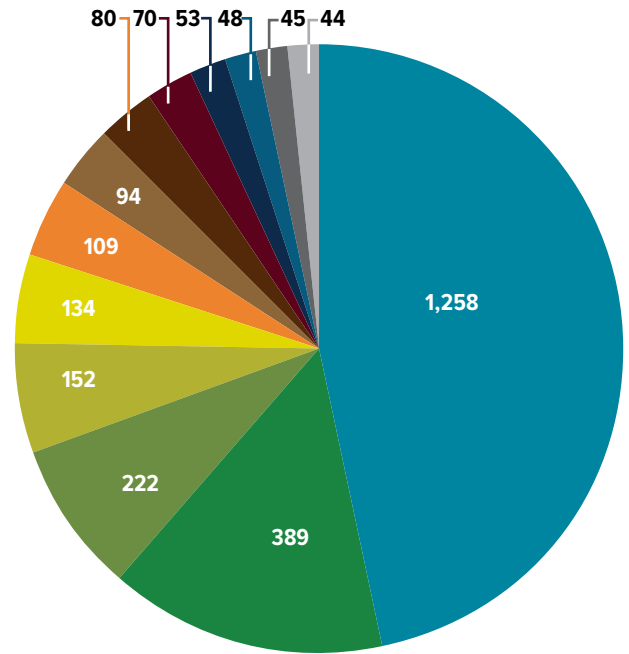
### INCIDENTS BY TYPE



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

\* Includes 4,328 callouts in support of FRV, 28 in support of SES, 13 in support of interstate fire services and five in support of DELWP

### ORIGIN OF FIRE



Paddock/open area/lawn
Road/car park
Engine area/running gear/wheel area of vehicle
Kitchen/cooking area
Undetermined
Scrub/bush area
Part of vehicle
Lounge
Garage/carport
Chimney/flue
Rubbish area/rubbish bin
Patio
Bedroom

### INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT



#### SOUTH WEST

District	Incidents
4	87
5	283
6	241
7	1,069

#### WEST

District	Incidents
15	872
16	224
17	210

#### NORTH WEST

District	Incidents
2	759
14	2,464
18	395
20	412

#### NORTH EAST

District	Incidents
12	367
13	1,471
22	574
23	310
24	281

#### SOUTH EAST

District	Incidents
8	3,544
9	485
10	274
11	275
27	354

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

**As leaders, our primary objective is ensuring CFA is a great place to volunteer and work. To do this, we need to provide the right resources for our members and also the right environment for them to carry out their roles.**

This has been a strong focus over the past year and we are making progress in addressing long-standing issues around our complaints management processes, working through a backlog of legacy complaints, reducing the average time for new cases and putting in place an improved, transparent and efficient system for managing complaints when they arise.

This includes a localised approach to addressing and managing issues raised by managers at the brigade, district or regional level, with support from regional HR business partners if required.

CFA's Behavioural Standards are the guiding principles for expected standards of behaviour for all CFA members and are now available as a single document on Members Online, that everyone can access and follow, with supporting resources.

The forthcoming Behavioural Standards training program, together with the outcomes and recommendations of the independent Issues Management and Culture Review, will help us shape the future culture of CFA.

All members have a role to play to make CFA a safe, respectful and inclusive organisation and the Standards will play a big part in helping us fulfil that vision.

One of the pleasing outcomes of our recent mid-year budget review process was the identification of savings which are being used to purchase some new tools and other equipment for a number of brigades across the state. Battery-powered fans and lighting, toolkits and the development of new training videos are among the initiatives we will be funding to improve the capability of brigades. Where we can, we will continue to use savings we find within our budget to fund additional equipment for volunteers.

The first of the 50 new tankers, funded through the Victorian Government's \$126 million CFA Capability Funding package, will be rolled out to brigades in coming months. The fleet of new dual-cab vehicles includes 48 heavy tankers and two light tankers, all of which replace single-cab tankers and allow a full crew to sit in the vehicle cabin. The full rollout will be completed in 2023.

Finally, it's been great to see the start of the distribution of the CFA workwear to brigades. The popularity of the garments was evident at the CFA/VFBV Championships and we look forward to seeing many members decked out in the new clothing as they proudly undertake their duties in the community.

## CHAIR



# Greg Wilson

### Attending the Championships

It was my great honour to have officially opened the 2022 State Championships in Mooroopna and attend this celebration of CFA. The combined event showcased the best of our organisation to the broader community through the dedication and commitment of our people both on and off the track.

I was impressed by the talent and skill of our members as they competed across a number of different disciplines and it was great to see teams from right across the state come together in such a fun and supportive environment.

Following another year of significant challenges due to COVID-19, being able to stage the Championships and bring brigades together to participate in this long-held tradition was clearly welcomed. It was also pleasing to be able to support the regional economy again and holding the Torchlight Procession alongside Shepparton's Illuminate Festival proved to be one of the highlights.

Across both weekends, in all the events, including the new women's events and the Junior events, the passion and dedication for which our volunteers are renowned was evident to everyone who was present.

Touring the displays of appliances, training props, the new workwear and next generation PPE, virtual reality technology and the volunteer support available for activities like recruitment and wellbeing highlighted the excellent work of all our members to ensure CFA protects lives and property.

Congratulations to all involved in hosting this superb event.

Finally, thank you to all our volunteers and staff who have been available to fight fires and help at incidents over this past season, in particular our members who travelled interstate to help in two different natural disasters – fire in South Australia and flood in New South Wales.

All our members continue to do CFA proud as pillars of your community.

## CHIEF OFFICER



# Jason Heffernan

**All our CFA members know the standards of behaviour expected of them as a representative of our proud organisation. In my travels throughout the state, I have seen the respectful way in which our members interact with each other and the values exhibited through their behaviours.**

Whether tackling the intricacies of an incident or educating Victorians as part of planning and preparing for fire, CFA members are trusted and respected by their communities.

That's why the release of our Behavioural Standards will be welcomed by our members. They bring CFA's expectations together into a single, accessible document available on Members Online.

To be a safe, respectful and inclusive organisation, these Standards must be followed by everyone working, volunteering or undertaking activities for, and on behalf of, CFA.

All CFA members will be expected to have read and understood them, and senior operational leaders are expected to lead by example. I strongly encourage you to read and familiarise yourself with the Standards and take the time as a brigade to discuss them.

Information sessions will begin in May to help members understand the Standards and provide a refresher in how to deal with difficult issues and challenging situations.

Each region is managing this through a variety of channels, including their district planning committees and eventually through to brigade management teams. There will be further information about when these sessions are coming to your local area and how it will be implemented.

As I look back on the past fire season, another La Niña summer has delivered a mixed fire season across the state. Crews battled significant fires mostly across the west and south-west parts of the state. But in stark contrast to the 2019-20 season, there was reprieve across District 11 in East Gippsland which didn't declare a Fire Danger Period at all.

We all saw the devastating impacts of the floods in NSW and Queensland recently. Victorian emergency services agencies deployed a total of 190 members, which included CFA staff and volunteers, to help with the recovery. I was pleased our members were able to share their expertise to help these impacted communities and I thank them for their incredible efforts in an extremely challenging and emotional setting.

After two years of COVID-19 restrictions, we were also able to celebrate the return of a full CFA/VFBV State Firefighting Championships as an outstanding community event in Mooropna over two weekends. I look forward to attending more events across the state throughout the year.

## DCO SERVICE DELIVERY WEST REGION



# Peter O'Keefe

**It has been a long, dry and busy fire season for West Region and all of our supporting partners within the region and across the border in South Australia. With operations being undertaken in an environment impacted by the pandemic, the challenges were overcome by the hard work and diligence of our teams.**

The most significant fire occurred at Langkoop - Edenhope/Penola Rd in District 17 on 31 December 2021. This fire originated in SA and quickly crossed the border burning 7500 hectares. I would like to acknowledge and recognise the terrific work of our brigades and groups across District 17 and all who supported the enormous effort to deal with the largest fire in the state last season.

I would like to particularly acknowledge the outstanding leadership of Apsley Group Officer Simon Robinson and Poolajelo Fire Brigade Captain Celia Scott who both led the team, directed firefighting operations and considered the impact and consequences on the local community. Their commitment continued into the recovery of those impacted by the fire in the Lang Koop district.

During this entire period Celia and Simon displayed outstanding leadership and courage in putting the community at the centre of what was accomplished. Key successes at Langkoop included our ability to keep the fire much smaller than predictions indicated and reinstating power early to support the isolated community – which was critical in keeping people in their houses and on their properties. No occupied houses were lost and the evidence indicated that fire crews and aircraft protected many structures.

While the protection of life and property is critical, this can only be achieved with good leadership and teamwork and this was so evident at the Langkoop fire. Well done Simon, Celia and team!

While big fires were being controlled in the Wimmera, all brigades in West Region had their own challenges dealing with the pandemic and its impacts. I congratulate everyone for the way they conducted themselves and continued to deliver emergency services including response. Innovation, creativity and diligence ensured all brigades continued to support community needs in a challenging and continually changing environment. Thank you for your commitment.

As we look to the future, fire service reform allows many opportunities to refocus our effort to ensure community risk is mitigated. It will allow us to build capacity and leadership capability to ensure we remain adaptable and agile to meet future demand for service delivery.



## DCO OPERATIONAL RESPONSE &amp; COORDINATION



# Garry Cook

**For the second year in a row, we have moved through the summer fire season under the influence of the weather phenomenon known as La Niña. While there is a lot of underpinning technical detail and multiple influences that determine the impact of La Niña, in broad terms we have experienced generally cooler conditions, higher humidity and a milder summer.**

We've seen areas of eastern Victoria experience significant and regular summer rainfall and the East Gippsland Shire didn't declare a fire danger period. This is a remarkable contrast to the 2019-20 season and the preceding two summers where enduring drought conditions laid the foundations for a period that re-wrote the record books.

The Hume Freeway, running from Melbourne to Wodonga, almost provided the perfect line this season for defining the fire risk in Victoria. The area to the north and west of the freeway right to the SA border was the key area of concern, predominantly in cropping and pasture country. It was evident early in the season that districts 18, 17 and 4, our three South Australia-bordering districts, would be the early and ongoing risk, with adjoining districts of 2, 5, 16 and 20 also experiencing dry conditions as the summer arrived.

There were many fires in these districts during this past season, 50 hectares here, 100 to 200 hectares there. Many of these fires didn't feature in mainstream media, but our brigades and districts worked very hard all summer in these areas.

CFA used firefighting aircraft significantly in these areas, which once again proved the benefits of these resources in early attack and suppression support for our ground resources.

Fuel loads were also abundant, with bumper crops and pasture growth at some of the highest levels experienced since records began in the middle of last century. The contrasting impact of La Niña was perhaps most evident during the 2021-22 Christmas to New Year period when significant flooding occurred in East Gippsland and warnings were in place for several rivers, while the Langkoop fire south-west of Edenhope on the SA border burned more than 7300 hectares.

We all understand that Mother Nature sets the agenda and one season is never the same as the next. Many of our senior volunteers have been searching their memories and records to find a year similar to 2021-22, and it's even harder for them to remember when there were two consecutive years that were so similar. These people remind us that three in a row would be almost impossible to contemplate and therefore planning for the season ahead starts now.

## GROUP OFFICER DUNDAS GROUP, D5



# Everard Linke

**The Dundas Group, which was formed in 1962, has 18 brigades (the second largest in Victoria) ranging from the busy brigade of Hamilton to traditional town brigades, right to the northern edge of the group's area on the Grampians' interface of rural and parkland.**

The size and topographic complexity of the Dundas Group requires highly skilled, experienced and flexible leadership through captains and six deputy group officers (DGOs).

Most fires attended by the group this year were caused by lightning strikes and a couple of header fires that required strike team activation. District 5 strike teams also supported the effort to suppress the Langkoop fire and a fire at Lucindale in South Australia. The group's motto is 'Instant Suppression'.

The Hamilton Air Base located at Hamilton Airport is a great asset in the Dundas Group, as it serves the south-west of Victoria and has also supported the surrounding fire districts. Being within the group's area, the waterbombing aircraft often arrive on scene before the tankers and they deal with the situation.

Our DGOs have a portfolio of three brigades each, and what is working well is how the DGOs mentor the captains in their roles as required. Being a large group, each captain provides a report to the group executive meetings that outlines their brigade's progress and any difficulties they may have.

Communication within our large group is important to me and the weekly radio check-in ('sched') is the most important way we communicate. It gives us the opportunity to test more than 30 radios, relay messages to the group and find out the availability of brigade leadership.

Our major training session for the year is the group exercise, but unfortunately this had to be cancelled for the past two years because of COVID-19 restrictions. With nine new captains, we also needed to carry out special training, but this was also cancelled. Fortunately, a preseason captains' training session was held in December 2021 where they received the latest information and took part in a TEWT in preparation for the Fire Danger Period.

An ongoing challenge for our group is the availability of training sessions to suit the size and needs of our group. This was further compounded by COVID-19 restrictions on training and on gathering for our meetings. We've had many online meetings using video and teleconferencing, which were beneficial during lockdowns. In January and February, we faced some difficulties sourcing crews because of positive COVID-19 results and close contacts having to isolate.

# QUARTERLY OPERATIONAL UPDATE



## Chief Officer's Message for autumn 2022

On 8 February, I attended the State Funeral of South Australian, Country Fire Service, Senior Firefighter Louise Hincks, tragically killed in the line of duty following a tree fall while working at the Coles Fire near Lucindale SA on 21 January. On this very same fireground CFA firefighters stood in solidarity with their CFS counterparts to protect local communities. I was also accompanied by our volunteer CFA Strike Team Leader Ian Hamley who led our dedicated and hard-working members on that tragic day.

Louise was a woman who lived and died a firefighter, always putting the lives of strangers ahead of her own. She was a volunteer of the CFS for close to three decades and a psychologist whose passion was the mental health of fellow firefighters and emergency services first responders. Louise spent many years working in the South Australian emergency services sector pioneering peer support programs and welfare services focusing on stress and harm reduction across the CFS. A strong message sent by those speaking at her funeral was many a life had been saved because of her hard work and dedication. I know many CFA members had Louise and her family in their thoughts.

As I watched my fellow colleague Chief Officer Mark Jones QFSM, undertake the task that all Chiefs and Commissioners across Australia hope never to have to perform in their career, I reflected on the past CFA Chiefs and the difficult and tragic moments they must have faced in our history.

On the anniversary of the 2009 fires, we joined with our fellow Victorian emergency services partners to publicly recognise the worst bushfire disaster to affect Victorian communities. The 2009 fires claimed the lives of 173 and changed forever the lives of countless more in grief, damage to property and loss of livelihoods. The effects of this disaster still have a lasting impact on many CFA members and brigades.

We once again stopped and reflected on the 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires where 47 people lost their lives including 14 CFA members. Combined with the Linton Fire of December 1998, where five CFA firefighters tragically died while trying to protect themselves in a fire entrapment, these three events are some of the darkest days ever recorded in our history. The advances to CFA following these events in particular have shaped how we operate today.

In more recent times, my experiences during the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires where 33 people lost their lives across the country (including NSW RFS volunteers, aerial firefighting flight crews, a DELWP contractor and two Forest Fire Management Victoria staff) demonstrate to me the continued dangers that are faced by our members today and into the foreseeable future.

The grief, suffering and sacrifice of those who have gone before us must not be in vain and CFA continues to make improvements to ensure our members go home to their families and friends at the conclusion of each deployment or incident. This is why CFA will always embody a lessons management approach and share learnings through these operational updates to embody our value of safety.

This is the right thing to do and we owe it to our current and future members and their families.

As the fire season has now ended, I would like to thank each and every one of our members for the valuable contributions they have made. I appreciate that although it was a quieter season in many areas, it was filled with uncertainty given the COVID-19 situation and our members continued to dedicate their time to assist their communities. As we approach the cooler months, our service delivery will shift, as will the associated risks. It is important that members familiarise themselves with the content of this update to be aware of potential risks and CFA expectations leading into autumn.

In the autumn Quarterly Operational Update we shared information about:

- safety shares generated from current CFA safety issues
- driving and collisions
- planned burning
- service exchange vehicle initiatives
- debriefing after the fire season.

I have expectations of brigades to consider how the information shared in this operational update can be incorporated into brigade, group and district operations, training and exercises.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank each of you and recognise the support of your families who make this possible. Thank you for your continued commitment.

Use this QR code to access the Quarterly Operational Update or go to [cfa.vic.gov.au/quarterlyoperationupdates](https://cfa.vic.gov.au/quarterlyoperationupdates)

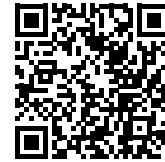




# Safety shares

Safety shares from CFA investigations are being shared to ensure the entire organisation benefits from the investigations being carried out. There are four key investigations with important lessons to focus on over the next quarter. We encourage members to familiarise themselves with the key messages listed below from each of these safety shares.

Use the QR code, right, to read more about the investigations below and the actions implemented, or go to [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/safetyshares](http://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/safetyshares)



## Safety Share # 10 Asbestos exposure during burn off

- Members should understand the aim and importance of a size-up. Size-ups ensure that there is a clear appreciation of the incident and any potential risks.
- DRA, LACES and WATCHOUTS are vital tools to maintain situational awareness and safety during an incident. Members should ensure they have a clear understanding of these tools and how to implement them during operational response.
- Asbestos exposure is a risk and members should be equipped with the knowledge and understanding to manage this risk by undertaking formal asbestos training.
- It is necessary to conduct briefings before any authorised activity, not just emergency response.



## Safety Share # 12 Tanker rollover

- It is important that drivers are familiar with their vehicles and the specifics of vehicle handling characteristics under a variety of road conditions.
- Road conditions were a contributing factor to the rollover. Driving vehicles in different road conditions will help members develop a better understanding of how their vehicles react. Brigade leaders should ensure drivers are experienced with all brigade vehicles.
- For brigades with a Hino cab chassis, it is important to note that they have a wheel track slightly narrower than most heavy vehicles and tend to wander laterally within the wheel ruts or roads. This requires the constant attention by the driver to continually adjust the steering to keep it on the intended path.
- All members must wear a seat belt when in a vehicle to reduce injuries and save lives.



## Safety Share # 11 Water pressure loss

- When receiving a new truck, it is important that all members of the brigade (and supporting brigades) familiarise themselves with the truck, particularly when moving away from a mechanically-operated style pumper to an electronically-operated one.
- Maintain awareness of the water supply and pressure throughout an incident. The number of trucks using the water supply in this incident severely reduced the volume and pressure available to the primary attack line.
- The miscommunication between crews and the incident controller meant that a first attack line was set up to facilitate a rescue that wasn't required, putting crews at unnecessary risk. This highlights the importance of clear communication at all times in an incident.
- Always ensure incident objectives are clear to all crews at the incident through informed briefings.



## Safety Share # 13 Railway near misses

- Familiarise yourself with safety alerts and safety shares that may be relevant to your role. The members involved in the second near miss incident were not aware of Safety Alert 41 that was produced as a result of the first railway incident.
- If your brigade has a railway line in its area, it is important to undertake training in train and rail hazard recognition. Presence of switches, crossovers, electricity, ballast and other rail hazards all increase the risk when attending incidents like this.
- Do not become complacent in high risk situations such as working on train tracks. It is important that members use tools such as DRA, WATCHOUT and LACES to ensure safety of members.
- Always maintain situational awareness and regularly review for hazards, both seen and unseen.
- When working in a high-risk situation such as active rail lines, only maintain the required number of crew so as not to unnecessarily expose members to risk.
- Always report near misses on CFASafe.



## Driving and collisions

Driving is a major function of CFA's response and service delivery, so it is important members have a thorough understanding of driving doctrine and are aware of the risks and expectations. It is important that members learn from and apply the key lessons that have been identified over the years.

### Driving doctrine

Section 12 of the Chief Officer's Standing Orders and Standard Operating Procedures deals with driving CFA, brigade and group-owned vehicles. All CFA members who drive any CFA vehicles, including pool vehicles, should have a thorough appreciation of their responsibilities when driving CFA vehicles.

This section of doctrine provides a wide range of guidance about driving CFA vehicles, including:

- collisions involving CFA vehicles
- recovery of disabled CFA vehicles
- driving and travelling in CFA vehicles
- emergency vehicle response
- identification of service exchange vehicles
- speed limits
- CFA members driving other emergency service vehicles
- non-CFA members in/on CFA firefighting vehicles
- CFA members driving private vehicles when involved in operational activities.

### Fatigue management

Driving when tired is a contributing factor in 16 to 20 per cent of all road crashes in Victoria. In the past five years, around 30 people died each year and up to 200 people suffered serious injuries in crashes caused by fatigue.

Fatigue is a state of mental, emotional and/or physical exhaustion which reduces a person's ability to perform work safely and productively. It is commonly caused by lack of sleep or poor sleep, prolonged or hard mental or physical work, may occur at home or at work and is cumulative. Fatigue impacts all other work we do.

Drivers should have a 15-minute break every two hours of driving. For long trips, where possible, ensure vehicles have two drivers available to share the driving.



### On-road driving

On-road driving poses a risk to members whether they are travelling in a pool vehicle or on a firefighting truck travelling code 1 or 3. When driving on roads, members are required to comply with a number of CFA requirements.

- **Items in cabin:** Loose items in the cabin of any vehicle should be secured wherever possible, as per the safety notes in the Chief Officer's *SOP 12.03 – Driving and Travelling in CFA Vehicles*. In recent years, a number of CFA vehicles have been involved in rollovers and loose items were a risk of becoming projectiles within the cabin.
- **Seat belts:** Seat belts must be worn when travelling in CFA vehicles. Wearing seat belts is both a legislative and CFA requirement and will reduce the risk of injury to the driver and passengers. Seat belts must also be worn by those seated in the ROPs area of a tanker. However, there is an exemption if a firefighter is required to be standing in the crew deck area to undertake operational activities such as extinguishing a fire. A risk assessment should always be undertaken before applying the exemption, as per procedure 7 in SOP 12.03.
- **Driving code 1:** Intersections pose a risk when travelling code 1, so it is important to be highly familiar with the doctrine surrounding this and not become complacent. You should always have warning devices activated, slow to a speed that enables the vehicle to stop if necessary and only proceed with due care when all traffic has stopped.

As we near the end of the fire season and operational activity starts to decrease, it is important that people remain focused and don't become complacent while driving. The risks when driving remain, particularly as our roads become wetter in autumn.

Use the QR code to access more information and resources about driving and collisions in CFA, including key lessons that have been identified in previous collisions. Alternatively, go to [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/driving](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/driving)





# Planned burning

Planned burning forms a large part of CFA's service delivery to control and manage fuel loads in preparation for the fire season.

Fuel reduction by burning decreases the spread of bushfire by lowering the intensity, which makes it easier for firefighters to control a bushfire and significantly reduces the impact of flame, radiation and ember attack.

It is important that members have a thorough understanding of planned burning including the doctrine that surrounds it, the planning and conduct process and the various programs associated with planned burning.

## CFA involvement in planned burning

CFA brigades have a proud history of undertaking planned burns to protect their community.

In addition to reducing community risk, there are many benefits to brigade involvement in planned burning. It provides CFA members with experience and training in bushfire suppression and the opportunity to observe and learn about fire behaviour under differing conditions. As a brigade activity it can also raise the profile of the brigade in the community and attract new members.

Burns conducted jointly with CFA and public land managers provide learning opportunities and improve agency interoperability and relationships during bushfire suppression.

## Planned burn doctrine

Standard Operating Procedure 9.39 outlines the procedures and processes required to undertake a planned burn by CFA. It provides assistance to members planning and conducting a planned burn and ensures it is executed in a safe and efficient way to benefit the community and environment.

A planned burn conducted in accordance with the planned burn SOP secures the protection provided to CFA members and the land owner or manager in accordance with the CFA Act 1958 for loss or injury associated with a planned burn that has been approved.

A properly planned burn is legal and CFA supports you in undertaking these important fire prevention works.



It is vital that all doctrine is followed, and no corners are cut in order to maintain safety and to better protect our members and the community from any potential loss or injury.

## CFA planned burn camps

Training is an important part in upskilling our workforce and ensuring members have an in-depth understanding of certain activities before they take part in them.

CFA burn training camps expose volunteers to live running fire in a controlled learning environment; where mentoring and coaching can occur.

At the camps, members gain vital experience in all aspects of introducing fire to the land under controlled conditions. The experience gained also has a direct benefit in building skills in fire response and suppression.

To find out more information about planned burning training camps and how they could benefit your brigade, contact your district's vegetation management officer.

## Planned Burn Task Force

CFA has a statewide Planned Burn Task Force that can be deployed anywhere to support planned burning. Fire prevention through fuel management is part of our core business and many areas don't have the numbers to undertake planned burning when the conditions are favourable.

Similar to the strike teams that are mobilised for emergency deployment statewide and go wherever they are needed, this state-based volunteer program is designed to support each other during planned burning and other non emergency-based fuel treatments. More information about this program is available by emailing [plannedburntaskforce@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:plannedburntaskforce@cfa.vic.gov.au).

For more information about planned burns and resources to support your brigade with planning burning, use the QR code or alternatively go to [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/burns](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/burns)



## Service exchange vehicle pump operations



As part of the ICAM process, an Investigation Review Panel was established with senior leaders of the organisation to ensure that outcomes from ICAM investigations are properly actioned.

One outcome that the review panel has been working on is improving the way brigade members can access instructions about how to engage pumps on various service exchange vehicles (SEV).

When a brigade's truck is out of service, it is given an SEV to use. However, it may be different to the vehicle that it replaces. As such, the pump engage technique that needs to be used may be different, so it is important that members are able to easily access this information.

Often when a pumper is required to be taken to one of our DMO workshops for maintenance, an SEV can be a different type. There are four types of SEV pumpers currently being used across the state:

- Isuzu type 3 medium pumper
- Scania type 3 medium pumper
- Hino type 2 automatic pumper
- Hino type 2 manual pumper

A QR code initiative has been introduced to assist drivers and operators to better understand the functions of the vehicle in a simple and easy-to-understand format.

Fleet Operations is fitting QR codes to SEV pumpers so that users not familiar with the type of vehicle will understand the functions of engaging the pump and conducting a changeover from the first-aid tank to a hydrant supply.

The QR codes will be attached to the pump panel and when an SEV is delivered to a station, the brigade can easily and quickly watch a short instructional video about the critical functions of the vehicle. This can be watched as many times as required.

This initiative will be rolled out across the state fleet to ensure members have easy access to essential information. To access this information online, use this QR code or go to [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/sev](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/sev)





# Debriefing

Debriefing is an important step in operational response, non-operational programs and projects to facilitate improvement and to continue good practice across CFA.

CFA encourage brigades, districts and regions to conduct debriefs whenever possible where there may be valuable lessons to learn and areas to improve. A debrief can take the form of an informal 'hot debrief' that may not be recorded, or an after-action review.

## Post Season Debrief Program

The annual Operational Debrief Program is designed to enable CFA to review and assess its performance in preventing, preparing and responding to fires as well as other emergency events during the fire season.

The purpose of the debriefs is to identify key observations, opportunities for improvement and best practice to ensure learning and improvement occurs within the emergency management sector. The process assists in identifying areas of improvement at local, district, regional and state levels.

The Operational Debrief Program was released mid-March. The program, including further information and resources, can be accessed via this QR code or go to [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-operational/operational-debriefs](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-operational/operational-debriefs).



## After-action reviews

An after-action review (AAR) provides an opportunity to assess what happened and why. They are learning-focused discussions designed to help the team and the organisation to discover what to sustain or do differently. The information collected is analysed to support continuous improvement and learning, a vital component of lessons management in CFA.

By sustaining good practice and identifying practices to improve, we can improve operational effectiveness, reduce risks and meet the challenges of the future.

Not every incident will require an after-action review. Minor incidents with no major learning outcomes might benefit from a hot debrief between crews after the incident. However, any incident, large or small, where improvements would be beneficial or where practices worked well, can provide good value in an AAR.

For example, members attending a minor MVA with no injuries or significant issues should carry out a hot debrief. A bushfire with poor radio communications and other significant issues may benefit from a more significant AAR to help firefighters and the organisation improve the way we respond to similar incidents.

## Importance of AARs

An AAR is a key component of post-incident activities. It's about getting a greater understanding of an event rather

than placing blame on individuals or groups. It focuses on the reasoning behind what happened, how we can sustain current practice or improve the process in the future.

Some benefits of conducting AARs are:

- the lessons identified can be quickly integrated into future operations
- members can understand the circumstances and actions of a potentially traumatic event
- team communication and feedback is improved
- provides an opportunity for all members to participate in developing actions to improve performance.

## AAR process

Four key questions form the core of an AAR: what was planned? What happened? Why did it happen? What would you do differently next time?

To make sure an AAR is effective, members are encouraged to:

- conduct AARs regularly so they become part of everyone's daily routine
- conduct the AAR as soon as possible after the incident
- make sure everyone participates and feels they can talk honestly
- manage disagreements because that is when the members learn
- always end on a positive note
- focus on what happened and not who did it.

Every AAR should be documented and forwarded to your district and emailed to [aar@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:aar@cfa.vic.gov.au). This enables data to be collected and analysed for statewide trends.

CFA has a variety of resources available that can guide your brigade, group or district when undertaking AARs, including a list of talking points, record sheets for note taking, action plans and a basic starter pack with everything you need to know.

These resources can be accessed using the QR code or link below.

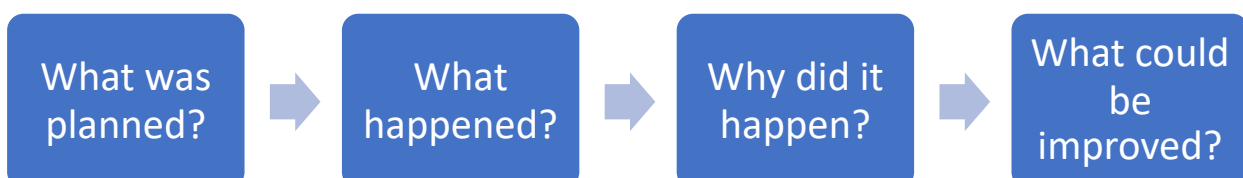
## Want to learn more?

CFA's Lessons Management Centre has released an online learning course about lessons management. It consists of five modules that can be completed separately, covering:

- introduction to lessons management
- introduction to debriefs
- how to run an AAR
- how to write an observation
- how to analyse AAR data.



Use this QR code for more information and resources about debriefing or go to [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/debriefing](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/debriefing)



# New equipment benefits fire investigators

To help CFA's fire investigators carry out examinations at structural fires, grass and scrub fires, and vehicle and marine craft fire scenes, CFA has invested in digital cameras, metal detectors and storage cases. These were distributed in December 2021.

Digital cameras have been allocated to all CFA volunteers who are endorsed and delegated to perform the role of a fire investigator. A digital camera is one of the most important tools in the kit that fire investigators use when investigating the origin and cause of fires. As part of the investigation process, investigators document the scene using photos which are included as part of a comprehensive report that is completed on the Fire Investigation Management System.

Each CFA district office has also been given a metal detector which is part of the district's fire investigation kit. Metal detectors are used at vegetation and bushfire investigation scenes when examining the area of origin. We use a systematic examination process to detect any metal components or fragments which may be associated with the ignition of the fire. For example, parts of brake drums, bearings, components from power lines and power infrastructure or even types of incendiary devices.

These metal components can then be collected from the scene as evidence for further examination to help establish the origin and cause of the fire.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFISM

In addition, fire investigation electrical safety kits have also been given to each CFA district for fire investigators to use at fire scenes to detect potential electrical risks and hazards.

"Fire investigation is one of the fundamental components of the fire service leading to the identification of

fire trends, which then results in fire prevention outcomes," DCO Operational Response & Coordination Garry Cook said. "It's important that our fire investigators have the best equipment available to assist them at scenes to safely undertake their role."

STORY NICOLE HARVEY

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# CFA awards first commendations to community heroes

**CFA has officially commended two community heroes for rescuing a disabled man from his burning home in June 2020.**

In mid-February 2022, CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan and Chief Executive Officer Natalie MacDonald presented CFA's first Citizens Commendations to Dean Tustin and David Harrison for their bravery and courage at a house fire in Plenty.

On 13 June 2020 at about 10.30pm, Dean and David were alerted to the house fire in their street. Incident Controller and former Plenty Fire Brigade Captain Adrian Marshman said knowing the medical history of the home's occupants, Dean and David were faced with a very distressing situation.

"Dean and David ran inside the property and worked together to carry Michael, who has severe cerebral palsy, out of the house to safety," Adrian said. "Dean went back to the property to rescue Michael's father James, who suffers dementia, and in his quick thinking also saved some vital equipment for Michael.

"Michael and James are alive thanks to the actions of both Dean and David that night."

This award was established in 2019 to acknowledge a community member who performs an act of bravery at a fire or provides exemplary service in connection to CFA or their communities.

Jason Heffernan said this was the first time CFA had awarded someone with the Citizens Commendation.

"I can't think of anyone more deserving than community members Dean and David to be the first to receive this important award," Jason said.

"Their acts of heroism and bravery that night were nothing short of incredible and CFA is grateful for their service to the community.

"This award was created to give CFA the opportunity to highlight, thank and reward members of the community like Dean and David, and I was proud and honoured to present these commendations to them."

Award recipient David Harrison said he didn't hesitate to do what he could to help because he knew the family and Michael's condition.

"Dean and I did what hopefully anyone would do," David said.

"We didn't expect anything in return so it's really an honour to be awarded the commendation, and to receive the first one from CFA is very special too."

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER



# Australia Day 2022 Honours

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

## Graeme Higgs

A volunteer for close to 50 years, Graeme Higgs has distinguished himself as a selfless, dedicated and compassionate leader across his near five decades of service to CFA.

He's one of CFA's exceptional operational leaders and through his management of Drouin West Fire Brigade has helped to make the communities of Jindivick and Drouin West, and Victoria more widely, a safer place. His expertise has been greatly valued during his participation in campaign fires in Victoria and interstate, where he has carried various roles including strike team leader, sector commander and divisional commander.

When asked about his AFSM award, Graeme said, "Wow, what a surprise. I do what I do to help people and usually can't say no. I'm truly humbled to receive such a prestigious award. It's an honour to be recognised for something I enjoy doing.

"I accept this AFSM on behalf of all the crews I've led and worked with over the years. Many thanks to Drouin West brigade members for their support and teamwork."

Graeme has a reputation for being technically competent and trusted by those he leads because the welfare of his crews is always front of mind – crew safety is a hallmark of his command.

His exceptional leadership in the 2009 fires, especially the Bunyip State Forest fire, inspired confidence in the strike teams he led and in the members of the Labertouche community.

"I was the strike team leader of the first strike team to tackle the Bunyip fire," Graeme said. "In the week leading up to Black Saturday, it was very hot and then a storm came through and we had about 11 lightning strikes. Eventually, all the strikes were extinguished except for one in the Bunyip State Forrest.

"We had 190 callouts on Black Saturday and over the following weeks. I took three weeks off work to take on divisional commander roles as we had strike teams coming into our area all the time to help our brigade manage the massive amount, of calls.

"During my time as captain, the support of my family – Chris, Clare and Scott – kept the farm running and allowed me to help others. Thank you so much."

Graeme joined Drouin West brigade as a teenager where his leadership potential was recognised early. He has served in leadership roles for most of his time, including 20 years as brigade captain as well as Junior leader and his current position as deputy group officer.

During his time as captain, Graeme identified the need for change and led the transition of Drouin West brigade from a traditional rural brigade to one capable of responding in a professional way to the range of incidents typical of an active urban/rural interface brigade. He established a culture of professionalism that's evident today.

He identified the need for change, developed more appropriate content for the brigade's training program, and then ensured

that members gained the competencies needed to capably and professionally meet the challenges posed by the changing risk profile.

Graeme was elected deputy group officer of West Gippsland Group in 2002 and he had a significant role in the negotiations and formation of a new and larger Baw Baw Group following municipal restructure. He was again elected as the second deputy group officer and has taken particular interest in the group's communications systems and operating procedures and the conduct of group training exercises.

A lasting tribute to Graeme's outstanding contribution to saving lives and property in the Labertouche area on Black Saturday is in the Nangara Reserve. As part of the restoration of the Reserve, the local community replaced the many wooden carved statues that were lost. One of the new concrete sculptures is of Graeme, the firefighter.

"A local artist took photos of me in turnout gear and then carved the sculpture," Graeme said. "I feel proud that the statue of me was made. It represents the effort of all local firefighters."







PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMUN

## John Clarke

With more than 50 years under his belt, John Clarke said he still remembers signing up at 16 years of age to fight a significant fire at Longwood in 1965 that would eventually claim seven lives.

“My neighbour was a lieutenant in Seymour Rural Fire Brigade and he called my mum and dad to ask if he could take their two young, fit sons to fight the fire,” John said.

“We went out there in a 1948 Chev truck that had two nozzles, so it was fairly basic.

“The modern equipment now makes firefighting so much easier and gives the crews great protection which is a great step up for crew safety.”

Having started his service with such a significant event, John has since gone on to be involved in many of Victoria’s largest fires.

“I was over in Macedon fairly early on Ash Wednesday,” he said. “I remember the communications weren’t great at that time, but the way they have developed has certainly made fire management a lot easier.

“I was also the field operations officer at Kilmore on Black Saturday and had great support from my team down there.”

His roles during the 2009 fires included the planning and coordinating of strike teams and air attack activities, and he was also responsible for deploying CFA personnel to the impacted areas in the following weeks and ensuring compassionate support was available throughout.

John has held many leadership positions including captain of Hilldene and Seymour Rural Fire Brigades, group officer of Seymour Group, president of Hilldene Fire Brigade, and supporting in various deputy group officer and lieutenant capacities.

He has also received the National Medal, National Emergency Medal, and is a Life Member with both CFA and Hilldene.

John said he was honoured to even be considered for the award.

“It’s something that I never dreamed I would get and it’s the pinnacle of my career. I was over the moon when I heard because it’s not only a great honour for me but for all the people I’ve worked with. It’s a reward for all my fellow volunteers as well.”

## Gill Metz

Starting her CFA journey 22 years ago, Gill Metz has held many roles throughout her time as a volunteer, including firefighter, secretary and lieutenant. Alongside this, Gill has worked for CFA as a member of staff, as well as working for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, holding the roles of Assistant and Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Gill has been a fierce driver for change during her time at CFA, advocating for increased youth engagement and increased diversity in our brigades.

“To work with our communities, we need to reflect our communities. The capability of an organisation is linked to diversity. You have to think ‘can I walk in their shoes? Do I understand their challenges?’ when thinking about your local community.

“When working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the key is not only understanding how their culture works, but also for them to see themselves reflected in your organisation. You become trusted.”

Gill said when she first joined CFA her local area was going through a period of rapid growth and this was a driver to invest in young people and increase diversity.

“When I was working in District 14, we were going through huge growth and it was obvious we had to appeal to more than just the traditional cohort. Investing in young people is so important because they truly are our future and bring new skills and outlooks to brigades and the whole of CFA.”

Gill also believes that brigade diversity is a team effort.

“Key to our success is developing our brigade management teams (BMTs) as a complete unit rather than as individual positions, because with the diversity of roles in a BMT you can get a diversity of people and that makes us stronger. My brigade has a diverse BMT and I really feel it benefits the brigade.”

Gill was incredibly proud to be nominated for and receive an AFSM.

“For me it’s a recognition of all the people who continue to challenge the status quo and want to improve the lives of our frontline volunteers and want to improve the culture and efficiency of CFA.”

# State-of-the-art training at Central Highlands





**CFA's newest state-of-the-art training facility was opened by the Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes on 24 November 2021. The site selection and construction of the facility was four years in the making.**

The Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre Central Highlands in Ballan is a \$31 million-dollar facility on a site of almost 40 hectares. It allows CFA volunteers and other emergency services personnel to prepare for real-world emergencies in a safe environment.

CFA worked closely with Moorabool Shire Council to minimise the economic impact on the surrounding community of closing Fiskville Training College and to choose a location for a new training centre that was easily accessible for people who previously trained at Fiskville. This included those in the west and north-west and those travelling to and through Melbourne.

"VEMTC Central Highlands is designed to offer training that simulates the types of scenarios our members could face on any given day and it will play a vital role in skills training and education for CFA brigades across the state," Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said.

"We're incredibly proud of what we've built and we look forward to welcoming our members and other emergency services for training at Ballan."

There are three practical areas for drills – or PADs – and 19 individual props that

allow members to train in everything from basic firefighting through to advanced structural firefighting with some complex scenarios. This includes a petrol station, a tanker with running fuel fire, a gantry, gas tankers, and other small and moveable props to test skills in dealing with a range of hazards.

The structure PADs give trainers the ability to turn up flames and smoke and adjust the fire threat to test the more experienced firefighters.

There's also an off-road driver complex with a range of challenging slopes, a sand bed and water trap.

"It's really top of the range for a driver education facility and we expect it to be used heavily and in high demand," Jason said.

Ballan Fire Brigade Captain Ben Hatfield and his crew trained at Central Highlands in late 2021.

"It's a modern take on traditional training of the past," Ben said.

"The use of synthetic smoke and LPG gives us a more controlled environment to work with different fire behaviour and scenarios. We've got more scope to do flashovers and combat it with water, and the gas PADs are particularly good at night."

The brigade is keen to do more training at the site.

"We haven't been able to do structural training since Fiskville closed, and the

nearest centre for us was Peshurst which is three hours away."

The latest in modern, cutting-edge features includes a layout designed to reduce contamination from training materials and dirt and grime brought in from outdoors, gender neutral shower and changing facilities with individual, enclosed and secure cubicles and disability access for all areas.

## PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

As part of CFA's commitment to environmental sustainability, the water management system meets all compliance and quality requirements. Stormwater and runoff from the training facilities, buildings, roads and paved areas is collected and diverted into a flush system for treatment. It's then stored and reused across the campus so there's no waste water released into the environment.

Two million litres of untreated water can be collected on site and one million litres of treated water can be stored for use by our brigades for training. Regular water quality monitoring and reporting is carried out to ensure CFA has constant oversight of any potential impacts to our environments.

Members Online includes an interactive tour that lets you see the training facility as if you are there in person. Search for 'Central Highlands' on [members.cfa.vic.gov.au](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au).



## PAST AND PRESENT MEMBERS HONOURED

In a CFA first, the road network and off-road driving track at Central Highlands have been named in honour of present and deceased members who have made a significant contribution to CFA.

**Allan Roberts (Roberts Road):** The late Allan Roberts joined Research Rural Brigade in 1962 and was a dedicated member for 59 years. His passion for firefighting led him to become a career firefighter in 1968 where he had a career spanning more than 20 years. Throughout the 1990s, he was a deputy group officer, then group officer, of Lower Yarra Group and before retiring he became a driving instructor.

**Dale and Joy Pitts (Pitts Drive):** Dale joined CFA in 1975, five years before Joy joined Wattle Glen Fire Brigade. Joy was the first female firefighter at the brigade and Dale was brigade captain for 10 years and a volunteer PAD operator at Fiskville Training College. The couple worked for an industry training services company, and CFA used their services to train members in on-road and off-road driving. During their careers, the couple ran more than 150 paid on-road and off-road driving courses for CFA, 47 driving courses as volunteer instructors and 800 licence tests on behalf of VicRoads for CFA members.

**David Gerrard (Gerrard Way):** David has contributed to CFA over many decades, including leadership roles such as Beaufort Fire Brigade captain, group officer and PAD instructor. David joined CFA in 1974 and has joined strike teams fighting fires across Victoria and New South Wales. He was also involved in the development and delivery of CFA's original foundation training, Minimum Skills, now known as General Firefighter.

**Graeme Broom (Broom Street):** Graeme Broom is a former Ballarat Fire Brigade captain and road crash rescue instructor and trainer. He first joined CFA in 1958 and received his 60-year CFA medal in 2019. During his time at Ballarat, Graeme was instrumental in helping the brigade to buy its first road crash rescue vehicle.

**Greg Allisey (Allisey Track):** The late Greg Allisey joined Frankston Fire Brigade as a junior firefighter in 1964, before moving into the career ranks in Dandenong in 1972. He served as a station officer at Bendigo, Boronia, Fiskville and Frankston. Notably, he was a staff instructor at Fiskville.

**Jan Cleary (Cleary Close):** Jan first joined CFA in the mid 1990s and is a volunteer with Lakes Entrance and Mossi-Tambo. Having been a deputy group officer for



several years, Jan Cleary became CFA's first female group officer in 2010. Since 2017 she has been a VFBV Board member and is also a member of the South East Regional Inclusion and Fairness Council. She trained in peer support in 1998.

**Max McLean (McLean Street):** Max McLean joined Moyston Fire Brigade in 1963, aged 14. He transferred to Plenty Fire Brigade after he completed his national service, where he eventually became captain aged 29. He went on to serve in the role for 21 years, before becoming group officer for the Whittlesea-Diamond Valley Group.

**Samantha Rothman (Samantha Street):** Samantha has been recognised for her localised work at CFA, secondary school programs and broader dedication to volunteerism in her community. Her passion for learning and development extends beyond CFA, having founded an award-winning school emergency services program called the Emergency Services Journey at Maryborough Education Centre where she works as a secondary teacher. As a firefighter, Samantha has been involved in some of the state's most devastating fires, including Black Saturday and the 2019-20 bushfires.

**Sue Sheldrick (Sheldrick Street):** Sue has been recognised for being the first female captain at CFA, as well as her ongoing achievements in emergency management. She joined Research Fire Brigade in 1983, before moving to Wattle Glen brigade. She transferred to Killawarra brigade, where she was elected captain. While still an active firefighter, Sue's focus these days is her incident management team role as a level 3 public information officer.

**Winsome Morris (Morris Drive):** The late Winsome Morris was the first female CFA member to receive an Australian Fire Service Medal. This was just one of many medals and honours she received during her lifetime. Passionate about the role of group communications, Winsome managed communications for operational incidents over many decades, including management of large incidents across multiple agencies.

Full profiles of these members are available on Members Online – search 'Central Highlands' on [members.cfa.vic.gov.au](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au).







# The flammability of wet eucalypt forests

**When the Australian Fire Danger Rating System was pioneered by Alan McArthur during the 1950s and 1960s, it was based on standard dry eucalypt forests on level ground and assessed the difficulty of suppression under a range of fire weather conditions. This fundamental work still forms the basis for fire agency decision-making needs in forests.**

Although further research into dry eucalypt forest types has been carried out since Alan McArthur, there has been far less research to help us understand the drivers of fire behaviour in wet eucalypt forests.

Wet eucalypt forests often act as an effective barrier to the spread of bushfires or planned burns because they are typically too wet to burn. However, when wet eucalypt forests transition to a dry state in relative terms, they can carry fire as was tragically observed during the Ash Wednesday and 2009 fires. When this flammability-switch is on and under hot, dry and windy conditions, bushfires spreading through wet forests can become intense and extremely dangerous because of the amount of heat generated from the burning biomass. As a result, accurately predicting the timing of this transition to a flammable state is important for predicting the ignition, escalation and fire spread potential, so that the true fire risk potential can be captured and communicated.

Under the Victorian Government's Safer Together Program, CFA in partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and the University of Melbourne were funded to work on a research project to identify and quantify the factors driving flammability in wet eucalypt forests and to describe these relationships.

Although the overall project is still in progress, the initial piece of research investigated the relative importance of key factors driving flammability – such as drought, heatwaves, fuel availability and fuel moisture – through an expert elicitation workshop. Despite the diversity of experts present, that included Kevin Tolhurst, David Bowman and Ross Bradstock, there was agreement that fuel availability was a fundamental factor that would likely drive flammability. Conversely, it was also acknowledged that fuel availability in wet forests was poorly understood from a scientific sense and that further work needed to be carried out.

This outcome was important to frame the second part of the project, which concentrated on the development of an experimental field campaign to quantify the drivers of ignitability from flaming firebrands in wet and damp eucalypt forests. We measured ignitability at field sites throughout the 2019-20 and 2020-21 fire seasons under varying moisture conditions, fuel structures and ignition techniques.

We then tested the effectiveness of numerous in-forest and modelled landscape fuel and existing landscape scale moisture metrics, such as the Keetch Byram Drought Index, and more recently-developed landscape scale moisture metrics as observed through satellites and models developed by the Bureau of Meteorology.

This research, which will be completed at the end of 2023, will help us to answer simple questions such as under what environmental conditions are fires likely to ignite in damp and wet forests?

STORY MUSA KILINC





# Get involved with the Chief's Volunteer Forum



## Empowering volunteers across the regions was the main driver behind the new monthly live volunteer forums.

The forums began as a way to share information across the state and have become a place for participants to ask questions of the various monthly guests, learn about new topics and share ideas.

Now in its seventh month, the forums have covered various topics including training, new vehicles and infrastructure.

For Chief Officer Jason Heffernan the forums allow him to connect with our members across the state in a new way.

“The monthly volunteer forums are a fantastic way for us to link in with volunteers from all across Victoria,” Jason said. “Being able to have that live interaction means we can answer people’s questions in real time, introduce participants to new topics and show people what’s going on in other regions. It gives us the opportunity to showcase some of the amazing work being done across the state.

“The online format means that anyone can tune in and get involved no matter where they are.”

Jason said that hearing from our members is very important to him, and this format allows him to do so in a quick and convenient way.

“I find the forums so valuable because I love hearing from our people on the ground. There are so many fantastic ideas floating around in the regions and being able to hear them in this interactive environment is just great.

“Since the forums began, we’ve had hundreds if not thousands of participants take part and ask questions, share ideas and learn more about the fantastic initiatives CFA has in place.

“It’s important to me to answer the questions that our members on the ground have, and this provides an excellent format in which to do that.”

The forums have mainly taken place online and have been broadcast live from a range of locations including the State Logistics Centre in Scoresby, VEMTC Central Highlands in Ballan, the DMO facility in Geelong, Shepparton and Headquarters in Burwood East.

Geelong West Fire Brigade volunteer Steve Robertson has attended several of these forums, both in person (at the Ballan forum) and online and said they’re a fantastic way to learn more about the plans for the organisation.

“For us ground troops, being able to hear straight from the bosses about what their priority areas are and what their

plans for the organisation are has been fantastic,” Steve said.

He said one of the biggest benefits was recognising that other brigades may be dealing with the same issues that Geelong West is facing.

“It was great to network with other members from other brigades, especially at the face-to-face event in Ballan, and see that we’re not alone with many of the experiences we face as a brigade. It was also fantastic to speak to the deputy chief officers and expand on certain topics in more depth.”

Steve said he would encourage other members to log on to the forums and learn more.

“You get to see a lot of background as to what’s going on, to actually see issues spoken about first-hand and hear how the organisation is responding in an unfiltered way. They’re really beneficial and I would definitely encourage other members to get on board and take part.”

Go to [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-operational/volunteer-forum](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-operational/volunteer-forum) to see when the forums will be held. You can also watch recordings of previous forums and access a Q&A section.

STORY TIAHN WRIGHT

# Realistic fire training close to home

**CFA's mobile prop program began in 2013 with three mobile props. Now, with the recent delivery of three new props, CFA has a fleet of 13 props across the state.**

These props offer realistic fire training to volunteers close to their home station. The props have electronically-controlled LPG burners with sensors to determine when the firefighters have applied enough water to extinguish the fire.

The burners' intensity can be adjusted to challenge firefighters with a range of fire complexity, and to tailor the fire to the experience level of the firefighter.

There are five configurations of prop: car fire; domestic house fire; small industry (shed fire); pressure vessel (bulk LPG); and commercial kitchen. All props are self-contained and operated by suitably-trained local firefighters.

Before COVID-19 restrictions, Echuca Fire Brigade used the domestic prop. Group officer for Deakin Group, Justin Wills, said this type of training is invaluable.

"The whole idea of these sessions is to give volunteers the opportunity for hot fire training without travelling long distances to our training grounds," Justin said. "A range of people used the prop from the very experienced to a couple of new members of Echuca brigade."

Echuca firefighter Maddy Zlateff found the experience very rewarding.

"It's really interesting to learn some of the tips and tricks," Maddy said. "I haven't done something like this before, so it was new to me. I learned from some of the more experienced members about how to attack the fire in different situations and how they gained entry to a fire."

Props are available for booking by groups for a four-week period. If you would like to book a prop, determine the type of prop, the dates and location that is suitable for your group, and then contact the mobile prop coordinator on 1800 035 211 or email [mobile-props@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:mobile-props@cfa.vic.gov.au).

STORY TERRY PRENTICE





# Mural honours local heroes

**A new mural in Orbost acknowledges the incredible commitment of emergency services workers including CFA members during the 2019-20 bushfires.**

It was the end of December. With the sky already dark with smoke, community members and tourists in Orbost gathered to hear from authorities about an impending fire emergency.

High temperatures and strong north-westerly winds were expected to put Orbost under threat within 24 to 28 hours. People were advised to leave immediately before it was too late, particularly with the highway and local roads likely to be impacted by fire.

The forecasted conditions came to pass, as three separate large fires surrounded the town in a wall of flames.

Crews battled to save surrounding properties and assets as ember attacks sparked spot fires within Orbost's boundaries. The wall of fire came within mere kilometres of the town before a freak wind change pushed the fire back on itself.

While the feed, stock and asset losses were devastating, crews had saved Orbost as well as the Newmerella township and Marlo village.

The town's iconic pub – the Orbost Club Hotel – will be home to a permanent marker of their efforts, with a mural honouring those emergency services members who fought to protect their community and its people more than two years ago featuring on its outer walls.

The mural is one of more than 20 projects funded by EMV under the SES/CFA Wellbeing Recovery Project which aims to support the psychological recovery



of first responders and their families following the 2019-20 bushfires. For more about this project, see page 46.

Painted by Bairnsdale artist Tracey Soloman (pictured below), the design was chosen following consultation with local emergency services including Orbost Fire Brigade and Orbost SES to acknowledge all the hard work of members and staff during the Black Summer fires. The concept of the artwork is shown above.

Orbost Captain Geoffrey 'Dick' Johnstone features on the mural as the representative for CFA, alongside members from SES, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, DELWP and the Fijian Army.

A CFA member for more than 40 years and Orbost captain for 14, Geoffrey said the mural was an important way to recognise the efforts of all agencies during the fires.

"It has been a challenging time for our members and community since the fires," he said.

"With the COVID-19 pandemic hitting so soon after the fire season, we just didn't have the time we would normally have to debrief, and with restrictions we weren't able to have that time together as a group.

"It was scary for a lot of people especially those who were travelling in the area at the time. It wasn't something many had ever experienced.

"I think the recovery work has given people a focus and helped with the healing process.

"The mural will be an ongoing tribute to all emergency services members involved in the 19-20 season and provide a reminder of the work we do together to keep our communities safe."

Tracey worked with local agencies to create the work using photos she had taken of the available members involved in the fires. The piece was started in mid-February and is expected to be completed within a few months, weather permitting.

A volunteer Junior CFA member in her youth, Tracey said it was a privilege to work on the project.

"My family lives in Orbost and I know how hard it was for them following the fires," Tracey said.

"The contribution of volunteers was enormous, and they still haven't had a chance to really recover with the COVID-19 pandemic declared soon after.

"I hope that the mural honours their efforts and sacrifice and also in some way helps members and their community to recover."



STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN

# Safer Together – ongoing boost to fire services



**The Victorian Government launched the Safer Together program in late 2015. Since then it has been led jointly by CFA and DELWP. It marked a change in policy for fire agencies with the aim to improve collaboration and partnerships and to place a stronger focus on working with the community.**

The Safer Together Statement described an intent of innovative community engagement practices, integration of fuel management practices across public and private land, and investing in research and modelling to improve the evidence used to make decisions.

Safer Together evolved into a four-year pilot program with about \$5 million managed each year by CFA. Following the pilot program's success, the Victorian Government provided ongoing funding for the work to be part of CFA's and DELWP's continued fire management programs. This is a significant long-term boost in support for brigades and prevention and preparedness activities.

In the area of vegetation management, the Safer Together program is now providing \$1.25 million a year to prepare and deliver planned burns and mechanical treatments such as mulching and slashing. This dedicated funding allows better preparation and support for brigades to conduct planned burns.

To support these operations, an additional 18 planning advisory and coordination roles have been funded. This includes advisers for cultural heritage and biodiversity to ensure CFA's operations meet our legislative requirements, and our brigades can conduct burns following

best-practice burn plans that identify and protect important values to community and are delivered safely.

The program also provides ongoing funding for the Planned Burn Task Force. This program has allowed volunteers from different parts of the state to be deployed to more than 45 burns in the past two seasons.

It means it will be easier for volunteers to participate in planned burning, which can increase the knowledge and skills of members in bushfire behaviour and improve safety during bushfire suppression. And through joint operations with Forest Fire Management Victoria, both agencies can achieve better outcomes for communities and exchange knowledge and experience within the sector.

The Safer Together program also includes a joint agency program called Community First. The Community First program aims to reduce bushfire risk by engaging and collaborating with communities and the fire management sector to understand what risk means to them, what they value, and the actions we can take collectively. To achieve this, the Community First approach focuses on building relationships, partnerships and trust with communities and across the sector.

Coordinated through CFA, this includes the flagship Community Based Bushfire Management (CBBM) program, which employs 10 full-time CBBM officers by CFA, DELWP and Latrobe City Council. Community First works to strengthen the capability of the sector to take a community-centred, place-based

approach to working with communities. The benefits of this program include:

- use of community development principles, evidence-based methods, research and partnerships to improve engagement and understanding of risk
- the long-term, facilitated engagement between community groups and the CBBM program
- effective partnerships with local government to provide community-centred bushfire management services to the community.

Safer Together also provides significant resources to improve CFA's research capability. Through ongoing funding for staff and research operating funds, CFA is leading key research to improve our fire management practices and safety for volunteers and the community. Recent research about crop fire behaviour has dramatically improved our understanding of fire behaviour in wheat and this work will be expanded to include other crops.

When the impact of all this work is combined, the Safer Together program enhances CFA's capacity through increased staff and increased opportunities for volunteers to contribute to prevention activities, improve community safety outcomes and capability in vegetation management and community engagement. It also fosters increased collaboration with DELWP, supporting the fire agencies to work with a more integrated approach to serve the community.

**STORY GEOFF MORRIS**



# New smoke alarm campaign in 2022

After three years, CFA and FRV's smoke alarm campaign is due for a refresh. In 2019, the 'Silence is Deadly' smoke alarm campaign was launched highlighting the latest Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council (AFAC) advice and encouraging Victorians to install smoke alarms in all bedrooms, living areas and hallways, and promoting a switch to ten-year batteries and interconnected smoke alarms.

Three years on, our market research tells us that, while the message is getting through about interconnected smoke alarms, most people believe that it's good enough to have smoke alarms near the bedrooms. However, the statistics tell us a different story.

The research shows that we need to increase our focus on getting smoke alarms into bedrooms. And as most children will either sleep through a beeping smoke alarm in the hallway near their bedroom or take way too long to wake up and respond, our new campaign will focus on children's bedrooms.

CFA and FRV are working together to develop a new campaign urging people to consider smoke alarms as an essential item that no bedroom is complete without. Watch out for the new campaign in late May or early June.

The campaign will be advertised through social media, digital, print, and radio channels, with a further round of advertising planned for July and August.

To help our districts and brigades promote the messages in their local communities, a range of collateral and resources including videos and social media tiles will be available on the Community Engagement Content Portal in May to June. To access the portal, search for 'Community Education and Engagement' on [members.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://members.cfa.vic.gov.au).



## House fire statistics

- 72 per cent of fires that end in death start in bedrooms and living areas.
- 71 per cent of children aged six to 10 years old don't reliably awaken to a standard hallway smoke alarm.

## What our post-campaign research found

- Only 15 per cent of Victorians claimed to have a smoke alarm in any of their bedrooms.
- Only 59 per cent of respondents said they had a smoke alarm in any living room.
- The key barrier to installing smoke alarms was a lack of knowledge and satisfaction with current alarms.

STORY NANCY THOMPSON

# CFA & Brigades Donations Fund supporting brigades

Community members can choose to donate directly to the CFA & Brigades Donations Fund or to a specific brigade at [www.cfa.vic.gov.au/donate](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/donate). Receipts will be emailed direct to donors reducing administration time for brigades. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

If a community member nominates a specific brigade, 100 per cent of donated amounts are passed to the nominated brigade. If a donor doesn't nominate a specific brigade, the trustees will apply those funds to projects that benefit brigades.

Thanks to community donations to this Fund following the 2019-20 summer fires, CFA and the trustees of the Fund have delivered the following programs that further enhance volunteer safety and capabilities when responding to incidents:

- District Pick List Program (\$4.4m)
- Breathing Apparatus Capability Project (\$2.25m with \$0.5m CFA operational funding)
- Mobility Communication Solution (\$1m with additional CFA operational funding)

- Defibrillators on vehicles program (\$2.29m with \$1.3m from the CFA Public Fund).

## Grants

The Fund sponsors and supports brigade fundraising grant applications where funding bodies such as Bendigo Bank require applicants to have deductible gift recipient (DGR) status.

## Community Benefit Program

Ritchies Community Benefit Program has been supporting CFA brigades for 29 years donating over \$3 million to brigades. Brigades can contact their local Ritchies store to get involved and benefit from the program.

## Make a gift in your will

Leave a lasting legacy and include a gift in your will to a CFA brigade or the CFA & Brigades Donations Fund. Sample wording can be found at [www.cfa.vic.gov.au/donate](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/donate).

Email queries to: [cfagivingcommunity@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:cfagivingcommunity@cfa.vic.gov.au).

# Updated DMO truck full of innovation

**Whether you've been a CFA member for some time or joined recently, you'll have an appreciation for our district mechanical officers' (DMOs) capabilities. You may have witnessed their work or heard stories about how DMOs are an amazing cohort of can-do people who can fix anything from chainsaws to helicopters.**

One of the DMOs' mantras is 'the right tool for the job', and that's what has been achieved with the latest development of large DMO service vans built by MFI Service Bodies in Pakenham. With project kick-off in late 2019, a working group of DMO leading hands – Damien Taman from Moe, Scott Stevens from Ballarat, Chris Bell from Warrnambool and Sean Botting from Seymour – started discussions around what capabilities the new van needed.

The team developed a document called a Role Statement that described the features needed to maintain annual field servicing capability, fault rectification, perform fire truck modification programs and support CFA volunteers at minor and major incidents in Victoria and interstate deployments.

Following this, the working group thought about how one vehicle could do all this in a safe, compliant and efficient way. To answer this, the team first visited key industry providers who transport waste oils, who work at heights and who carry an array of hand tools and equipment to service vehicles in the field. Then they drafted a specification and reviewed different cab chassis models, products and components, and visited several companies to inspect products.

In addition, the group consulted with all DMO workshops and carried out a step analysis during a routine service. It was found that with the current service van layout, an average of 1,000 steps were taken to carry out a general service and inspection. The new design will significantly reduce the amount of steps required.

A draft specification was drafted taking into account the lessons learned from these visits and relevant regulation and compliance requirements. CFA then invited manufacturers to quote to supply five turnkey vehicles in the first batch.

"Throughout the build process, the working group has collectively engaged with the wider DMO network to ensure this new vehicle design delivers the capability needs," said Manager Fleet Maintenance (East) Kelvin Gleeson. "One of many key achievements is how this vehicle meets and exceeds compliance and best industry practice for certain design aspects such as

no-spill oil transfer, working at height and ergonomics."

The Moe workshop received the first new truck, and Moe DMOs were very thankful.

"This vehicle has many key features to help in our daily work," Damien Taman, Moe Leading Hand and member of the working group said. "For example, instead of carrying hot and heavy oil from an oil drain tray back to the vehicle, we now connect a non-spill hose connection and suck the oil into the vehicle's on-board 200-litre waste oil tank."

When the first truck was built, the project team engaged a certified ergonomist to review the design and help DMOs to adopt healthy daily postural movements when working from the vehicle.

Some of the truck's features are:

- welfare items – fridge, defibrillator, first-aid kit, space for personal bags
- cab chassis class-leading safety features
- optimal weight distribution to prolong service life
- truck-mounted crane with wireless control
- 200-litre fresh oil tank and 200-litre waste oil tank
- 160-litre water tank for cleaning/truck washing
- recessed tray floor restraints
- ability to produce 240V from an engine-driven generator.

"We've completed many reviews on the locker layouts to ensure we can carry all the necessary items to keep our volunteers mobile," Damien said. "Another great outcome is that we can work from the ground and don't need to climb up on the tray to get frequent items or to operate the different systems such as the air compressor, ladders and oil tanks."

COVID-19 restrictions led to a delay in delivering the first vehicle. However, this enforced delay resulted in a well-refined product that has had considerable thought, testing and engagement with all stakeholders.

This vehicle has been discussed at AFAC fleet meetings and interstate emergency services have shown interest.

It will be an exciting time for our DMOs as the current service van bodies were designed 30 years ago. With the change in firefighting vehicles over the past 30 years, the new service truck will give our DMOs the capability to maintain the fleet efficiently for many years.

STORY JOEL READ









# Protecting communities with better warnings and communications



**Left:** Ruby and Tom from Harkaway Primary School explain their knowledge of bushfire to CFA's Neil Munro and Dr Briony Towers.

**Below:** Cathy Buck from the Sunshine Coast Council (left) gets insights from Kath Ryan (right) about how the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services have used the research to improve their warning messages.

PHOTOS: BUSHFIRE AND NATURAL HAZARDS CRC

**An online documentary series profiles key Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC research about warnings, public information and recovery to support emergency services in protecting communities.**

The series, called *Driving change: the evolution of communications and warnings in emergency preparedness, response and recovery*, shows the impact of the research as it follows communications and engagement practitioners from different sectors, meeting the researchers and learning how to apply this knowledge to their own work. You can watch the full series at [bnhrc.com.au/communications-warnings-video-series](http://bnhrc.com.au/communications-warnings-video-series).

The series is structured around three themes – preparedness, response and recovery – and includes an introduction that explains the how and why behind the evolution of communications and warnings in recent years. Each theme includes different types of videos to give viewers a taster of the topic, the full feature or in-depth interviews with researchers.

The documentaries give a big picture view of the impact of research on policy and practice, and how it can be used, explained the CEO of Natural Hazards Research Australia (incorporating the CRC), Dr Richard Thornton.

“We know that emergency services agencies have used this research to improve their practices and what they

deliver to their communities, whether that is educating kids in the classroom, informing the warnings that go out when bushfires flare, or helping to plan for post-disaster,” Dr Thornton said.

“But we also know that as the role of providing public information expands to different types of organisations, more and more people and different types of organisations outside of traditional emergency response will need to do this in the future. The series showcases how the research is being used and the difference it’s making to guide those who need to do this in the future.”

The series is valuable information for anyone volunteering or working in warnings, public information, community engagement, education or recovery roles, and is well-suited to team training or upskilling sessions. It will be used as companion guidance for the Australian Disaster Resilience Institute’s Handbook collection, explained AIDR Executive Director Amanda Leck.

“There are some real synergies between the research covered in the documentaries and the Handbooks,” Amanda Leck said.

“Handbooks are underpinned by research and bring this together with good practice from across Australia. These videos will support implementation of the handbooks and assist the sector to use research and improve practice.



“With the research contributing substantially to a number of handbooks, such as public information and warnings, community engagement for disaster resilience and community recovery, the series will be a key resource for anyone learning about best practice and how to use research in their role preparing, responding or recovering from emergencies.”

The series would not have been possible without the support of AFAC, AIDR and all researchers and agency representatives who feature across the series.

**STORY: NATHAN MADDOCK, NATURAL HAZARDS RESEARCH AUSTRALIA**



# Book your virtual reality firefighter training

**Bookings are now open for brigade members who are keen to try virtual reality firefighting – and visitors to the recent CFA State Championships at Mooroopna gave the immersive technology a huge thumbs up.**

Developed by firefighters for firefighters, the new innovative FLAIM Trainer gives CFA volunteers a real-life experience to assess their skills without exposing them to danger.

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said CFA was excited to offer the training opportunities following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

“CFA has been at the forefront of computer-based learning for operational skills for 20 years, but we’re always looking for more innovative ways to help our volunteers,” Jason said.

“It was great to see so many volunteers and also members of the public try this amazing new technology at the State Championships and we can’t wait to bring it to brigades more broadly this year.

“The FLAIM Trainer was trialed by volunteers during a pilot so we knew our members welcomed the technology, but it was still great to witness the excitement of those trying out the different scenarios such as house fires, grassfires and airplane fires.

“The FLAIM Trainer works in a similar way to a flight simulator for pilot training but it’s designed specifically for firefighters, combining

virtual reality technology with real-life equipment such as a hose and nozzle, BA and heat suit that simulate both the visual and sensory feelings of being in a real fire,” Jason explained.

CFA Digital Learning Manager Operational Doctrine and Training Kirsty Waugh said not only does the FLAIM Trainer complement training and tools currently being used, but it also offers many other benefits.

“For example, high-risk scenarios that are difficult to replicate can be simulated. You can complete the scenario several times and even play the events back and watch as part of an after-action review, which means additional learning opportunities that you don’t get in real life,” Kirsty said.

CFA’s ten FLAIM Trainer and ten FLAIM Extinguisher systems will be available for training across the state, and volunteers are urged to keep an eye out on Members Online and the weekly newsletter for details about the final booking process, or contact the team by emailing [immersivelearning@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:immersivelearning@cfa.vic.gov.au) or phoning **0499 552 489**.

We are also looking for volunteer facilitators and technicians to lead awareness sessions about the technology. If you’re keen to support immersive learning at your brigade, phone **0499 552 489**.



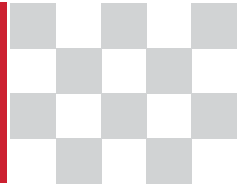
## Computer simulation well established at CFA

CFA has long embraced new technology for simulation training. Fire Studio and XVR On Scene use interactive and immersive incident scenarios to help build practical knowledge in a safe, repeatable manner with minimal resources.

The simulator creates a realistic three-dimensional fire or incident scenario with replicated crews, vehicles and equipment that you’d find at an actual fire or incident. Scenarios are purpose built and targeted at potential and current crew leaders, sector commanders and incident controllers.

They are easy to transport and can be operated in most CFA brigade stations. To arrange a booking or ask about a session at your brigade, email [compsimtraining@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:compsimtraining@cfa.vic.gov.au) or phone **0400 474 742**.





## Truck vs truck collision

### Summary

Loch Fire Brigade attended a complex motor vehicle accident (MVA) in April 2021 involving two trucks and trapped drivers. The brigade had attended a very similar incident a few months earlier and had conducted a debrief to identify areas for improvement and what practices to continue. They were able to implement these lessons during this incident and displayed a high level of teamwork, interoperability and skill.

### Incident overview

On 20 April 2021 at around 1.30pm, Loch brigade responded to an MVA as the primary rescue brigade for the area due to possible people trapped. While the brigade was en route, further information was provided that two trucks were involved. Due to their knowledge of the area and experience of similar calls in the area, a lieutenant from Loch brigade immediately requested additional rescue resources to be prepared for two potential entrapments in the trucks. They also made the decision that when on scene they would sectorise the incident as soon as possible, because this approach worked effectively at other similar incidents they had attended.

The roads of South Gippsland through to the Bass Coast range in quality and size. Almost all are winding and narrow, with a scenic background of hills and valleys. Dotted around the area are a number of CFA and SES rescue teams. Due to the topographical challenges, it is not unheard of for travel times to be around 30 to 40 minutes from time of receiving calls. This potential travel time through the hills is a factor that the officer in charge from Loch brigade considered when deciding to call for the second rescue almost immediately. It's better to have one on the road and not need them than to wait 20 to 30 minutes to get on scene before calling for it.

The other factor was hindsight. Incidents like these are not uncommon on many roads and the Loch crew has attended numerous similar incidents. The most recent one was just a couple of months earlier on the other side of its rescue response area. It was a practically identical scenario. At incident debriefing sessions in the past, there have been discussions about how to enhance the response. The call for a second rescue, along with early vehicle relocation and the early sourcing of a flat top, tilt tray tow truck to create a work platform for larger trucks, is ingrained into the minds of all the rescue operators from Loch brigade and other rescue teams in the area.

Once on scene, it was confirmed that two trucks were involved in a head-on collision and the trucks were embedded in each other. There were two confirmed entrapments, one in each of the trucks, so the brigade liaised with Ambulance Victoria (AV) personnel to triage the drivers. The team initiated a plan to relocate the trucks using a tractor and separate them when it was confirmed there was no risk to either driver due to mechanical entrapment with the opposing truck.

Rapid access was gained by on-scene medical teams to the first driver. The second one was coherent and talking to the rescue team, despite being trapped by the legs. The first driver had sustained critical life-threatening, multi-trauma injuries, including questionable consciousness and impalement of the right leg on the driver's seat rail through the calf muscle. The left leg was also trapped in the firewall and floor pan and the steering column had collapsed against his chest.

The relocation of the first driver's truck was performed and the two trucks were rapidly, but safely, separated. The second driver's truck was used as an anchor to pull the dashboard and steering column away from the first driver. At this point, the second rescue team arrived on scene and they began to extricate the second driver.







The extrication of the first driver continued and was complex. Regular stops were required for AV to perform various procedures for patient welfare. Driver two was released not long after, and the second rescue crew was tasked to assist with the extrication of driver one. After the driver had been removed, he was transferred immediately to Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) where he was stabilised.

### What worked well

**Relationships with other agencies:** Establishing an incident emergency management team early is vital to ensure there's a clear command structure, an identified control agency, and resourcing requirements are clear. Stable inter-agency relationships are also critical to the success of any emergency response. Many of the attending medical teams have worked with both responding rescue teams numerous times and so they were used to communicating with each other. Emergency responders should never underestimate the benefits of constant mutual respect, regardless of agency.

**Interoperability:** The crew leader of the rescue team that arrived second knew immediately who to report to thanks to the effective use of vests. Sectorisation was decided early and transmitted to incoming and on-scene crews. The use of common jargon and procedures between CFA and SES rescue teams meant there was no ambiguity in the sectorisation handover or extrication plan. Team trust, between the two organisations was also imperative and on display at this incident. Trust is gained through long-term relationships and regular inter-agency training.

**Accessibility planning:** Supporting brigades that were first on-scene parked their tankers well back from the incident and ran multiple lengths of hose up one side of the narrow road to provide fire coverage. A CFA member mustered/staged all other emergency vehicles on one side of the road and as far away as practical with the intention of leaving a clear pathway for responding rescue vehicles. Had this not occurred, the rescue teams would have been about 300 metres away from the scene. This plan alone significantly contributed to the success of the initial operation. This was also partly attributed to the rescue teams across the area spending time in conducting familiarisation visits to these brigades.

**Resource requests:** Through their own experiences, the brigade knew that requesting additional resources early

was important. Without this, they could not have dealt with the entrapments as quickly. Additionally, attending police were quick to act when a tractor was requested.

**Learning from experience:** Incidents like this are common for this brigade and they have had numerous experiences working with the supporting agencies to achieve a common goal. They were able to draw on what they had learned in previous incidents to effectively manage this MVA, leading to the successful outcome. It's important that brigades always draw on the knowledge they have gained from previous experiences. Specifically, debriefing can help identify what worked well and what didn't in order to use these lessons at future incidents.

### Lesson identified

**Control:** The Emergency Management Act specifies the control agency for all emergency responses. In this case, CFA was the control agency during the extrication phase. When the rescue is complete, it becomes a motor vehicle accident and Victoria Police become the control agency. Some older, experienced members from all agencies are still confused by control rules. This should be reinforced across all emergency services organisations.

### Questions for your brigade

- What are the key areas you would have covered in a debrief for this incident?
- How would you have sectorised a similar rescue involving two drivers needing to be extricated from separate large vehicles?
- If a similar incident occurred in your area, do you know the resources available to you that you could draw on?

### Conclusion

In this case there was the benefit of recent experiences. The Loch rescue team and indeed probably some of the attending police, fire and paramedics had recently attended a virtually identical incident. From the perspective of the rescue crew, the benefits of effective debriefing sessions to learn from such incidents assisted greatly in the early decisions made regarding the rescue operation. Always make time to debrief an incident, regardless of its significance. Be prepared to learn from these sessions. They can be informal or formal.

After a significant rescue, Loch rescue crews allocate part of the next rescue training session at brigade level to discuss the prior operation. This session is open to all members and everyone is strongly encouraged to attend. Please note though, that this is not a substitute for a formal diffusion session for critical incident stress.

Too often we try to learn from what went wrong, but in this case a series of events went as planned and led to a smooth-running operation. Effective tasking, an early command and control structure, teamwork and regular inter-agency familiarisation and training sessions produced entirely what was intended. At one point there were more than 40 emergency responders on scene within a confined area. Every member of those responding agencies understood their role and knew what was expected. This is an exemplary example of teamwork and should be used to demonstrate the benefits of developing and maintaining inter-agency relationships.

*Thank you to Loch Fire Brigade members for their work in developing this case study.*

# Apollo Bay structure fire



## Summary

In the early hours of 14 April 2021, Apollo Bay Fire Brigade was paged to a going structure fire. The remote nature of the town, the strong winds on the day and the lack of fire resistance in the buildings due to their age resulted in a ferocious fire that was difficult for crews to tame.

## Incident overview

At 3.17am on Wednesday 14 April 2021 a fire was reported at the Chinese restaurant on Collingwood Street, Apollo Bay. As the Apollo Bay captain was en route to the station, he called FireCom and advised of smoke and flames sighted and requested that Powercor attend the scene for electricity isolations.

The first truck arrived on scene in less than six minutes from the time of the call with a crew of five firefighters. The structure fire was well alight on the brigade's arrival, and was impinging on another building, a fish and chip shop, that was soon on fire due to the radiant heat and the multiple weak points including windows that faced the Chinese restaurant.

The incident controller (IC) soon requested additional resources to assist in the firefight. Other buildings such as the local hardware store next to the fish and chip shop and a nearby motel were also at risk. Evacuation of the nearby motel occurred early in the firefight by attending crews within six minutes of the brigade's arrival, then more formally when Victoria Police arrived on scene.

The crews remained under pressure and had to work extremely hard for a considerable period of time while support brigades responded. The closest brigade to Apollo Bay is at least 35 minutes away because of winding roads. As part of District 6 pre-planning, the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) response line-up for this event ensured that two of the three brigades dispatched to the call had breathing apparatus for a structure fire.

The fire was ferocious and so was the tenacity of the crews. Members worked heavy 64mm hose lines on their own for a long period of time in a desperate battle to contain the fire, as significant winds pushed

the fire into adjoining buildings that had little to no fire resistance. Over an hour into the incident, a situation report was provided that stated the structure fire was not yet under control. The Chinese restaurant and fish and chip shop had both been lost and half the hardware shop was fully alight.

The fire continued to spread and crews battled the blaze as further resources continued to arrive to assist. At 5.18am another situation report was provided by the deputy incident controller stating that two shops had been fully destroyed, they were waiting on an aerial appliance to arrive and informed FireCom of the agencies that were on scene, including Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Barwon Water and Powercor.

The response to this fire included Hazmat support, BA replenishment, use of the ladder platform and establishment of additional water supplies. Further specialist advice was also requested, and equipment responded in a timely manner to manage hazardous materials and asbestos decontamination. As issues became apparent, the cooperation and collaboration between CFA, FRV and partner emergency services organisations in the incident emergency management team (IEMT) was excellent and well received by all attending organisations.

When additional BA operators arrived and began working, the fire was eventually contained to the three shops, but there was still considerable fire activity within the three buildings. About the same time, incident control was established upwind opposite the fire, Ambulance Victoria set up medical monitoring and Victoria Police were on scene managing crowd control. The deputy incident controller also delivered a SMEACS briefing which doubled as an initial incident action plan to crews arriving on scene and the IEMT.

The fire was brought under control at 6.29am. Good strategy and efforts of the attending crews saved the main section of the hardware store. Loss of this store would have had a significant effect on the community from an economic point of view. The impact of this fire on Apollo Bay community with the loss of employment and services to both residents and visitors to the area will be felt for some time.



## What worked well

- **Early resource request:** This incident highlighted the importance of early requests for additional resources which contributes to effective incident management and fire suppression. Due to the isolated nature of Apollo Bay and the distance of supporting brigades, the quick thinking of crews to request sufficient resources as early as possible reduced delays in effectively combatting this incident.
- **Early evacuation:** The early evacuation of motel residents was due to the rapid, yet well considered and adaptive decision-making from our members in challenging circumstances. The conditions on the day meant there was potential the fire could impact the nearby motel so they didn't wait until it was too late, and instead assisted motel staff who didn't have an evacuation plan to notify residents and relocate them to a safer area away from the path of the fire.
- **Interoperability:** Complex incidents such as this involve a number of different people from different agencies. Another key factor that attributed to the successful outcome of the incident was the high level of inter-agency operability that enabled cooperation and collaboration between CFA, FRV and partner emergency services organisations when any issues arose.
- **Leadership and teamwork:** The leadership seen from Apollo Bay's captain and the teamwork between the Apollo Bay members in what was an incredibly challenging incident should be commended. This crew displayed just how well they are able to work together to protect each other and their community, despite the gruelling circumstances and the long wait until other supporting units arrived.

## What could be improved

- **Pre-incident response plan (PIP):** Although brigade members had a good understanding of the layout of the three buildings, there was no formal pre-incident response plan formulated for the shops involved in the fire. It was acknowledged, however, that the brigade didn't have the capacity to invest time in writing plans that would otherwise be used for operational response and training.
- **Breathing apparatus:** The current allocation of breathing apparatus to Apollo Bay brigade is four sets. Although the nearest support brigade, Wye River, brought an additional two sets on their tanker, it took them 35 minutes to arrive, and the

intensity and size of this fire meant there were not enough sets available. In addition, it was recognised that a number of members wearing BA had beards or long stubble which meant they were working outside the guidelines set by Australian Standard 1715.

- **Radio communications:** It was identified that there were reception issues with the digital simplex fireground channel used. The fireground covered a large area, and with the complexities of buildings between radio operators and heavy smoke conditions, it is understandable that a simplex channel may not have been adequate.
- **Use of ground monitors:** Due to limited initial crews, firefighters struggled to manage large hose lines for an extended period of time. This understandably resulted in the hose streams not always being directed at the fire in the most efficient way, because firefighters had to reposition or couldn't always see where the stream was going. A safer and more efficient way of managing large streams in this situation would have been to use ground monitors. This would have improved safety from manual handling and freed up firefighters to concentrate on ensuring the streams were effective and being delivered efficiently.

## Questions for your brigade

- If your brigade had an incident in an isolated area, how would you manage fatigue and crew levels until support arrived?
- What resources do you have in your area that you could draw on in a similar incident?
- Does your brigade have pre-incident response plans for high risk locations in your area and how often do you review them?

## Conclusion

The successful protection of the hardware store and the motel and its patrons in this incident can be attributed to the strenuous, sustained efforts by the crews and the high level of interoperability between all agencies involved to achieve a common goal. Apollo Bay Fire Brigade members had to manage the scene alone for a considerable time and should be congratulated for their hard work and tenacity. Their quick thinking to evacuate the motel and protect the hardware store prevented any further destruction.



# Barongarook West tanker rollover

## Summary

In September 2021 two CFA members were involved in a tanker rollover and both suffered serious injuries. This case study explores the lessons identified from the incident as well as information about load bearing structures in CFA tankers and the handling of medium tankers.

The content of this case study is from the investigation report that was produced by CFA's Motor Vehicle Collision Investigation Team.

## Incident overview

On Tuesday 7 September 2021, Barongarook West Fire Brigade in District 6 was responded to a going house fire in Yeodene, about 23 kilometres away.

The tanker responded with two members and travelled on rural roads and then turned onto the Colac-Lorne Road as they approached the fire. When they were approximately one kilometre from the fire, they travelled along a sealed section of road with a downhill gradient of approximately five to six degrees. The default speed limit was 100 km/hour and there were no warning signs to indicate that the road ahead had several sweeping bends.

The tanker hit a damaged section of road that was not visible to the driver and the road condition caused the tanker to lurch to the left. The driver then steered the tanker to the right and tried to bring it back onto the roadway. The tanker then travelled across the centre white lines to the right-hand side shoulder. The offside front and rear wheels entered

the very soft shoulder and the driver attempted again to gain control by steering to the left. As the front of the tanker veered left onto the sealed roadway, the rear rotated, bringing the tanker almost at 90 degrees to the road. The force of the movement caused it to roll over. It rolled four and a half times between two Armco railings protecting a bridge and ended up on its roof.

The crew leader released his seat belt and exited the cabin in an attempt to notify FireCom. There was no radio signal, so the crew leader walked up a hill until he was able to send a mayday message to report the accident and request assistance from emergency services.

Ambulance Victoria arrived on scene and treated both CFA members. The crew leader was treated in an ambulance and then transported to Geelong Hospital.

He suffered several fractures to his L2 and L3 vertebrae and severe bruising to his body. He was released from hospital the following day and required ongoing general and physiotherapy care.

The driver was treated on scene and then airlifted to the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne by air ambulance. He suffered broken ribs, a fractured pelvis and a compound fracture of the left tibia and fibula. He spent two weeks in the Alfred hospital and then three weeks in the Epworth Hospital in Geelong before being released a few days later.

Both members are continuing their medical rehabilitation and re-engaging with the brigade.





## Engineering comments

The medium tanker involved in the incident was fitted with a B post stiffener and an external rollover structure. Both these safety systems are not fitted to commercial cab chassis and have been included by CFA to increase occupant and vehicle safety.

CFA's rollover load bearing structures are designed to protect occupants in the event of a static, or near static, lateral (sideways) vehicle rollover. This is to address the specific accident that may occur during off-road driving in forested environments characterised by slow speed on uneven/unstable ground.

In this incident the structures experienced loading in excess of their design intent. Both have likely experienced significant dynamic loading from multiple directions (lateral and fore/aft) and possibly on multiple occasions. The B post stiffener experienced referential twisting (driver's side forward/passenger side rearward). For the tray-mounted ROPS, there was referential rearward movement

## Vehicle handling

CFA introduced the medium tanker in 2012. As part of the continuous improvement process for all vehicles, new vehicles were independently assessed for on-road and off-road performance by Accredited Test Services at Monegeetta. Comments from the assessing drivers included:

- the tanker tended to roll on corners and needed steering correction
- It had a tendency to bottom out when passing over bumps and holes in the roadway.

The report states that the tanker performed as designed and expected by a vehicle of this nature.

The Hino cab chassis has a wheel track slightly narrower than most heavy vehicles and tends to wander laterally within the wheel ruts or roads caused by larger heavy vehicles. The rear wheel tracks of most medium-sized rigid trucks is less than the wheel tracks of large heavy and multi combination prime movers and trailers. This requires the constant attention of the driver and the need to continually adjust the steering of the vehicle to keep it on the intended path.

CFA engaged the services of an external contractor to provide expert advice in relation to this concern. The report states that the tanker performed as expected for a vehicle of this nature.

## Crews leader's observations

In addition to the investigation, the crew leader provided comments to his assistant chief fire officer. These are his verbatim comments.

- There is a gap in our entrapment/mayday training. We are trained over and over again that we can get our location from the 'L' button on the truck mobile radio, and that the truck mobile radio will be working. It is important to know what to do if it isn't.
- I would like to point out how well the structural PPC I was wearing protected me. There were things flying around everywhere in the cabin, yet the only places I had any cuts or abrasions were on my hands and head. Wearing my jacket saved me a lot of injuries in my opinion.

- Tools in pockets hurt. The longest recovery I am dealing with is swelling on my legs from where I had car keys/Leatherman/One Key firefighting tools in my jacket pockets.
- The Hino medium tanker suspension system needs to be understood. When the tanker hits a bump or drives into a depression at speed, the springs initially compress until the body hits the bump stop. Any remaining energy is then absorbed by the truck tyres, which compress and then bounce back upwards. This upwards energy, dampened by the springs throws the body of the truck upwards, and when it goes past its normal ride height the springs lift the tyres and can cause a loss of traction. A minor bump hit at a particular speed could cause the truck to become airborne.
- I would like to once again put in writing my appreciation for the support that we and our brigade have received specifically over the previous three months. The support our brigade received from various departments has been second to none, and the support I have personally received from the Injury Recovery department has also been excellent. I look forward to returning to operational duties as soon as cleared to do so, and I would love to help prevent any recurrence or similar incident in the future.

## Lessons identified

- **Road condition:** The road condition is a major contributing factor in this collision. The Colac Otway Shire stated it will review the condition of the road and also investigate whether warning signs should be installed to warn drivers.
- **CFA support:** The response from CFA to its members has been praised by affected and attending members, family and Victoria Police.
- **Truck handling:** It is important that drivers have an intimate understanding of the way their brigade's trucks handle when driving, including the impact of the suspension system.
- **Situational awareness:** Hazards can arise even when travelling at a reasonable speed for the conditions, so it is vital members maintain situational awareness while driving to minimise the impact of such hazards.

## Questions for your brigade

- Are members of your brigade aware of any stretches of road in your response area that are in poor condition? Discuss this between yourselves so members know which roads may pose a risk during response.
- Have you been involved in a rollover? What lessons did you identify that may be useful to pass onto members of your brigade?

## Conclusion

This case study highlights how vital it is that drivers understand how their brigade's truck might handle and how the condition of roads in your area may impact this.

*Thank you to the members involved for their openness in sharing their experience and lessons. If you have any experiences to share email [Lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:Lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au).*

# Work continues on 2019-20 wellbeing recovery

**CFA thrive**   
anonymous self-care

## YOUR WELLBEING

This app is designed to help you monitor where you are on the Mental Health Continuum and provides suggestions as to how you can move to or stay in the healthy range for your mental and physical health.

## YOUR CHOICES

There is one questionnaire for your mental health and wellbeing and another for your physical health. You can choose to do one or both.

## YOUR RESOURCES

My CFA Wellbeing also provides a library of resources to help you improve your results and links to CFA and external services to connect you with someone to talk to.

**The devastating 2019-20 fire season was extremely tough on people both psychologically and physically and this was closely followed by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recovery from major disasters takes a long time and many services and activities are still ongoing.**

One aspect of recovery currently underway is the joint SES/CFA Wellbeing Recovery Project funded by Emergency Management Victoria. This grant will support the psychological recovery of first responders and their families.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 delayed this funding by a year, so the wellbeing teams in both agencies took the opportunity to consult SES units and CFA brigades about what would improve their wellbeing. Although we received a range of responses, the common themes that emerged were connectedness, story-telling and recognition.

This makes a great deal of sense when we acknowledge that the pandemic prevented many debriefing, social and training activities. These events would have

brought members together and given them opportunities to share their experiences, recognise achievements and start to deeply process events.

Some of the activities being rolled out thanks to this grant include murals of emergency services workers, opportunities to access a retreat and events involving other emergency services agencies that have a social or training focus. Later this year, a book will be published about volunteers' experiences during the Black Summer fires, bringing together stories and images that reflect the courage, sacrifice and hard work that was evident across the long fire season.

The Wellbeing Recovery grant has also enabled the development of an app called CFA thrive. The confidential app will help CFA members assess where they are on the mental health continuum and, if needed, help them to work their way back to the healthy/green range. An article on page 45 of the spring 2021 edition of *Brigade* magazine described the continuum and the ways it can help to normalise fluctuations in our wellbeing, communicate these changes and enable support.

CFA thrive takes this a step further by linking the continuum to a valid and reliable wellbeing questionnaire and the services and resources that can support good mental health. The app takes a holistic approach by including questions and resources related to physical health.

CFA thrive can be used anonymously and only the person using it will have access to their results. The aim is to more effectively operationalise the mental health continuum so it becomes an easily accessible and useful tool that can actively support good health.

Posters and fridge magnets are available to help brigades and district offices promote the continuum and the CFA thrive app.

Email [wellbeing@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:wellbeing@cfa.vic.gov.au) to request these resources.

You can try out the app by going to [cfa.vic.gov.au/thrive](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/thrive) or by scanning this QR code.



STORY SUZANNE LECKIE



# Hazard identification and situational awareness

**Situational awareness is a term that's often used in high-risk environments, but what exactly is it and what does it mean to CFA volunteers? For Diggers Rest Fire Brigade Captain Tim Welsh, situational awareness "is essential in developing a control structure to manage the dynamic environment we operate in."**

A definition you may find on the internet is that situational awareness is about being alert to what's happening around you, where you are in relation to other people or things, and what potential hazards or threats exist nearby. It forms part of any good risk management strategy that involves consistently assessing situations for any existing or future threats or risks based on the current situation.

How do you improve your situational awareness so that you are safer in a high-risk environment?

**Leadership:** The culture in any organisation is often set from the top – from managers, supervisors and other leaders. If the leaders are practising and demonstrating effective situational awareness, the team tends to learn by example.

**Induction and training:** It's important when inducting new members into our organisation that we point out where potential safety risks or hazards may exist and share knowledge and experiences. Training sessions or scenarios need to be realistic and the discussions that follow should talk about potential consequences and options. Getting it right early on is much easier than fixing issues later.

**Mindfulness:** Maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and surrounding environment can improve your situational awareness because you don't get lost in thought.

When people see a hazard, they will perceive the risk differently, even if only slightly. This is because a person's perception of risk is based on what they know about the hazard through education and training, personal and cultural beliefs and their previous experiences with that hazard. We are all capable of looking at issues from our own perspective, but how about the perspective of others? What do new members with limited training see or understand about the risks in any situation?

It is good practice not to assume someone else perceives the danger or risk the same as you.

It can be difficult to identify a hazard or the harm it can cause if you don't have the appropriate knowledge or experience. A basic risk assessment process CFA uses is Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA). This involves six steps:

1. Evaluate the task and hazards
2. Select what to do
3. Assess the risks
4. Decide is it safe enough? If yes go to step 6; if no go to step 5
5. Modify can you make it safer? If yes return to step 3; if no you must return to step 1.
6. Proceed and continue to reevaluate.

Being able to communicate the risks in any situation is a vital part of any overall awareness strategy. Any effective strategy requires everyone to be on-board and the best way to achieve this is to communicate the presence of any risk or potential hazard to all involved. Sometimes this involves instructing members in the safest way to do tasks, telling them about hazards you see, or about any risks you perceive or know may exist. It may also mean asking for help with a situation or task because your situational awareness knowledge is telling you this task could be risky.

For brigade leaders, good communication could mean demonstrating by following existing procedures, putting in place proper processes and checks, and communicating to the team when situations change. We should never assume that just because you told someone about a risk or about the correct procedure that they understood. We may need to remind them.



PHOTO KEITH PAKENHAM, AF301

STORY PAUL DALY

# Preventing sprains and strains

**Pain, swelling, stiffness and reduced functionality are common signs of sprains and strains that many Australian adults have felt at least once in their life. Sudden movements, twisting, crouching, stooping or jolts or falls can leave us feeling sore at best and injured at worst. In CFA, almost one in five injuries in 2021 was a sprain or strain.**

When responding to fires and other incidents, the risk of injury can be enhanced as we go from rest to near full exertion without warm-ups. So what can we do to prevent sprains and strains?

- Follow the correct techniques for lifting, dragging, bowling or using heavy equipment.
- Avoid turning out when you're tired or fatigued, as you are more likely to lose technique and make mistakes.
- If you don't have time to warm up before turning out, try small warm-ups such as rotating your wrists and ankles or circling your arms during waiting periods to keep your joints warm.

- Practise posture-positive exercises. These counteract any poor postures we might adopt during the day such as sitting, hunching, or looking down at our devices. Try hip flexor stretches, forward folds and light neck stretches. Posture-positive exercises can be found on Members Online by searching for 'posture booklet' at [members.cfa.vic.gov.au](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au).
- Stability exercises are an effective way to prevent falls. You can find exercise programs for upper body and lower body stability on Members Online in the Health Services section.

## DID YOU KNOW?

HealthWatch has gone virtual. While we have been unable to deliver our regular face-to-face health checks, we have offered online health education workshops. Topics include backfit, functional breathing, fatigue prevention and management and healthy eating. Email [healthwatch@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:healthwatch@cfa.vic.gov.au) to find out more or visit the Health Watch Program page on Members Online.

# Stay hydrated

**Hydration is important for everybody, but particularly for firefighters working in extreme conditions. Safety is everyone's responsibility and failing to stay hydrated on the fireground can lead to serious injury or death.**

While firefighting you can lose over one litre of fluid per hour which significantly increases the risk of dehydration. Being dehydrated impairs your ability to perform at your best. Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, impaired motor function, and impaired situational awareness and decision-making. Dehydration can also lead to heat stroke which can be life threatening.

Christine Bittner, captain of Mossi-Tambo Fire Brigade, has had several personal experiences with dehydration. Recently, she avoided being taken to hospital for observation but she needed to go home, have a shower, cool down her core temperature and drink a lot of fluid. She was told to call Triple Zero (000) if she felt worse. She remained stationary for the remainder of the day and drank plenty of water.

She highlighted the challenges of remaining hydrated when turning out.

"I begin drinking more water the day before a potential hot fire danger day, prepping my body for the next day and possible long and hot turnouts," Christine said.

"I'm very conscious of when to eat and when to drink. I try to grab a bottle on the way out the door or as soon as I walk into the station. This has now become a habit for me and one that I'm trying hard to make sure others follow too."

You can use your dynamic risk assessment skills to assess the risks of dehydration. Ask yourself how can I minimise the risks? What can I do to make it safe? How will I monitor it?

Discuss hydration with your brigade members and make plans so everyone is aware of how to keep safe.

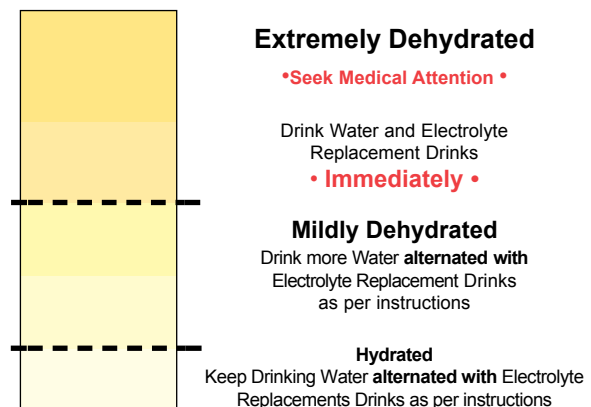
There are simple ways to avoid dehydration:

- You can use the pee test to monitor your hydration levels by taking note of the colour of your urine using the chart, right, as a guide.

- Don't wait until you're thirsty before drinking water
- You can also carry a water bottle with you to monitor your intake to ensure sufficient hydration levels are being reached (1200ml per hour, with a 600ml electrolyte replacement drink each hour, when engaging in intense physical activity in extreme weather conditions)
- Get out of the heat whenever possible
- Avoid caffeinated drinks because these can act as diuretics
- Use a CFA rehab unit, if available, for cooling down, hydrating and first-aid.

## What Colour is your Urine?

It is recommended that you drink up to 1200ml of water per hour and 600ml of electrolyte replacement drink per hour depending on work rate.



## DO YOU PASS THE TEST?

Note: Urine colour may vary because of diet or supplements (e.g. multivitamins).





## Faces of CFA

KASEY SCHOENMAEKERS, TINAMBA FIRE BRIGADE, DISTRICT 10

### What is your CFA role?

First lieutenant, communications officer, community safety officer and group representative on the district training committee. I'm also a trainer and assessor, currently assisting with General Firefighter and looking to expand into other courses.

### Why did you join?

My husband and mum were part of the brigade and so I was always at the station. The brigade captain at the time convinced me to sign up as a non-operational member. But when my welcome pack came, I saw I'd been signed up as an operational member. My husband and mum convinced me to get on board and give firefighting a go because being a small community we don't have a lot of active members.

### What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

My first major bushfire was the Aberfeldy Complex fire in January 2013, which headed fast for our community. Riding on the back of the tanker, I could feel the radiant heat even though we were nowhere near it. As the sky rained fire, we went from property to property helping people who stayed behind.

I remember waiting for the wind change and watching the fire dance and then just disappear. Then I heard my crew mates yelling "it's coming, duck now", with the hose drizzling above our heads. My husband was in the front as the crew leader and he was sure I wouldn't get on the tanker again, but the experience made me realise I was meant to be doing this to help my community as best as I can.

### Who have been your mentors in CFA?

My mentors have been experienced members of our group, our district and my mum and husband who've pushed me to do the best I can. They also help me share what they see I have to offer to CFA, which I sometimes just don't see in myself. After I unexpectedly lost my mum, I never thought I would get back on the tanker, but other people refused to allow me to quit and I'm glad I'm still part of CFA.

### What have been the highlights of your time in CFA?

I love being an active member of CFA and have a family that supports me in my roles. When the kids were younger my husband and I would alternate turning out. If we didn't know whose turn it was, the kids always knew. We are always thankful for family and friends, as often when we are deployed with strike teams we swap shifts and people step up and take our kids until the other returns. We have always worked as a team whether it be rotating shifts turning out or at home.

My husband and I have always been each other's sounding boards, counsellors, teachers and advisers, and that's why our involvement in CFA and marriage have worked so well.

Other highlights are helping to form the Women of Wellington, which supports existing CFA women in areas of leadership, mentoring and succession planning, and the appreciation I get from people I help every time I arrive on the big red truck.

### How do you motivate your brigade members?

I have a sense of humour and I like to make people feel at ease around me. I want to inspire not just women to become leaders, but the next generation after me.

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

No matter how many years of experience you have, you will learn something different every time you're at an incident because no incident is ever the same. Also, in CFA you are never alone.

### What do you like to do in your spare time?

When I am not assisting in CFA training courses, I love spending time with family, friends, travelling, being part of the kids' hobbies and playing music.



## Journey of a new firefighter

**The storms that thrashed the state in June 2021 caused widespread damage to the town of Kalorama and some residents were without power for a month.**

**Madeline Dundon had moved into her new house in the town just weeks earlier and after experiencing the storm and the devastation first-hand, she was inspired to sign up with her local brigade.**

"I decided to join CFA because of the weather event we had here in June," Madeline said. "I'd just moved into my property six weeks prior to the event and it was living out a childhood dream of being a firefighter.

"I'm most excited for the fire trucks," she said. "Pushing and pulling buttons and levers; seeing what they do. All the different hoses – the lengths, widths and materials, the attachments to the hoses, how to connect water."

Madeline is currently completing her General Firefighter training, learning the key skills that will help her be prepared for her first turnout.

Although she admits she's apprehensive about jumping on a truck for the first time, she feels confident that through General Firefighter she will be ready once the time comes.

"It's a high-pressure situation. Everyone turning out, getting geared up, jumping on a truck with sirens blaring. When you're just starting your training, that does seem overwhelming," Madeline said.

"But I know that that's what General Firefighter training is for – to give me the skills, knowledge and above all the confidence to get out there and support my fellow members and my community when the time comes."

Part of a group of nine new recruits for Kalorama-Mount Dandenong Fire Brigade, Madeline said the support of her crewmates has been vital as she works her way through the training.

"The support of the other members has been fantastic. We have a Facebook group and we're planning to spend some time working on our theory together to test each other and really make sure we have it locked in.

"I definitely think working in a team has been my favourite part of the journey so far, particularly because we are all equally as nervous and excited to go through the training."

Now about halfway through her General Firefighter course, Madeline has learned

the basics of firefighting and is learning how to put her new skills into action.

"We started with our nine key foundation skills – our skills drills – which are practical drills and cover everything we have to master to be competent," Madeline said.

"We've also completed all our theory modules and are now marrying those two, our theory and practical together, before moving onto our learning consolidation days."

While she's still a little nervous about her first turnout, Madeline feels comfortable that the training she's undertaking will adequately prepare her.

"It's pretty daunting but it's just about staying calm and remembering my training.

"My brigade has been so supportive throughout my training. I think that's a showcase and a celebration of the strong sense of community there is at CFA and here in the hills.

"I would recommend this experience to anyone and everyone who's willing to give it a go."

**STORY TIAHN WRIGHT**



# Plenty's new fire station nears completion

Plenty Fire Brigade started in 1944 in a tin shed just off Howe Road, originally as a satellite station of Diamond Creek before becoming its own entity in 1961. The brigade continued to serve the Plenty community from this tin shed until 1970, when it relocated to the current site on Memorial Drive.

Captain David Rumble said while the current station has served the community well, given the vast developments in the Plenty area over the past 40 to 50 years, the current station was well past its use-by date.

Planning for the new station has been almost 20 years in the making, leaving brigade members excited about the project finally nearing completion..

"Our current station was opened in June 1970 by Chief Officer Arthur Pitfield. It consisted of a meeting room, office, kitchen and two engine bays," David said.

"Over time, there have been extensions and modifications to meet the needs of the growing brigade, which were funded by the Ladies Auxiliary and wider Plenty community. This generosity was a real credit to the Plenty community."

Construction on the new \$2.65 million station, conveniently located near the current station in the Memorial Park complex, started in early 2021. Although COVID-19 restrictions delayed construction, completion is expected by May 2022.

The new four-engine bay station will provide Plenty's more than 70 brigade members with additional space for vehicles, men and women change rooms, on-site parking, workshop, hose drying tower, storage and other operational support areas.

Plenty brigade also contributed a significant amount of additional funds, raised through community activities, to extend the kitchen facilities, build an outdoor barbecue area, install security systems, upgrade technology, and get enhanced administration and meeting areas to provide fit-for-purpose areas to carry out training programs.

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan and ACFO David Maxwell (pictured above) visited the new station in February to view the progress of the build with Captain David Rumble and brigade members.



PHOTOS: BLAIR DELLEMIN

Like many brigades, Plenty brigade had an original fire bell that sat in a paddock for many years up the road from the old station. Its primary purpose was to alert brigade members of a fire in the area. Bells like these became redundant with the introduction of new technology such as pagers.

When they relocate to the new site, the brigade is planning to refurbish this original fire bell and install it in front of the new station, tying the brigade's proud history to the new location.

David is hopeful this state-of-the-art facility will lead to greater interest from the community.

"Being a member of a brigade brings a real sense of community, something we have all been lacking over the past few years," David said. "Our hope is that the new station will drive a greater level of interest in brigade membership. The brigade is planning a recruitment drive in line with the station opening."

Planning is currently underway for an official opening of the station, with an event expected to be held later this year.

STORY NAOMI GALVIN





# Perennial Perry family creating positive culture

There are many crucial elements that come together to make a successful CFA brigade. History, tradition and a positive culture are all considered important by many brigade members. For Nagambie Fire Brigade, a single family has been heavily involved in that history and tradition and is looking likely to continue its involvement for decades to come.



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSSM



The Perry family has been an integral part of the brigade for generations, with 17-year-old Ed Perry the newest member following in the footsteps of his father Wayne, uncle Geoff, grandfather Neil and great-grandfather Bert.

"I used to hang around at the station when I was a kid. I'd go to training nights and some meeting nights for quite a few years," Ed said. "It's a bit of an honour to be carrying on the tradition in the family, but really I'm just glad to be helping out the community."

Ed officially became a CFA member in 2020 after doing his General Firefighter training.

"Even though I've been around the brigade for a while, I still learned quite a few new skills when I went through that training.

"In-depth information about the different types of fires and fuels was great to learn about, while it was also good to practise skills like bowling hoses and radio management."

Ed's father Wayne has also been a brigade member since he was a teenager and is still an active member along with his brother Geoff.

"My dad has also been involved since he was young and was captain of the rural brigade for quite a few years back when there were still urban and rural brigades," Wayne said.

"He's still a member, although he hasn't been active for quite a while now.

"Uncles and other relations have also been brigade members throughout our history, but now it's just me and my brother who are still involved, as well as my young bloke Ed who started just over a year ago.

"Even when he was a little tacker, Ed would be wandering around when I was down washing the truck, so joining the brigade was really something he'd always wanted to do."

Of the many incidents he's attended, Wayne said the 2009 fires still stands out as the most significant. He also said that like many brigades around Victoria, Nagambie has been through its fair share of ups and downs.

"We've certainly had times when we haven't had many members, or when there were certain egos getting involved. But at the moment we've got a great captain and we moved into a new station in the last couple of years which has been a big improvement for the brigade."

Nagambie Captain Allen Treble said creating a positive culture at the brigade has been a big focus in recent years.

"Brigades have ups and downs, but the best way to create a positive culture at a brigade is to simply be there for the volunteers," Allen said.

"It doesn't matter if you're captain or lieutenant, leaders just need to get in and work with your firefighters from your youngest through to your oldest members.

"Volunteers want to be heard and they want their captain to be available to them, so you have to be hands-on which is how you gain the respect and how you go forward as a whole team."

Allen said a positive brigade also helps bolster membership numbers.

"Once you've created a good group within the brigade, the word filters into the community quite quickly," he said.



**Left:** (from left to right) Geoff Perry, Wayne Perry, Captain Allen Treble and Ed Perry

**Above:** Neil Perry

"Some people are keen to be involved as much as possible, while others are interested but may not be as flexible with their availability. But without creating that good brigade atmosphere in the first place you just don't get as many people asking to volunteer."

Allen said it's great to see young people like Ed signing up.

"The whole brigade is a family at Nagambie, but the Perrys are really like part of the furniture here," Allen said.

"Like many others, I joined the brigade when I was 16 and Neil, Wayne and Geoff Perry have always been around.

"You look at the number of years that they've given service back to their community, and never once have they ever asked for recognition for what they do.

"For someone like Ed to follow in the footsteps of his father, uncle and grandfather is phenomenal. He's not just participating, he really wants to be involved as much as he can."

And for Ed, it's the positive atmosphere of the brigade rather than the family connections that keeps him interested.

"It's nice to turn out with my old man and uncle, but I'm lucky that the entire brigade is a good group and different people bring different expertise for me to learn," Ed said.

"Everyone's switched on at the brigade. When you turn up for an incident, you know that everyone's going to be there and give it their all."

**STORY MARK BLACKMAN**

# EMBRACING DIVERSITY AT CFA

Diversity, fairness, equity and inclusion are principles that have been part of CFA's long and proud history. They are also pivotal to our future. Here's how three brigades are embracing diversity.

STORIES BY LERNA AVAKIAN

**Diversity and inclusion are part of CFA's core values and are essential if we are to truly reflect the communities we protect and serve.**

As we strive to be an organisation of choice for volunteers and employees, it is essential CFA continues to attract people with a variety of skills, talents and backgrounds while also providing members with opportunities and experiences to help them learn and grow.

Our volunteers, staff and secondees come to CFA with their own story and every experience gives us a unique identity. These 55,000 experiences weave together to create the fabric of CFA as a strong, vibrant and modern emergency service.

"We are all responsible for creating the culture in which we volunteer and work. It's not a job assigned to a person or area and it's not something someone else should be doing," Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said. CFA is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, respectful and inclusive environment that enables all people to reach their full potential and thrive and have several initiatives in place including:

- Allies of Inclusion Network
- Women's Advisory Committee and Youth Advisory Committee
- CFA Pride Network
- Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Gender Equality Action Plan

If we aspire to reflect the communities we serve, we need to hear and share more stories of diversity and inclusion. The three stories here show there's a place for everyone at CFA.

## Bianca Bassett, Lakes Entrance Fire Brigade

Bianca Bassett joined Lakes Entrance brigade in 2012 without any real thoughts of becoming an operational member.

"Even if I wanted to, with my five-foot stature I couldn't get onto a truck," Bianca said.

For Bianca, who is the brigade secretary, some tasks many people take for granted can be a challenge for her. For example, she can't access the station on her own with her wheelchair because of the way the doors open. Also, the setup of chairs and tables for brigade meetings makes it difficult for her to move around the room because access points are too narrow or blocked off.

"When I got sick and lost my leg, the brigade and district really stepped up. My family was not left wanting. They even set up a roster to drive my family into the city to visit me in hospital.

"And in recent times we've started to have meaningful conversations about a number of different things including access."

This spirit of helping and lending a hand is what brings members together and something CFA does well. But Bianca thinks we can be more inclusive.

"Diversity doesn't mean inclusion. It's a very common misconception and most organisations think it's interchangeable," Bianca said. "We're at a point where there's a great opportunity to educate volunteers about unconscious bias and develop training and resources about how to create inclusive spaces for people with disabilities."

During the Black Summer Fires in 2020, Bianca helped coordinate the huge volume of donations coming into the brigade and region.

"We needed someone at the brigade all the time. It was full-time job. But I had to wait eight hours before I could go to the toilet because I didn't have one that I could access at the station."

But while facility upgrades need budget and time to implement, creating inclusive spaces is something that's much easier and faster to action and relatively easy to do.

"If we are to reflect our communities, it's important that we know and learn how to create safe spaces. CFA is starting to ask the questions. We just need to have more of these conversations to bring about change."





## Ballan Fire Brigade Junior Leaders Program

The Ballan Junior Leaders Program won the Inclusion and Fairness Group category in the 2018 Spirit of CFA Awards. It's made up of a mix of young people of different ages and genders and has strong roots in engaging with the local community.

"While it's a good recruitment program for the brigade, it has greater benefits for kids themselves especially for their personal growth," Captain of Ballan Fire Brigade Ben Hatfield said.

"We've even had kids join who aren't inclined to be firefighters but are interested in the social side of the program. They join with their friends and it offers something different to local activities like football and scouts."

The Junior Leaders Program runs during school terms with a planned program that includes rural competitions for fun rather than competition and learning about specialist firefighting vehicles. To facilitate the social interaction and hands-on aspects, the brigade prefers face-to-face sessions at the brigade.

According to Ben, this program is a stepping stone into the brigade and half the current brigade management team came through the Junior Leaders Program.

Samantha Searle, Ballan brigade's communications officer, has been part of its program since 2011. With both parents being members of the local brigade, Samantha grew up around CFA.

"For me it felt like the normal progression to join. I became a Junior leader when I was 17," Samantha said.

The most rewarding aspects for Samantha are the mentoring and seeing how the participants develop.

"I've had the opportunity to watch young people grow up and become valuable members of our community. Knowing that I've contributed to their lives, no matter how small, is a great feeling."

As well as the impact she's had on others, Samantha recognises how the program has personally impacted her.

"My time as a junior leader has helped shape me into the leader I am today. I'm now a ranger (fire and emergency) with Parks Victoria and I manage a team of fire project firefighters. I don't think I would have had the confidence to fill this role if it wasn't for the experience of being a Junior leader."



## Ying Gan, Keysborough Fire Brigade

Twenty-six-year-old Ying Gan is an operational member at Keysborough brigade. A first generation Australian born of Chinese migrant parents, Ying said volunteering always seemed natural to her. She was already volunteering with RSPCA and looking to do something different when she approached CFA.

"I drove past the station on Chapel Road all the time and thought why not give it a go," Ying said.

Ying joined Keysborough brigade in 2018 during her gap year after finishing university. "In my first year or two I had plenty of spare time and I'd turn out a lot, mostly to MVAs."

And it is the perception of danger and injury that Ying believes stops people from multicultural backgrounds from joining.

"I think the perception of danger and injury can be influenced by parents," she said. "In Asian culture, parents still have a big influence on their children even when they turn into adults. Having your parent tell you constantly about how dangerous something is can really influence you and make you question things."

"When I first joined I assumed you could only fight fires, but I now know there are many different roles available and volunteers don't just fight fires."

For many migrants and culturally and linguistically-diverse communities, their reference points and experiences of volunteering are very different to those in Australia.

"For my parents, especially when they were still in China, emergency services workers were generally seen as paid staff. They didn't know of any volunteer roles in emergency services. I think maybe that's why not many

people know that in Australia there are volunteer roles in this area. They might think if people get paid overseas because of the risk involved, why would you risk your safety doing that kind of volunteer work here?"

When reflecting on the benefits of volunteering with CFA, Ying said it has helped her out of her comfort zone.

"I'm not really a leader but I feel like CFA, and especially my BMT, has helped me develop my leadership skills by allowing me to see things from a different perspective. It's helped me from a work perspective too where I'm more likely to take control of a situation."

For Ying CFA brigades should fully reflect the communities that surround them, and Keysborough brigade is a great example of its diverse community.





## Adam Damen gets his special wish

**Long-serving CFA volunteer and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre patient Adam Damen saw the results of his labour on 21 February 2022 when a specialised firefighting helicopter landed at the Royal Melbourne Hospital.**

The specially-arranged landing was organised to fulfil Adam's special wish to allow him to inspect the upgraded Aerial Intelligence Gathering helicopter which he had been instrumental in developing for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), even while he was being treated for cancer.

"It's a really complex and amazing piece of technology that has helped us track fires," said his wife Michelle. "But because Adam became unwell, he never got the chance to see it."

Staff from Peter Mac, The Royal Melbourne Hospital, State Air Desk, Ambulance Victoria and CFA worked together to ensure Adam's special request was achievable, with Peter Mac and Royal Melbourne staff making sure Adam was cared for while he attended the helipad.

Michelle said she couldn't be prouder of her husband, friend and colleague.

"He's just been so dedicated to what he does and said he hadn't felt he had done a day's work in his life."

But now Adam's legacy is protecting the people of Victoria.

He was also honoured by his colleagues from Mount Macedon Fire Brigade and DELWP Macedon staff who demonstrated

their respect with a 'drive-by' of Peter Mac's Parkville site in February.

Adam, who was a palliative care patient, sadly died on Tuesday 22 February, after a 10-month battle with synovial sarcoma.

Michelle said fire management and creating the firefighting intelligence system for Victoria's emergency services, including CFA and DELWP, was Adam's life work.

"He's a quiet achiever, so he won't talk about what he does – he just gets it done," Michelle said.

"It was his life's dedication to have the machine up and running."

Adam worked in forest fire management since he was 20 and served during the February 2009 and Black Summer fires in Victoria. His roles have taken him all around the country working with our partner agencies in WA, Tasmania, NSW and ACT.

Together, he and Michelle, who were high school sweethearts, have more than 40 years of service between them – Adam at DELWP and Michelle at CFA and both CFA volunteers. Adam was well-known and respected by both CFA and DELWP members and he received many messages and well wishes from colleagues over his last days.

**STORY ANASTASIA CASAGRANDE, PETER MACCALLUM CANCER CENTRE**



# Echuca celebrates 150 years of community service

**Echuca Fire Brigade has come a long way from its inception in 1872, when the local council called for applications for those willing to join a fire brigade. Twelve men joined and Echuca Borough Council had a fire service. This year, the brigade celebrates 150 years of service to the community.**

The brigade's original firefighting equipment consisted of a hose and leather buckets, before progressing to a horse-drawn fire engine in 1878.

Over the years the brigade has moved its station's location. The original fire service was stationed at what was then the town's water towers in Heygarth Street – where the Eureka Civic Centre now stands. They remained on Heygarth Street until relocating to a site on Pakenham Street in 1880, known as Paddys Market.

The brigade continued to use this old market building until an extension was built in 1918. After this, the old market building continued to be used as meeting rooms, with the extension used as the fire station where the fire truck was housed. This station remained until 1967, when it was demolished and a three-bay fire station was built on the same site.

As the brigade's longest serving member, with almost 65 years of service under his belt, former Captain Ron Hooper fondly remembers the Pakenham Street station.

"Alan Eley, the brigade's historical expert, was actually born in the fire station on Pakenham Street as his father George was resident officer, or 'station keeper' at the time," Ron said.

"My older brother was also resident officer for a period. He and his wife moved into the residence after the Eley family moved out. "The brigade stayed in this new station from 1968 until we moved to a new station in High Street about five years ago."

Ron is still an active member and has strong friendships in the brigade including would-be member Xavier Moylan. With his dad serving as second lieutenant, eight-year-old Xavier aspires to become captain himself one day.

At the recent Urban Junior State Championships, Xavier spent some time trying out virtual reality firefighting, an innovating training system Ron was quite impressed with, given his humble beginnings with firefighting.

Back when Ron first joined the brigade in 1957, a common method of fire suppression was using beaters and knapsacks.

"The beaters consisted of a strong handle, like a shovel handle, and an old service hose plaited together, which looked like a rake with a cross piece at the bottom, all riveted together" Ron said. "You needed to go around the edge of the burning grass and belt it back in over the burnt area to stop it from spreading."

Thankfully, Xavier won't be relying on handmade beaters when he can officially join the brigade, given the improvements in firefighting equipment and techniques since 1957.

Young Xavier appreciates the significance of the brigade celebrating its 150-year anniversary, because "there are big signs on the running track and at the station".

As part of anniversary celebrations, a reunion will be held for past and present members in August – the month Echuca Fire Brigade was first registered with CFA.

Another anniversary event, held earlier this year, was a competition to name a book being published by the brigade. The book is a sequel to 'Bell to Siren', originally written to commemorate the first 130 years of the brigade. The new book will cover the past 20 years, with an official launch planned at the brigade anniversary dinner and awards presentation night in October this year.

STORY NAOMI GALVIN





# State Championships at Mooroopna



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM AFISM



**For the second year in a row, the CFA/VFBV State Firefighter Championships were held on consecutive weekends in March 2022 at the Mooroopna Recreation Reserve in North West Victoria. It was the perfect event to shake off the shackles of COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions and celebrate what's great about CFA.**

It has been a long and difficult 12 months for those who look forward to competing and putting their training into action. The same can be said for CFA members who look forward to catching up with friends from other brigades made over the years at past Championships.

Thanks to a funding boost from the Victorian Government, plus improvements made following feedback from last year's event, the layout of competition and exhibition areas was changed to bring them closer together and encourage greater interaction.

"The feedback has been really positive," Alan Davies, Chair of the Annual Championships Planning Committee said.

"This year's setup allowed quicker access to different competition areas and there was all-abilities access to the corporate marquee. There was a COVID-safe kids entertainment area and more covered areas near the food trucks and stall holders."

The corporate marquee was busy with a lot of visitors over both weekends. As usual the merchandising stand was extremely popular, but the new workwear stand was top of the must-see list for members wanting to see, feel and test out the new clothing in person.

"It's been incredible. We've had so many volunteers coming in to look at the workwear and get fitted. They are overwhelmingly positive and excited about the clothing," CFA's Head of Fleet and Protective Equipment Danny Jones said.

CFA's virtual reality technology was also a highlight, with hundreds of visitors, many of them potential young firefighters in the making, donning the headsets to try out their skills in a variety of simulations designed to replicate real-life scenarios.

The Urban Juniors competition on the first weekend was fierce, with Melton A taking top honours for the second year in a row. They blitzed the field winning all the Under 14s' wet events and most of the Under 17s' events.

Melton A Junior Manaia Robinson has been competing for six years and next year he'll be moving into the seniors' competition.

"What I love most about the Champs is that I get to run with my best friends," he said.

Teammate Ben Geysing has been with Melton A for three years and loves the thrill and the nerves that come with competing.

This year he went home with six medals. "Standing up and getting the medals at the end feels nice," he said.

After a full day of Urban Juniors' competition, a Youth Advisory Forum was held with CFA CEO Natalie MacDonald, DCO Operational Performance & Capability Kaylene Jones and DCO Operational Doctrine and Training Jean Dyzel. It was an opportunity for our young members to participate in interactive feedback sessions with senior leaders to improve the way CFA engages with and involves young people.

The forum resulted in constructive discussions about how CFA can more actively and inclusively involve young people in decision-making. Participants also provided ideas about how to reach and more effectively communicate with Junior members.

The Chief's Chargers took to the main track on the second weekend with DCO Kaylene Jones becoming the first woman operational leader to compete on the Chargers team. Unsurprisingly, they were beaten by the Kyneton Juniors.

Kaylene said she was proud to set an example for other young women firefighters.

"I'm equally inspired by our young members competing across both weekends. It's been great to see the skill and dedication of these future firefighters," Kaylene said.

It was a weekend of firsts for women at the Championships this year. Twenty women's teams from across the state competed in women-only events, as well as taking part in open competition.

Euroa students Amelia Delahey and Teagan Kubeil won the inaugural VFBV Female Aggregate Trophy for the team with the highest overall points. Tatura finished in second place, with Pakenham/Narre Warren A, third.

Amelia and Teagan, who are both secondary school students, said they were thrilled by the win and excited that the expanded women's events gave them more opportunities to compete.

"We were quite surprised. We just came to have a bit of fun and get involved but it was good to come out with something in the end," Year 12 student Teagan said. "It was an honour to take out the women aggregate."

The Torchlight Procession also made a triumphant return with this year's event featured in Shepparton's Illuminate Festival. The procession route wound along Victoria Park Lake and was lined with spectators.

For the first time, CFA rural brigades joined urban brigades for the colourful event, which dates to 1873.

This year's event was led by a colour party featuring Chief Officer Jason Heffernan, VFBV President Nev Jones and a fleet of CFA tankers and pumpers. The procession traditionally features kerosene torches on wooden poles but in a move towards environmental sustainability, this year's event also featured a trial of LED and e-flare torches. Organisers said the feedback from brigades using the alternative options was positive and a decision about the preferred lighting approach will be made before next year's Championships.

Brigades marched in formation and were judged at five points along the route on their presentation and appearance. The Knox Group came first, with Pakenham brigade second and Patterson River brigade, third.



Maxine Vaccine, Goulburn Valley Health's mobile vaccination bus, was also at the Champs to encourage participants and spectators to get vaccinated.

With another year over, the focus now turns to 2023 when CFA celebrates 150 years of Championships. It's sure to be big and unforgettable.

# Results from the Champs



## URBAN SENIOR

### Dry aggregate

1	Tatura	36 points
2	Melton A	19 points
3	Osborne Park A	11 points

### Wet aggregate

1	Harvey (WA)	58 points
2=	Werribee	56 points
2=	Kangaroo Flat	56 points

### A Section

1	Melton A	82 points
2	Harvey (WA)	58 points
3	Osborne Park A	54 points

### B Section

1	Werribee	64 points
2=	Swan Hill	56 points
2=	Kangaroo Flat	56 points

## RURAL SENIOR

### Division 1 aggregate

1	Springhurst A	42 points
2	Connewarre B	34 points
3=	Leopold A	34 points
3=	Sedgwick B	34 points

### Division 2 aggregate

1	Truganina A	84 points
2	Wallington A	30 points
3	Hurstbridge C	30 points

### Division 3 aggregate

1	Eldorado C	58 points
2	Springhurst B	56 points
3	Strathmerton A	50 points



## WOMEN-ONLY EVENTS

### Female aggregate

1	Euroa	16 points
2	Tatura	13 points
3	Pakenham/ Narre Warren A	12 points

## URBAN JUNIOR

### Dry aggregate

1	Melton A	48 points
2	Kangaroo Flat A	24 points
3	Grovedale	21 points

### Wet aggregate

1	Melton A	49 points
2	Kangaroo Flat A	24 points
3	Melton B	14 points

### Under 14 years aggregate

1	Melton A	53 points
2	Kangaroo Flat A	20 points
3	Sale	19 points

### Under 17 years aggregate

1	Melton A	44 points
2	Grovedale	34 points
3	Kangaroo Flat A	28 points

### Grand aggregate

1	Melton A	97 points
2	Kangaroo Flat A	48 points
3	Grovedale	34 points

## RURAL JUNIOR

### 11-13 years aggregate

1	Springhurst A	52 points
2	Ascot & District A	30 points
3	Beazley's Bridge A	24 points

### 11-15 years aggregate

1	Napoleons-Enfield A	30 points
2	Elaine A	28 points
3	Beazley's Bridge A	28 points

### Champion team

1	Springhurst A	68 points
2	Napoleons-Enfield A	52 points
3	Beazley's Bridge A	52 points



# Coldstream's new station now operational

**Coldstream Fire Brigade members are enjoying a brand-new \$1.5 million fire station after it became operational in mid-February. The station may be located just a few doors down from the old station, in Killara Road, but it's streets ahead in what it offers the brigade and its local community.**

The new three engine bay station – the first of 16 replacement CFA stations to be built as part of a \$126 million Victorian Government funding package – provides brigade members with a large meeting room for training and brigade meetings and better amenities including men and women change rooms, on-site parking, workshop, storage and other operational support areas.

Coldstream Captain Sean Bethell said the brigade contributed \$60,000 towards a larger meeting room and kitchen facilities that would allow the brigade to host group and district training. A shed and members' area including a barbecue were also recently finalised.

Sean said brigade members regularly rattled tins at Coldstream intersections and had also taken part in event car parking and Bunnings sausage sizzles

as part of fundraising activities over many years.

"The Bendigo Bank donated the shed at the back and we'd like to thank them for that," Sean said.

In all, it was a significant upgrade on the old station which was built by members in 1966 after the land was donated to the brigade.

"Everyone's happy to be in. There are a lot of memories in the old station, but now we have to make new memories in the new one," Sean said.

One of those new memories didn't take long to form, when brigade members tested their new facilities soon after moving in. A passerby knocked on the station door to report a house fire up the road. As the man finished explaining where the fire was, the pagers went off. The Coldstream pumper responded first, with tanker 2 following one minute later.

The fire was already in the roof space and the rear of the building when the trucks arrived. Brigade members from Coldstream, Lilydale, Gruyere, Yarra Glen, Bayswater and Yellingbo attended and successfully stopped the fire from damaging a large part of the home.

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan congratulated the brigade on its new station.

"Coldstream is a really busy brigade that attends fires, motor vehicle accidents and many other emergency incidents on the urban fringe and throughout the Yarra Valley and indeed in support of other regions and states, and I'm really pleased to see this new station come to fruition," Jason said.

"As CFA moves forward as a volunteer-only firefighting organisation, we are committed to providing our firefighters with the best infrastructure, equipment and support that we can so we can continue to fulfil our mission of saving lives and property."

Coldstream Fire Brigade covers suburban and rural areas in the Shire of Yarra Ranges, and has a long history of protecting the community from threats of bushfires and grassfires, and the upgraded station will ensure the brigade can continue to meet the demands of growing townships.

**STORY LISELOTTE GEARY**



# IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT FIGHTING FIRES

While bushfires and fire trucks are synonymous with CFA, the skills of volunteers extend far beyond the stereotypical image.

STORIES BY MARK BLACKMAN

The professional service of CFA volunteers includes a wide range of abilities, often acquired through specialist ongoing training. Many CFA volunteers would be aware that we have experts in high-angle rescue and road rescue, fire investigators, experienced and skilled incident controllers and brigades with specialist knowledge to rescue small and large animals.

To give a flavour of the diverse skills of our people, we talked to three CFA volunteers with skills in rope rescue, marine safety and community engagement.

## Darren Hunt, Mt Beauty Fire Brigade

Mount Beauty Fire Brigade's steep angle rescue team is one of CFA's specialist crews that can help rescue people from incredibly difficult terrain.

Fourth Lieutenant Darren Hunt said he has been around ropes since he was a boy and is glad his skills can be used to help save lives.

"We established this team 25 years ago because in Mount Beauty we're surrounded by mountains, and when vehicles go over the edge we needed to be able to get people up and out," Darren said.

"It's grown over the years and our team helps right across the area, rescuing people over cliffs at Beechworth Gorge and at Mount Buffalo, for example.

"Our steep angle rescue team can operate by itself, but we also work with different rope rescue teams in the area including a high-angle rescue team from Wangaratta FRV, a few local SES units including Bright SES, and we often have other local CFA brigades help out."

Darren said high-angle rescue operates at incidents where a vertical rescue is required, while Mount Beauty's steep-angle rescue specialises in extremely steep and difficult to access terrain.

"While we are, of course, a fire brigade, the number of fire callouts we get actually pales into insignificance compared to the number of rope rescues. And we get some road rescue callouts as well."

Darren said it's not only the volunteers on the ropes who are important at these incidents.

"Everyone who works with this team or attends these rescues is critical, as they might be helping to clear the area or provide food and drink to volunteers and victims."





## William Sandford, Gippsland Coastguard

Another aspect of CFA membership that's not often associated with the organisation is the relationship between CFA and the Australian Volunteer Coastguard.

Although they are separate organisations, the vast majority of flotillas throughout Victoria also act as CFA Coastguard brigades and the volunteers are registered as CFA members.

CFA volunteer William Sandford, who is Coastguard's Gippsland Squadron Commodore, said these volunteers highlight the variety of skills within CFA.

"Coastguard is specifically based in marine search and rescue, but the majority of flotillas are CFA brigades as well," William said (pictured right in the photo).

"We also act as a water taxi on occasion, as we help transport firefighters to specialist fires or incidents that are inaccessible to land-based vehicles."

CFA's Coastguard brigades are located along the entire Victorian coastline from Portland to Marlo, with another two brigades based inland at Lake Hume and Lake Eppalock.

Whether land-based or water-based brigades, Commodore Sandford said Coastguard is always looking for volunteers.

"If people are looking for a different avenue to volunteer, they can join a Coastguard brigade. You can be part of an important search and rescue team on water, and still be a CFA member."



## Kerryann Poynton, Snake Valley Fire Brigade

Not all volunteers are on trucks, boats, or ropes. Some of the significant work undertaken by our volunteers is with people in their local communities.

Kerryann Poynton, who's a community safety officer with Snake Valley Fire Brigade, said ensuring the right information is passed onto local people can save lives.

"I've been a CFA member for 10 years and have seen the community engagement space grow considerably," Kerryann said.

"It's really important for us to get out in the community and make sure people are as prepared for fire as they can be, that they understand how to prevent fires starting and how to protect themselves and their families if they do."

Kerryann said being able to connect with the range of community members is an important skill, and there are several methods that can be used to ensure the message is shared as widely as possible.

"We use social media quite heavily these days and we also share crucial information like Total Fire Bans and severe weather warnings in community Facebook groups.

"Like most other brigades across the state, we also hold bushfire information sessions and target specific areas where new people may have recently moved in or areas that could be a particularly high fire risk.

"There's a real skill in being able to read the room. There are two or three different ways you can approach something and you need to be able to figure out almost instantly if you're getting the information across or if you need to adapt your style."

In addition to the community meetings and digital engagement, Kerryann said it's important to consider other ways of sharing key information.

"We've also got a great working relationship with our local primary school which not only means we can share information with kids, but it also gives us access to local parents," she said.

"That could be bushfire information sessions in the classroom with parents as well, or it could be what we call gate meetings with parents in the morning or at school pick-ups.

"Even the school newsletters are used to include seasonal information about smoke alarms or barbecue safety messaging."



# Youth driving the way for Moe Fire Brigade

**A young brigade management team (BMT) is paving the way for the next generation of members at Moe Fire Brigade. With three BMT members aged 33 and under, Moe's leadership team is injecting new ideas and encouraging young people in the community to get involved with their local brigade.**

Captain Liam Bantock said young people are the future of CFA and we need to invest in them whenever we can.

"For a brigade, it's important to have young people because they bring a different generational understanding in how to connect to their peers, whether that's through community safety or engaging their peers in volunteering," Liam said.

"They also bring new ways of doing things and different skills such as social media. From a leadership perspective it's a good opportunity for young people to be mentored, which is also great for the older members who get to be mentors and share knowledge.

"I also think it's important to get involved in CFA generally because there's really strong personal benefits to volunteering – contribution to your community, the connections you make and the skills you learn."

Tara Paulsen, aged 33, is the brigade's second lieutenant. She said young people can bring a fresh outlook to a BMT and tackle tasks in a slightly different way.

"It's really good to see young people come through because their ideas are different, and they have a different mindset of the way things could be," Tara said.

"It's so important to encourage and develop leadership skills from a young age and give them the opportunity to speak up now so they carry that into the future. If younger members aren't encouraged in the early stages of their CFA career, there's the

potential for a gap in knowledge when the older members start to step down."

Third Lieutenant Rowan Day, aged 22, echoed Tara's thoughts, believing that the outlook young people bring can be vital to ensure the brigade develops.

"We've been able to implement certain technologies into the brigade which has been really beneficial," Rowan said. "We've implemented the Supplementary Alerting Service app into our everyday operations. As a BMT, we're all on the same wavelength and it really benefits us and how we approach certain tasks."

He said that being able to have input into the direction the brigade is heading is a valuable experience.

"Joining the BMT is a really great way to have your say and to help steer the brigade in a positive direction. I would really encourage young people in CFA to get involved in their BMTs."

For Fourth Lieutenant Montana Earle, aged 24, it's not only BMTs she thinks young people should get involved with.

"I've spent 13 years volunteering and it's definitely made me a lot more confident. It's helped me take on new opportunities and challenges," Montana said.

"Volunteering really provides you with a different environment where you become more community-focused and it teaches you resilience and adaptability.

"While it's fantastic for young people to get involved in their BMT, I believe it's vital we encourage more young people to join CFA in general. The youth are the future of CFA, and it's so important to foster them and help them to develop from early on."

STORY TIAHN WRIGHT







## First-aid skills save lives

**A first-aid refresher course turned out to be lifesaving for a CFA volunteer and his wife last year. Len Forster, a Nalangil Fire Brigade member, completed his first-aid refresher course in June 2021 through CFA and just two weeks later he saved his wife's life after noticing the signs of a stroke.**

On the evening of 4 July 2021, Len's wife Gaye mentioned she had a headache and was going to bed. Len noticed something wasn't quite right, with Gaye unable to form sentences properly.

"Gaye had just got off the phone to her sister and was trying to tell me she was going to bed. I noticed she was having trouble speaking and finding the right words, and when asked she couldn't tell me our address," Len said.

Drawing on what he'd learned just weeks earlier, Len called an ambulance.

"I rang Triple Zero and explained what was going on. The call-taker understood the gravity of the situation and sent an ambulance straight away. When the paramedics arrived, they said Gaye was either having a stroke or an epileptic

episode, but either way she would need to be taken to hospital for an MRI.

"After going to University Hospital in Geelong, it was confirmed Gaye was suffering from a stroke and experiencing a ruptured aneurysm and brain bleed, and I was told she would need to be transferred to the Royal Melbourne Hospital for surgery."

When Len reflects on that night, he's incredibly thankful for his first-aid skills.

"If I had let Gaye just go to bed, she wouldn't be here today. Look out for the signs, remember your training and trust your gut."

He said that first-aid is a valuable skill for absolutely everyone.

"Keep your training up-to-date. Keep it fresh in your mind and of course be aware that anything can happen to anybody at any time. It's always better to be prepared."

Alison Osborne is a first-aid trainer with St John Ambulance. She said the best thing about first-aid training was that it empowered people to know how to react in a situation where first-aid may be required.

"We know that if we can provide first-aid assistance in those first crucial moments that

we can significantly impact the outcome of a first-aid situation," Alison said.

"At St John, we believe it's not just about teaching the skills, but also about empowering our students so they can confidently recognise a first-aid situation and assist the person in need, which could have a huge impact on the eventual outcome."

Alison said it's important to ensure first-aid skills are regularly kept up-to-date.

"It's important to do the first-aid training in the first place, so you have those baseline skills and knowledge to confidently help someone, but just like anything if you're not using those skills regularly there's a risk you can forget key pieces of information.

"To develop that muscle memory and to be able to recall those skills, particularly under pressure, we encourage everyone to complete regular first-aid and CPR training."

If you want to learn first-aid skills, go to the Learning Hub ([learninghub.cfa.vic.gov.au](https://learninghub.cfa.vic.gov.au)) and book a course, or contact your district learning and development coordinator.

STORY TIAHN WRIGHT

# Fuel reduction takes teamwork

“Teamwork is the key to bringing a fuel reduction burn together,” said South West Region Vegetation Management Officer Tanya Nagorcka. By teamwork, Tanya means good communication between the key people involved, such as landowner or manager, brigade captain, catchment officer and vegetation management officer (VMO).

“A planned burn or other fuel reduction treatment often starts with the recognition that a fuel load needs reducing. This observation can be made by any of the stakeholders.”

CFA doesn't have direct land management responsibilities. However, because we do carry out fire prevention activities at the request of landowners or managers, it's critical that everyone involved is in the loop.

The initial discussion will cover aspects of the fire prevention task, such as the fuel treatment type (options include burning, mulching, mowing and candling), the best time of year for the activity to occur, and the resources required to complete the task safely.

The VMO will enter the proposal onto the Fuel Management System (FMS) to become part of the statewide inter-agency Joint Fuel Management Program (JFMP). This triggers a process of values checks for heritage (Indigenous and European) and biodiversity values that may be recorded for a site. If values are identified, appropriate mitigations to protect those values are developed and shared with stakeholders including the landowner or manager.

Depending on the fuel treatment selected for the site, it's likely that a number of tasks will need to be completed before the burn can occur. For example, if a roadside burn is proposed, it's likely the roadside fuel along the fence-line will need to be reduced before the burn to protect the fences. This may involve establishing a mineral earth ploughed or graded break, or a slashed break with a wet line applied just before ignition. The VMO will liaise with the road management agency to organise for the breaks to be constructed. Likewise, depending on traffic volumes, the VMO will coordinate traffic management to be in place during the burn.

As the burn date gets closer, the brigade captain or burn controller, working through their group, will determine the availability of local trucks and volunteers to help at the burn. If there aren't enough local volunteers available, the VMO can request extra volunteers through the Planned Burn Task Force.

With more than 700 vegetation management tasks entered onto FMS across Victoria by CFA every year, it's a significant challenge to complete as many of them as seasonal conditions allow. And every season brings its own variations that often differ across the state. History shows us it's an annual challenge that's best achieved through teamwork and good communication among the key players.

Opposite, we've described a successful fuel reduction burn recently carried out in South West Region.

STORY ANDY GOVANSTONE



## Brigades converge at Woolsthorpe for a Safer Together burn

**Local brigades were joined by a South East Region strike team to burn eight hectares of VicTrack land at Woolsthorpe in January 2022. More than 70 volunteers, seven trucks, six slip-ons and a quick-fill pump conducted the fuel reduction ecological burn.**

The section of VicTrack land burned is part of The Green Line – a 37-kilometre stretch of former railway line between Koroit and Minhamite in South West Victoria – which is managed by Landcare Victoria through The Basalt to Bay Landcare Network. It's a biodiversity corridor to preserve the remnant vegetation and biodiversity for future generations and contains a large volume of biodiversity that's locally extinct.

The old railway line protects and preserves at least three state and federally-listed endangered ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) – Victorian Volcanic Plains native grassland and ephemeral wetland and plains grassy woodland.

To stimulate healthier EVCs, The Basalt to Bay Landcare Network received funding to organise the burn under the Safer Together Victorian Government program. Attending the burn were Kirkstall and Woolsthorpe brigades from District 5 and a District 8 strike team with brigade members from Carrum Downs, Upper Beaconsfield, Cribb Point, Dandenong, Springvale, Rosebud and Hallam.





PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE BASALT TO BAY LANDCARE NETWORK



Deputy Group Officer Cardinia Group Steve Hicks said his volunteers wanted to increase their knowledge and skills.

“We came across from South East Region to learn about different fuels. We have a lot of new members who want to learn and we are learning new styles of burn management from local vegetation management officers Tanya Nagorcka and Phil Campbell,” Steve said.

Lisette Mill, the Basalt to Bay Landcare Network facilitator and manager of The Green Line Project, was pleased with the outcome.

“It was a terrific burn,” Lisette said. “The burn has produced a mosaic effect where some parts of the burn site have been skipped over by the fire. This leaves little pockets where biodiversity can survive the fire and stay safe from predators, while still stimulating the grassland and woodland trees to drop seeds into the newly-burnt areas.

“By spring 2022, we expect to see a full range of unique Victorian plants growing here that may not have emerged for decades.

“The burn has opened up the site so we can spread the seeds of the locally rare Silver Banksia trees. The original 1830s’ survey maps show these were the dominant understorey tree in this area and there are fewer than 40 left here in the wild. They are a precious local provenance banksia.

“We will collect the ripening seed so it can be dropped back into the ash before the grassland out-competes them. We hope to reestablish clumps of them along the site and rebuild a future seed orchard for these special trees.

“We’re so grateful to our funders, the CFA members and the VicTrack staff for making this possible.”

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL





## Kelly Krajnc's intense start as an air attack supervisor

**CFA's Kelly Krajnc couldn't have dreamt of a more intense start to her new role as an air attack supervisor when she was accredited at the end of 2021. In her first deployment, she was sent to the Langkoop/Poolajelo fire which started in South Australia during the afternoon of New Year's Eve and quickly spread to Victoria.**

Kelly's role as a volunteer with the CFA District 13 Headquarters brigade allowed her to pursue roles in aviation. She had carried out the role of air observer for some time before she put her hand up for air attack supervisor training.

"The main difference is that as an air observer, you're operating at a higher altitude feeding back information to the ICC or the fireground – how big the fire is, how fast it's moving, assets under attack, that sort of thing – whereas an air attack supervisor looks after the tactical firefighting in the air," Kelly said.

The Langkoop/Poolajelo fire certainly put her tactical skills to the test, with the fire burning in grasslands, pine, red gum and bush vegetation. Several waterbombing aircraft, a Helitak and Large Air Tanker worked side-by-side with South Australian aircraft to support the on-ground fire crews.

"It's like a strike team in the air and I'm their strike team leader," she said. "We're just another tool for our firefighters to utilise."

Incident Controller Mark Gunning was full of praise for the air support received, particularly the role played by CFA's newest air attack supervisor.

"She stood up unbelievably," Mark said. "I've seen much more experienced air attack supervisors baulk at the challenge of that many aircraft and that dynamic a situation."

In the air during such a large and fast-moving event, decisions have to be made very quickly.

"We knew a south-westerly wind change was coming through and it was going to change the direction of the fire, so the plan was to build a retardant line ahead of the change," she said.

"We found a track and we dropped the retardant on the burn side so that the track plus the extra line of retardant would slow the fire right down allowing it to burn itself out – it was very successful.

"We also dropped retardant on grass and you can see the effectiveness of where it burnt right up to the retardant line before dying out."

Kelly said daily debriefs following each shift were an opportunity to identify what had gone well and where improvements could be made for the following day.

"All my instructors – from multiple agencies, CFA, FRV, DELWP and Parks – have also been really supportive and I couldn't have done it without their support. They called me every day to debrief with me, check on my welfare and praise the work I had done."

Following the fire, Kelly undertook a formal after action review with her mentor, CFA air attack supervisor Commander John Katakouzinis, who said this review was an opportunity for continuous learning and improvement and allowed us to fill in any identified training gaps.

STORY LISELOTTE GEARY



# Resurgence for Cann Valley Fire Brigade

**Cann Valley Fire Brigade is boosting its profile in the local community, with recruitment drives and community education helping bolster the brigade as it celebrates a milestone.**

The brigade is celebrating its 75-year anniversary in its current form, although Secretary Frank Herbert said it did exist before then.

“The station was originally located just north of the Cann River township and the brigade was known as Noorinbee Bush Fire Brigade in the late 1930s,” Frank said. “That became the Cann Valley Rural Fire Brigade in 1946 which is what we’re now celebrating.

“We made a banner to mark the occasion that had an old photo with some of our earliest Cann Valley Fire Brigade members on it.”

The brigade has been in a unique position for a while, operating without a captain.

“A few members left the brigade in recent years and the brigade struggled because of low numbers, so I became a little more involved in the past year or so,” Frank explained.

“It’s been quite a few years since there’s been a full brigade management team. I joined Cann Valley Brigade in 2013 and we had no BMT at the time. The brigade was managed by a secretary and lieutenant which is still how we operate.”

Frank lives in nearby Tamboon, a remote area in East Gippsland between

Victoria’s coastline and the town of Cann River. Access to Tamboon is via a single road, which itself comes off the Princes Highway – the only major road to East Gippsland – and Frank said that makes it a high-risk fire area.

“The fires of 2019-20 gave us a very clear focus about what we need to do in small local communities,” Frank said. “We know that the chance of getting help when there’s an immediate impact from a bushfire is quite low, particularly in remote areas like Tamboon, so we formed a community group to help protect life, property and the environment.

“We also know we’ll be able to better protect ourselves if we have more brigade members so as a result of that everyone who was in Tamboon during those fires has joined the brigade.

“Myself and my brother-in-law have been on a recruitment campaign and we got five new members trained late last year, including a former NSW RFS member who knows a bit about firefighting, plus a few more who’ve signed up and will be going through General Firefighter training.”

Another way the brigade has worked to boost its service to the local community is by reaching out to neighbouring brigades. Frank said it has been fantastic to see the response from those brigades and from CFA more generally.

“We’ve had tremendous help from others within CFA. People like Ryan

Findley, who’s the group training officer at Orbost Group, has joined our brigade to become our training officer and has given us tremendous help with our training drills.

“But we still need to continue recruiting and just keep chipping away at it.”

Frank said everyone who’s joining is gaining valuable skills and life experience and encouraged others to consider volunteering with the brigade.

“When you join CFA you’re not just there to just jump in a truck and squirt water. If you want to be a good CFA member, you need to work at it on a continuous basis on the prevention of fires.”

And with no current captain, Frank said Cann Valley brigade members are all gaining important experience.

“Like any training drill or call-out, there needs to be a leader and while I’ve picked up that role for now, we’re getting other people involved in that role. For example, at a recent training day, I made sure we had a different member in charge of different drills so everyone gained some leadership through that.

“You’ve got to have some leadership and you need someone who’s prepared to stand up and make decisions, as well as recognise that you don’t know everything and you need to rely on getting good people around you.”

**STORY MARK BLACKMAN**



# Mentoring program reaches milestone



**The Captains Peer Mentor Program (CPMP), which launched in 2012, has rapidly spread throughout the state and is now run in 18 out of 21 CFA districts. The program supports captains in their broader leadership role of brigade management, rather than focusing on incident command and control.**

The CPMP complements any existing informal support relationships a captain has by introducing them to experienced peers who they might not normally encounter or have access to. The content is tailored to meet the specific needs of the participants and this content is largely chosen by them. Partnering with a peer gives those being mentored the opportunity to work through issues or bounce around ideas about any aspect of their role that they find challenging or want to further develop. Each participant works on what is most important to them at that particular moment in their leadership journey.

Participants can also choose to work at a strategic level with their mentor, planning their legacy to their brigade. However, it's important to note that the mentor role focuses on support and knowledge sharing, rather than telling participants what to do.

The program involves a series of role and professional development workshops for both mentors and mentees, facilitated partnership meetings where mentors and mentees are brought together, independent partnership meetings, and ongoing support and check-ins managed collaboratively by program staff.

Mentor/mentee partners negotiate their own arrangements for working together throughout the program. Some partnerships meet face-to-face, others talk on the phone or through email and texts, or a combination of all of these. Program evaluations show that how or when participants catch up is less important than the quality and consistency of communications.

Although it's difficult to quantify the success of the CPMP, the people involved in the program, including deputy chief

officers, assistant chief fire officers, commanders, Volunteer Sustainability team members and volunteers have observed its influences and impacts and often speak positively about its tailored and flexible approach. One of these is Ross Wisewould (pictured), captain of Tyers Fire Brigade in District 27.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Captains Peer Mentor Program as it was such a valuable experience," Ross said. "Through the CPMP I've developed strong working relationships with other captains. I also have a supportive and approachable mentor – Mark King, the captain of Yallourn North – who I now consider a friend.

"I've gained a multitude of new ideas, new ways of thinking and leadership skills. I cannot express how much the experience has had a positive impact in my role as captain.

"Thank you to all those involved in facilitating the program and to my mentor for his support, guidance and encouragement. It was a privilege to be a part of the Captains Peer Mentor Program."

Although the program doesn't claim to address everything a captain would find useful, captains have said that the mentoring process had helped them to become more comfortable with their broader leadership role. Furthermore, some captains have reported that their management of some brigade issues had improved thanks to enhanced knowledge and confidence gained from the program – and these benefits have a flow-on effect to brigade members.

At the heart of this peer mentor program are the volunteer participants who give so much time, energy and enthusiasm to CFA, to their communities and to their peers. They represent the lifeblood of CFA, and without their willingness to give so much of themselves, programs such as this would never progress beyond just being a good idea.

STORY BRI DODD



# The changing face of Captain Koala







# New modern home for Buninyong – Mt Helen brigade

**On 11 February 2022, after more than 60 years at the previous site, Buninyong-Mt Helen Fire Brigade became operational at its new Buninyong fire station.**

The previous Buninyong station, built in 1955, had undergone multiple renovations and modifications over the years. However, the site was too small and no longer met the needs of the growing brigade.

After some initial difficulties acquiring land, a suitable site was secured in 2019. The site is conveniently located only 700 metres west of the previous station, adjacent to the local golf club.

The new \$3.2 million facility features a three-bay drive-through motor room, dedicated turnout room, storage areas, workshop and modern amenities and meeting rooms.

The brigade also contributed an additional \$75,000 to construction costs obtained through community fundraising. This contribution was used to increase the size of communal areas, upgrade hot water capacity and to install a security system.

The new site features on-site car parking, a dedicated training area, hose drying tower and a two-bay external shed. There's also an outdoor breakout area,



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFISM

with provision for it to be made into an undercover area in the future.

A local command facility (LCF) will also be established at Buninyong Fire Station in the near future to improve incident management and support for large and prolonged incidents in the surrounding area.

A unique feature of the new station is a display room at the front, viewable from outside, which houses the brigade's historical artefacts, including the treasured

1899 Merryweather horse-drawn fire cart. The Merryweather was painstakingly restored by brigade members in the 1990s and has been hidden inside the old station. The addition of this display room was only made possible by a \$45,000 community grant from the Buninyong & District Community Bank.

Transporting the Merryweather took a coordinated community approach. With the support of a local towing company,





that donated both time and equipment, the Merryweather was carefully relocated from the old station. The Merryweather will be moved into its purpose-built display room when the finishing touches are complete, including UV window film to protect the precious artefact.

In addition to the newly-constructed station, the brigade operates a second fire station in Mount Helen, where the brigade responds to about 180 callouts a year. The primary response area of the Mount Helen station includes a large university campus with student accommodation, ESTA's Ballarat emergency communications centre and the State Library of Victoria's archive facility.

Buninyong Captain James Witham said the new station was welcomed by the brigade's 60-strong membership and will help them better support the community.

"After a long wait and many hours of meticulous planning, the brigade is pleased to have finally moved into the new station," James said.

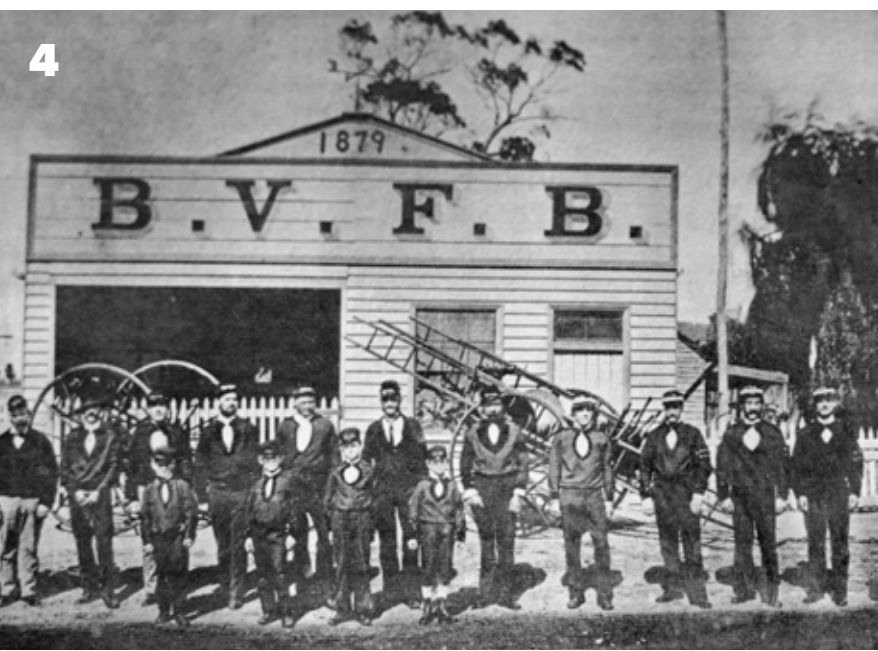
"The new station is a much more modern, capable, spacious and safer facility, which will enable our brigade to better prepare for, and respond to, incidents to protect life and property, both locally, interstate and abroad."

Planning is currently underway for an official opening of the station, with an event expected to be held mid-2022.

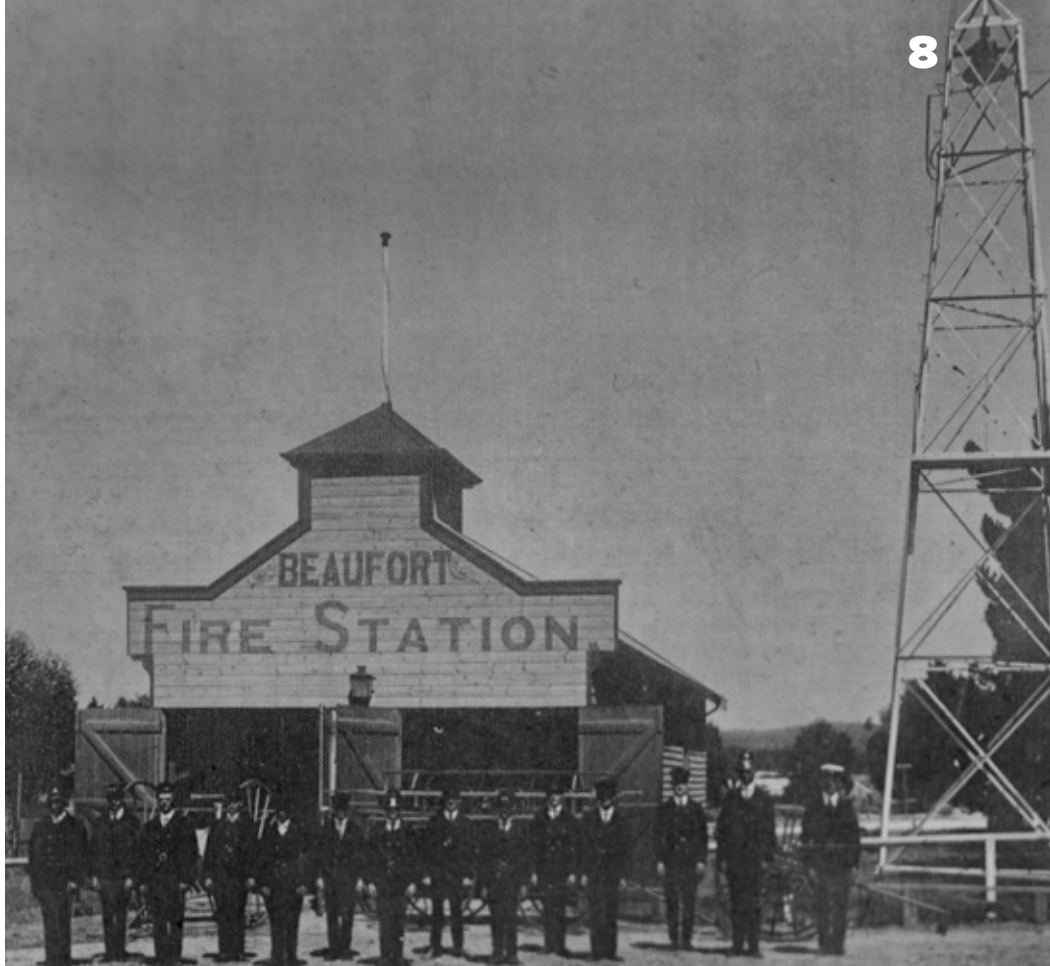
STORY NAOMI GALVIN











## THROUGH THE AGES BEAUFORT

- 1 Hazmat incident, 1990s.
- 2 Station and trucks, 1990s.
- 3 De Baere House Antiques fire, 1990.
- 4 Brigade members with ladder and hose reels, 1879.
- 5 Current station.
- 6 Ararat Golden Gateway Festival, 1970s.
- 7 School education, 2018.
- 8 Brigade members, 1914.
- 9 Running team members, 2015.
- 10 Brigade members, 1939.

COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM







Cadets

# Cadet Pilot Project in full swing

**The Cadet Pilot Project is off to a great start, with 250 enrolments of 16 and 17-year-old CFA members in late 2021.**

This optional training aims to provide additional structured learning and practical training and development opportunities to further engage with CFA's youngest operational members. The project pairs three terms of online delivery with two optional residential weekends to encourage Cadets to consolidate their learning and meet other Cadets from across the state.

Online delivery is designed to focus on skills that enhance young people's awareness of opportunities available to them in CFA, as well as building personal resilience. This foundation then allows them to undertake firefighting skills and knowledge of operational doctrine to ensure they can enhance the capabilities of their brigade as a firefighter.

Cadets so far have been able to undertake online modules in mental health foundations, community connectedness and wellbeing for fireys. In the coming months, they will be able to access new modules about fire management and risk mitigation, community engagement, fire equipment maintenance and cultural burns.

Early feedback from participants in the pilot has been encouraging.

"The modules so far have been useful and have provided information and training which can be implemented within local brigade activities," said Maison Ring from North West Region.

The program also includes embedded child-safe practices and sets clear expectations of appropriate behaviour for everyone involved in the program.

The Cadet Pilot Projects' residential elements begin with the weekend at Central Highlands on 21-22 May, followed by one in Sale on 18-19 June. Both weekends will be a fantastic opportunity for our 16 and 17-year-olds to attend a VEMTC training day and work with live fire at the training ground. Also included in the weekends are team building and adventure activities, fire drills, virtual reality training and, hopefully, a fly-in visit to introduce our young people to the wide range of activities available in CFA. Both weekends are fully funded by the Cadet Pilot Project.

DCO Performance Improvement and Capability Kaylene Jones is excited by the opportunities offered by this pilot to further engage our 16 and 17-year-old cohort.

"Our young members are not just the future of CFA, they are an integral part of CFA right now. It's vital we keep our engagement with them strong, relevant and purposeful," Kaylene said.

"The Cadets Program recognises these young members as leaders of today, as well as tomorrow, helping to develop citizens who can make an impact on their brigade, community and beyond."

For more information about the Cadet Pilot Project or to express interest in participating in the pilot or attending one of the residential weekends email [cadets@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:cadets@cfa.vic.gov.au).

STORY GOLDIE PERGL AND TRENT JOHN



# Spotlight on our young members

CFA's Youth programs are aimed at members aged 11 to 24 years old. We talked to some of our dedicated young people to ask them about their experiences in CFA and their plans for the future.

STORIES BY GOLDIE PERGL AND JEN CLEMENT



## ELIZABETH LATTANZIO

Elizabeth Lattanzio, aged 13, is one of CFA's newest members having joined Truganina Junior Brigade at the end of 2021. She had several reasons for wanting to join, some that are relevant now and others that look to the future.

"I decided to join CFA because I think it's an amazing way to work in a great team, build up essential skills such as first-aid, and also because I plan on becoming a volunteer with CFA and I think it's a fun and engaging organisation," Elizabeth said.

Practising for competitions is something that motivates Elizabeth and you will find her playing her part in Truganina's Junior running team. Working as part of a team is a new skill she has learned as part of this activity.

The hands-on elements of being in a Junior brigade, using equipment including hoses, are what she enjoys most. Elizabeth appreciates the foundations that are being built through such activities, which will help her on the journey of reaching her dream.

"Because of my aspiration to become a firefighter when I'm older, CFA has influenced me by giving me a better understanding of things that are involved in being a firefighter."

One of the added bonuses of joining CFA is that Elizabeth has made new friends and she is certain she's making memories for life.

Although Elizabeth has not been a member long, she still has advice for other young people in CFA.

"Give everything a go, have fun and make the most of it."



## ALEXIS RHODES

Alexis Rhodes, 14, has been an active member of Upwey Junior Brigade since she was 11. She joined because her dad is a senior member and after witnessing all the different aspects of CFA he is involved in, she decided that she wanted to "help people like he does".

Being around friends is an important part of being a member for Alexis and she knows that being part of the brigade means there are people around her who will support her in what she is doing. In a delightful description of her place in the brigade, Alexis explained that she has "found her people".

She believes the skills she can learn, such as first-aid and CPR, are worthwhile and can make a real difference. At Upwey brigade, it's a priority that Junior members train in first-aid and it has had a significant impact with Junior members stepping in to help in situations at school and in the wider community.

As a member of her Junior brigade, Alexis has discovered she can achieve more than she thought she could.

"I'm capable of doing what's required – the physical, it's not as scary as it looks," Alexis said.

Her advice to other young members of CFA is not to be afraid, but put yourself out there and give it a go. Being in the Juniors has made her more aware of the different ways in which she can help. Looking to the future, Alexis wants to become a senior member of the brigade, but she also has plans to join the Royal Australian Air Force after finishing high school.



## HARRISON HUGHES

**Harrison Hughes, 18, has been a member of two brigades in his three years at CFA – first a Junior at Gisborne brigade and then a senior at Mt Macedon brigade.**

Harrison joined CFA as a young person to get some knowledge and experience of firefighting. He believes CFA is a good way to get into firefighting and to start to build knowledge and experience while being in a supportive environment.

While firefighting skills were certainly at the forefront of Harrison’s mind when he started volunteering, he is vocal about the other benefits that being a member of CFA brings.

“The soft skills that I’ve learned through my volunteering have been the most impactful,” Harrison said. “CFA provides very good fire training to its volunteers, but skills like teamwork, working in stressful situations and critical thinking are also things you will gain. These are the kinds of skills you will keep for life and apply outside CFA too.

“Don’t see your age as a barrier to what you can accomplish in the organisation. Some people will be more welcoming of younger people than others, but it’s important to remember that even though it can present challenges you need to keep focused on why you joined and stick round the people who will help you achieve your goals, because you are just as capable as any other person in CFA.”

Currently a project firefighter for Forest Fire Management Victoria, Harrison sees himself continuing to work as a firefighter, both within CFA and externally, and to keep contributing to the safety of the community he lives in.

## CLANCY QUIRK

**Clancy Quirk, 16, has been involved with CFA for just over five years, the majority of that time with Morwell Junior Brigade. He’s now a member of Traralgon brigade. He decided to join CFA because he wanted to learn something new and be able to give back to his community.**

Clancy believes that you can never stop learning.

“I’ve always been interested in the field of fire management and saw the Junior CFA Program as a perfect opportunity to start learning. The more training and advice you get increases your brigade’s capability to help people,” Clancy said.

Clancy recognised the value and importance of teamwork and embraced opportunities to improve this skill throughout his time in the Junior brigade. He believes that teamwork is the most important skill to have in firefighting and is looking forward to being able to implement it on the fireground.

“Being a member of CFA has really influenced and changed my life. It gives me a sense of purpose. I am now looking into a career in fire management. This decision was heavily influenced by my time in CFA. I’ve found a passion in what I do, and I’m unsure what my life would look like without CFA.” His best advice for young members in CFA is to never stop learning.

“Strive to do all you can to improve your skills. If an opportunity for another qualification comes up, always take it.”

In five years, Clancy hopes to have a Diploma of Conservation and Ecosystem Management so he can pursue a career in fire management or firefighting.

“I’m not certain of exactly where I would like to end up in the industry, but I’m sure this is the right field for me.”







**REX JOSE**

Rex Jose, 20, has been a member of Ballan Fire Brigade for nine years – no mean feat for a 20-year-old. He joined the local Junior brigade after a fire at his property, during which he was asked by the responding firefighters to help by closing a manhole. The firefighters extended an invitation to the Junior brigade and Rex realised that joining CFA was the thing to do.

Rex credits Ballan brigade and his involvement with CFA with growing more belief in himself and being able to help others more.

“As part of a team at Ballan I’ve gained more confidence in myself. I have become more involved in our community events and brigade activities and I’m able to assist people in our community when they may be at their lowest,” Rex said.

Rex believes that the best thing about being in CFA is the team of people he works alongside, as well as meeting the challenges of providing safety for his local community.

“Being part of a team that provides support for each other has a huge impact because we are able to give care to those in need in the community after incidents.”

Looking forward, Rex sees himself continuing to help people in the community. He is considering becoming a career firefighter or paramedic because both jobs will give him the opportunity to help others.

Rex would advise Juniors and young members starting out in their CFA journey to, “join in all activities in your brigade and community and take on the courses where you learn skills for life. CFA gives you a tremendous background for your future.”

**TIM GRIFFITHS**

Tim Griffiths, 23, has been an operational member of CFA for six and a half years, first becoming involved with the local brigade aged 16 during high school.

“I always had a desire to become a firefighter. I was lucky enough to have been involved in a CFA program in high school which encouraged me to join and learn more,” Tim said.

Tim’s immediate dedication to the brigade soon became clear when CFA members noticed him frantically riding his bike to the station for turnouts at all hours of the day and night.

Tim believes the most important lesson he has learned in CFA is how to manage and overcome challenging and unique situations. Currently the first lieutenant of Rye Fire Brigade and in charge of training and development and social media, Tim thinks CFA has helped him develop his skills.

“CFA has given me greater responsibility than I would have had if I hadn’t joined. I have developed communication and leadership skills which have led me to become a senior officer in my brigade.”

What Tim most enjoys about CFA are the opportunities to train new members and being able to help members of the community.

His advice to all young people in CFA is, “put in the time, listen and learn from experienced members and you will gain a lot from being a member of CFA”.



# 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](http://emergencymemberlink.com.au).

To join Memberlink phone 1800 820 037 or register online at [emergencymemberlink.com.au](http://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.



- Discounts throughout the year at **Specsavers Optometrists**.
- **SPC -The Good Meal Co** is offering a 20% discount on home-delivered meals.
- Save 10% to 40% off the best available rates at **Wyndham Hotels & Resorts** locations in Australia.
- **Sixt Australia** offers up to 15% off the best rate of the day on passenger and commercial vehicles.
- Save 3% to 7% on pre-purchased **Gift Cards** including Woolworths, Coles, Myer, Kmart, Target, Rebel Sport, JB Hi-Fi, Supercheap Auto and BCF.
- **Experience Oz** offers 10% off (and even more) a range of experiences such as day tours, attractions, zoos and aquariums, theme parks and extreme activities.
- Discounts on home entertainment, audio, televisions, mobile phones, IT hardware, fitness trackers and white goods through the **JB Hi-Fi Corporate Benefits Programme**.
- 4% discount on the Emergency Memberlink Health Plan through **Bupa**.
- 25% off Bath House Revitalise bathing and Moonlit bathing during off-peak periods (Mon-Fri outside of public and school holidays) at **Peninsula Hot Springs** on the Mornington Peninsula.
- 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**.
- **mycar Tyre & Auto** has 10% off servicing, mechanical repairs and TCP tyre purchases.
- 20% off flowers from **Petals Network**.
- Discounted cinema tickets, attraction tickets and gift cards through the **Memberlink Box Office**.
- 15% off prescription glasses and prescription sunglasses at **OPSM**.
- 15% discount on the best rates at the **Quest Dandenong**.
- 30% discount on **Milleni** women's fashion bags and wallets and men's wallets.
- New and existing customers have access to special offers on **Elgas** LPG bottled gas.
- Travel with **Spirit of Tasmania** and save 5% on adult Spirit and Flexi passenger fares.
- **RSEA Safety** offers 15% off full-priced items online.
- Up to 20% discount on the public web price on the entire range of **Lenovo** notebooks, desktop PCs, monitors and accessories.
- Members have access to **Nissan Fleet** pricing and other benefits on a range of Nissan vehicles.
- Plants, trees and garden products at wholesale prices at **Plantmark**.
- **Searoad Ferries** offers 10% discount on ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff.
- 10% off the best available rates at Melbourne's historic **The Hotel Windsor**.
- Exclusive pricing on white goods, kitchen appliances, audio visual, computers and mobile phones, home appliances and furniture through **Harvey Norman Groups & Associations Division**. Contact your Emergency Memberlink Team to arrange a quote.
- 20% discount on unlimited ride tickets at **Luna Park Melbourne**.
- **Isunsubscribe** 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.

## Recording your COVID-19 vaccination information

To contribute to your brigade's essential activities, such as turnouts, community engagement, training and meetings, you need to provide your vaccination status.



### You can give CFA these details in four ways:



Phone SDRC on (03) 9262 8663



Go to [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/vaccination](http://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/vaccination) or use this QR code



Contact your district office



Talk to a member of your BMT vaccination status to CFA

**Reminder:** Visit [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/covidreporting](http://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/covidreporting) to tell us if you are isolating because you are COVID-19-positive or in isolation because you are a close contact of a COVID-19-positive person. This applies for both community and workplace contacts.

### Chief Officer's Standing Order 17 – Vaccination

All CFA members undertaking CFA activities outside their ordinary place of residence must have recorded their vaccination status unless they have an exemption.

CFA members who have not recorded their vaccination status will be considered to be unvaccinated and will not be able to participate in CFA activities outside their home.