

Brigade

autumn 2017

Protecting lives
and property

cfa.vic.gov.au



▼ The art of roadside burning





07

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The art of roadside burning

COVER PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY CAPE CLEAR BRIGADE

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Chair Greg Smith



In my discussions with volunteers and staff, I am often asked about the level of change at CFA. In particular, people are keen to know about significant changes in direction that may shape CFA's immediate future.

These are understandable questions given the change and accompanying uncertainty that have characterised the recent past.

Last year the Board approved CFA's Annual Plan for 2016-17, a document which sets out our priorities for the coming year. And none of these priorities has changed since the Plan's release. Our five priority areas – capability; culture; stakeholder engagement; strategy, plan and direction; and systems and processes – remain the same, as do the key actions that support each area.

These include actions such as CFA's work in volunteer and brigade sustainability; connecting training and implementing the Learning Action Plan; and rolling out volunteer packages for appliances, work wear and structural firefighting gloves, among many other initiatives.

Invariably, we will finetune aspects of how we do this, but the changes will be in the execution – not in the blueprint.

For those who ask about the longer-term future – how CFA should look in five, 10 or even 20 years – I would point to the exciting work of a relatively new body: CFA's Performance and Policy Consultative Committee. This committee is noteworthy for its make-up and its aims.

It comprises eight CFA volunteer, career firefighter and PTA staff representatives as well as representatives from CFA senior leadership

and the broader emergency management sector. The committee is chaired by the Minister for Emergency Services the Hon James Merlino MP.

The committee has established four working groups, each responsible for examining an area critical to CFA's future. The working groups are:

- modernising brigades and stations – Chair: Steve Warrington, CFA Chief Officer
- enhancing volunteerism – Chair: Craig Lapsley, Emergency Management Commissioner
- service delivery – Chairs: Steve Warrington and Stephanie Rotarangi, Chief Fire Officer, Forest Fire Management Victoria.
- training – Chair: Gregg Patterson, CFA Deputy Chief Officer Training

The committee will engage directly with CFA volunteers, support staff and career firefighters about future directions for CFA. The committee will also work closely with the CFA Board to ensure strategic input into its work.

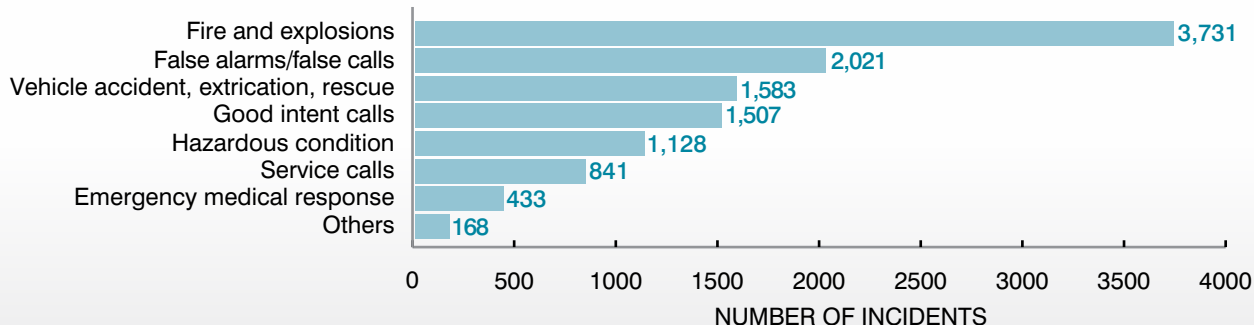
On behalf of the CFA Board, I would like to warmly congratulate CFA volunteers and staff Anthony Archer, Henry Barton, William Bowery, Paul King, Graham Petrie and Don Robertson on their receipt of the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM).

I would also like to acknowledge the achievement of current or former CFA members Alan Stafford, Alexander Carmody, Athol Graham, Thomas Heaney, Ivan Lee, Neville Oddie and John Robinson on their receipt of the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM).

Incident summary

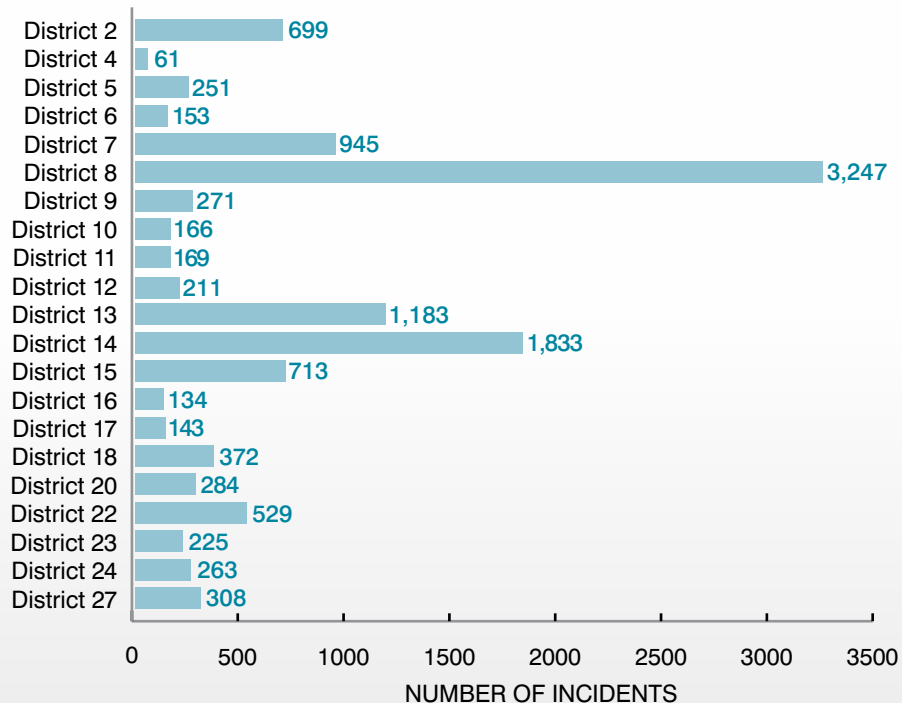
STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY TYPE

1 October – 31 December 2016



STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

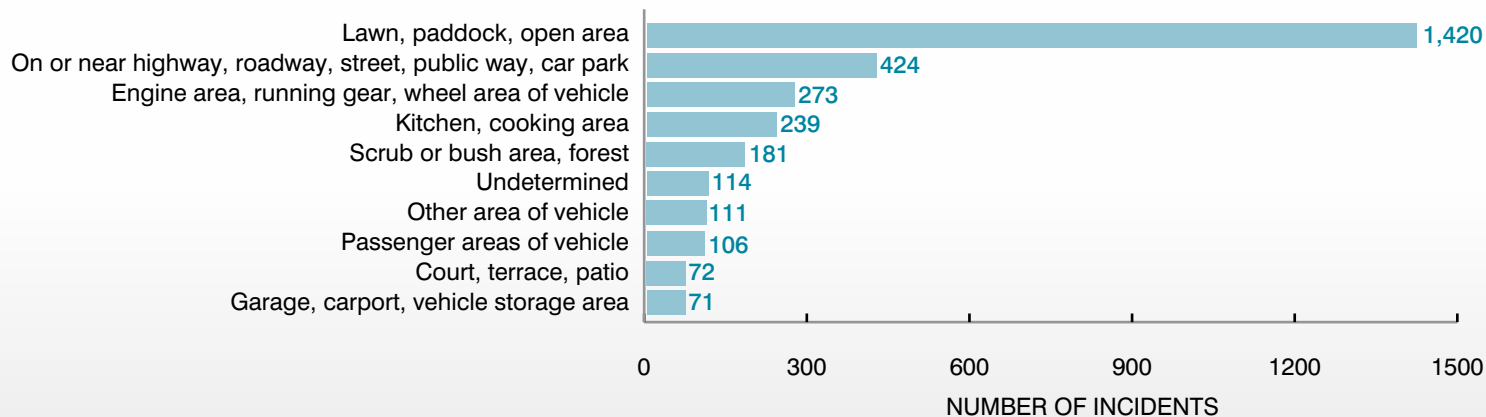
1 October – 31 December 2016



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

ORIGIN OF FIRE

1 October – 31 December 2016



Australia Day 2017 Honours



BILL BOWERY

William 'Bill' Bowery joined Kangaroo Flat Fire Brigade in 1945 and has never looked back.

"I've got a picture book full of amazing memories and I think they speak for themselves," Bill said.

During his many years with CFA, Bill has served in a variety of roles including brigade captain between 1961 and 1979, and as an executive member of the then Victorian Urban Fire Brigades Association (VUFBA) between 1972 and 1980.

Bill is widely known and respected for his outstanding leadership and dedication to CFA and its objectives. For many years, he's been committed to prevention and preparedness as key activities in improving the safety of the community.

He's a trained presenter in the Fire Safe Kids program and was one of the drivers behind the mobile smoke house built on a caravan chassis which enables members to take education directly to schools and the wider community.



ANTHONY ARCHER

When Anthony Archer moved to Kilmore in 1984, there wasn't much more than a fire station, a football ground and a general store. But it was that fire station – and the people in it – who have become like family over the years.

He has served diligently as an officer of the brigade for 25 years. Proof of his dedication to the brigade is the fact that he attends more call-outs than any other brigade member.

He attributes this to the supportive employers he's had over the years, including Kilmore International School, where he has been a maintenance worker since 2010.

"They have been outstanding in letting me do the work I need to do to keep my commitment to CFA," he said.

Anthony has held many positions in the brigade including captain, and since then as first lieutenant, and has been proactive about fire prevention planning. He has also held many fireground leadership positions including strike team leader, sector commander and field plant supervisor.

He actively represents the brigade on a variety of committees, and is heavily involved in fire station maintenance, fundraising and fire prevention. Anthony was also a key player in the design and commissioning of a structure fire training facility at Kilmore Fire Station.

GRAHAM PETRIE

Almost 60 years have passed since Graham Petrie first set foot inside Beazley's Bridge Fire Brigade in Victoria's west. Graham rose through the ranks to become brigade captain in 1977. A few years later, he was unanimously elected group officer for the Kara Kara Group, a position he held for nearly 24 years.

Graham recognised the importance of diversity in CFA, and over the years became a strong advocate for greater inclusion of women and Juniors. One of his initiatives was to encourage higher levels of junior membership and participation in championships.

"The biggest risk we face as an agency is losing our local knowledge," Graham said. "These young kids are our future leaders, so we need to keep them involved as much as we can."

Retiring from the group officer position in 2005, Graham has continued to serve CFA as a highly-respected member and mentor to the Beazley's Bridge Fire Brigade and St Arnaud Group.



The Australia Day Honours, announced by the Governor-General, provide national and formal recognition for Australians who've made a significant difference to their communities. Congratulations to the six CFA members who received the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) for their work in emergency services.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

PAUL KING

CFA's culture was deeply embedded in Paul King's life from a young age and he has certainly come a long way since joining Wodonga Fire Brigade in 1979 as a Junior member.

"I can vividly remember hearing the Wodonga Fire Station siren from my high school. I would sprint there from footy training to get on the first truck out the door," said Paul.

As well as his regular day job as District 24's operations manager, Paul is an accredited Level 3 incident controller. His exceptional incident management skills have been used in several major fires including the 2009 fires and, most recently, the Indigo Valley fire in 2016.

He has also been a key player in the development and refinement of cross-border relationships between agencies and communities in Victoria and New South Wales.

"People here are border-blind," said Paul. "We all know we'll see a friendly face at any cross-border operation. Our NSW neighbours know they can always rely on us and the feeling is mutual."

DON ROBERTSON

James 'Don' Robertson's CFA journey started 35 years ago when he joined Strathkellar Fire Brigade. Since then, he has served as the brigade's president, secretary, treasurer and captain.

Don has contributed widely to the local Dundas Group and District 5 bodies. It was this contribution to CFA locally – and to rural and farming communities in particular – that eventually saw Don serve on the CFA Board from 2011 to 2014.

However, it's his times leading strike and incident management teams (IMT) that Don recalls most vividly. "It's a real privilege to take a strike team out of your district," said Don. "It's good to show strength in numbers and to learn what that patch of land away from home is about."

On Black Saturday, Don started the day running an IMT in Hamilton and finished it in Alexandra in District 12, flown in to relieve the exhausted team tackling the Marysville fire. By 5 March 2009, he had worked continuously in IMTs for 37 days.



HENRY BARTON

Henry Barton leaves behind a strong legacy in CFA. Before retiring last year as officer-in-charge (OIC) at Warrnambool Fire Station, Henry dedicated his life to working side-by-side with volunteers and career staff to help the community.

"I've learned a lot of skills through CFA and I can use them to help others. I feel good about my own personal development, and I feel comfortable knowing that, through my experiences, I can deal with many and varied difficult situations."

Henry began serving the community in 1971 and has held many roles. He was a staff member at Warrnambool from 1985 to 2016 and OIC of the brigade from 2004 to 2016. Henry is now a volunteer with District 5 Headquarters Brigade in Hamilton.

He was one of the first qualified Juvenile Fire Awareness Intervention Program practitioners in the state for CFA, is an accredited Level 3 incident controller, and has displayed outstanding leadership during significant emergencies including the February 2009 fires and the Hazelwood mine fire.

CHIEF OFFICER

Steve Warrington



Teamwork makes us strong

Too easily murmurings throughout CFA centre on negative aspects about our family. We take reported issues seriously and I will personally hold to account any

CFA member who doesn't live by our values and persists in not adopting a positive attitude about them.

I want to tell you about the glowing feedback I and other team leaders receive on a regular basis about the exemplary behaviour of our members towards each other and, collectively, with other agencies and their communities. The feedback about incidents, described below, reflects the larger collection of correspondence.

Great leader Winston Churchill said "attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference".

It was uplifting to hear feedback from Carrum Downs Fire Brigade Captain Steve Rhodes, who described the interaction and teamwork of brigades at a house fire in Seaford (pictured below) which involved both career firefighters and volunteer firefighters.

Steve praised those in attendance for clear direction, quick decision making and engagement with partner agencies including Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria.

"There is no doubt this emergency was a fantastic example of integration, particularly in the outer metro areas," wrote Steve. "It is a credit to the professionalism of all CFA firefighters on the scene."

This is a really positive story and has not occurred in isolation. I've admired our people right across the organisation coming together and focusing on what we do best – fighting fires.

From District 7, Operations Officer Mark Collins shared a story about a house fire in Norlane that highlighted the breadth of services CFA provides and the care taken to ensure traumatised people are properly supported.

Volunteers and staff from Corio Fire Brigade professionally fought a hard and complex fire and offered counselling support and protected family and friends from additional trauma through their handling of a deceased pet.

In his email, Mark advised that, before brigades left the scene, they made sure the Department of Health and Human Services had the job and was providing assistance and links to the family for counselling services.

On scene, even with TV cameras present, CFA members discreetly removed the remains of the large family dog with care and compassion.

A roadside burn in Cape Clear received front page coverage in the *Ballarat Courier*, where our teams worked together to

complete 40 kilometres of burns along the Rokewood-Skipton Road. See page 26 for more about this story.

District 24 Operations Manager Paul King shared a letter from Bogong Group about the teamwork displayed handling a fire in Tangambalanga.

"It makes me proud the confidence and faith that our members have in our team," said Paul.

When Geelong City Rescue crew performed a delicate road rescue on Bacchus Marsh Road with the Anakie brigade team, Geelong City Leading Firefighter Dallas Gill appreciated the professional support and attitude provided.

"This incident posed many challenges both with the visual, graphic nature of the incident, along with the multiple complexities and dangers of extraction itself," said Dallas.

"This was a great example of crews working together."

These examples and the many more received far outweigh the negative feedback, and all Victorians have every right to be proud of the service provided by all our districts.

Our CFA values remain five key points – safety, respect, integrity, together and adaptive

I'd like to reiterate that while we respect the right for people to express their different opinions, we need to make sure that this is done respectfully.

As we assess the summer of 2016-17 and prepare strategies for the future, I want to stress that all members of our family should remember our values.

Continue to stay safe out there and look after yourself, your family and your community.



Left: CFA career firefighters and volunteers worked together at a house fire in Seaford on 6 January 2017

PHOTO: GARY SISSONS

Rollout of new structural firefighting gloves

A project is underway to replace all existing structural firefighting gloves issued to accredited firefighters across CFA.

This \$2.5 million project will progressively introduce the Eska Super Mars Plus glove on a risk-based approach, starting with Class 5 brigades.

Although CFA has experienced excellent longstanding service from the existing FirePro 2 glove, a revision of the Australian/New Zealand standard (AS/NZS 2161.6) during 2014 resulted in this two-level standard being replaced by a single-level standard with performance requirements higher than the performance of the FirePro 2.

The Eska Super Mars Plus glove is one of only a few gloves certified to the latest AS/NZS standard.

CFA and MFB reviewed the performance of the Eska Super Mars Plus glove, and MFB has been successfully using the glove for some time. This will now become its standard



glove. This glove is also being used by other Australian fire and rescue agencies.

Following a tender process, PacFire Australia was awarded a contract to supply around 17,000 pairs of replacement gloves.

All Class 5 brigades have received the new gloves and the project team will now continue to collate sizing data and deliver new gloves to remaining classes of structurally-accredited brigades as they become available. The project should be completed by 30 June 2017.

For more information, contact Project Manager Mark Tarbett at the State PPE&C Management Centre (m.tarbett@cfa.vic.gov.au) or Manager Field Engagement Operations Manager Graham Lay (g.lay@cfa.vic.gov.au).

STORY MARK TARBETT

IMT training courses

Following recommendations handed down in the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Final Report and work conducted by the Incident Management Team Training Project (IMTTP), state inter-agency incident management training began in 2014.

In the past three years, this has resulted in 2,500 members from CFA, DELWP, MFB, SES, EMV and supporting agencies attending incident management training. This collaborative approach to training sees facilitators from across emergency services agencies join forces to deliver 21 types of courses to members of the emergency services sector.

Agency personnel learn common practices and build on their existing expertise. They share their knowledge and experience with each other with the aim of improving capacity and interoperability across the sector.

The 2017 State IMT training calendar is now available on Brigades Online in the training section. Course overviews, dates and locations can be viewed along with IMT training and accreditation pathways. If you have been identified by your district for any of

the state IMT courses, you need to complete the IMT training nomination form and ask your district operations manager to authorise it. If you are a staff member, you'll also need your functional manager's approval.

CFA staff and volunteers wishing to begin their personal development towards any of the roles covered by the courses should check the prerequisites for each course before discussing it with their group officer or functional manager. If they think you are suitable for the role, they will progress your expression of interest to the operations officer and then to the district operations manager. If everyone agrees to you developing skills for a particular role, you will need to commence training in the course prerequisites.

Further information on IMT training can be found on Brigades Online > Training > Course Information > Incident Management Training Calendar, or by emailing IMT-training@cfa.vic.gov.au or phoning **5430 4338**.

STORY REBECCA PETHYBRIDGE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Frances Diver

As I visit brigades, a common concern raised by many is the impact of constant media focus on our organisation.

I understand the constant spotlight can cause angst amongst our volunteers and staff as it often can detract from the excellent work performed on a daily basis across the state.

I would encourage you to focus on the positive inroads not only made on a local level but more broadly across the organisation.

I point to our work in supporting diversity across CFA. We are making important inroads in this area but it is worth noting there is still much to be done to ensure we are a modern, inclusive organisation.

In February, it was brought to our attention that an unauthorised recording device had been installed in a shed at one of our fire stations. We moved swiftly to investigate the matter and sent a clear message that not only was this a clear violation of privacy, but also to make clear to the community that CFA is committed to ensuring our organisation is a safe place for all staff and volunteers, particularly women.

This incident also sharply brought to our attention the inconsistency in the standards of change facilities for female volunteers. This is something we address from a management perspective, and I believe it does put a focus on the need for leadership on these issues at a local level.

I would ask that we all reflect on how we are personally contributing to, or encouraging, diversity within our organisation, from brigade to district to headquarters.

Diversity is not confined to any one issue. Ensuring we have proper facilities for our female volunteers and staff is important, but so is understanding that CFA is made up of a unique blend of career staff, volunteers and administrative personnel.

People rely on the work we do each day and we need to be able to rely on each other. That means we all have a responsibility – whether at headquarters, at a brigade or on a truck – to ensure the environment is safe and supportive for everyone.

Anyone with any concerns about behaviour, whether it be discrimination, bullying or other harassment, can phone our dedicated bullying and harassment hotline that is managed externally and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call 1800 795 075.

We should not let ourselves be distracted by the things beyond our control and instead focus our energy and efforts on the values we all share – a sense of duty and service to the community. Let's remember it is our shared values that help make CFA such a leader in emergency management and such a great organisation to be part of.

DEPUTY CHIEF OFFICER



Alen Slijepcevic

With another fire season coming to an end, I would like to congratulate our brigades on another successful year. Your dedication is very much appreciated by Victorian communities. Moving into autumn, our focus should switch to making Victoria safer by managing fuels on public and private land.

Planned burning in grassland by brigades has started in some regions. The vegetation management officers (VMOs) are busy securing approval for these early burns and doing the planning for burns later in the season including in readiness for spring.

VMOs and the regional planning teams for CFA burn camps have been working on logistics and nominations for four camps and one candling workshop. These events are scheduled in late autumn and early winter. This is a fantastic opportunity for CFA members to learn more about how to safely conduct planned burning and increase their knowledge of bushfires.

Senior Instructor Roger Strickland has been assessing the work of the participants in the new two-day Burn Controller course, completing the second round of the course delivered in all CFA regions. Participants will have an opportunity to gain the practical component of the course at CFA burn camps.

Four planned burn resource coordinators have been appointed ahead of the burn season as part of the CFA Planned Burn Project. These coordinators will be locating CFA resources for CFA and joint DELWP planned burns. They will also help with burn camps and burn season reviews. For more information about burn camps, contact your local CFA VMO.

Work continues on CFA and Forest Fire Management Victoria's (FFMV) joined-up planning and implementation of planned burns across private and public land. CFA, FFMV and EMV are developing plans to implement the Victorian Government's Safer Together bushfire policy. This work will allow us to significantly expand the existing inter-agency work integrating private and public land fuel treatments.

The research and development team continues to produce grassland curing maps for five other states and territories. We're working with the AFAC Predictive Services Group to find a suitable long-term system to manage grassland curing data. Our grassland fire behaviour research shows that grassfires spread faster than predicted in partially-cured grasslands, so we're working with agencies to review and update fire spread models, readiness thresholds and fire danger rating determination.

Following last year's burnover research at Brucknell, we're looking at retrofit options for ultralight tankers using either gel or compressed air foam. A prototype gel tanker has been developed to further test the gel's effectiveness. We're currently looking for suitable sites to carry out some experimental burns of the gel tanker.

ACTING ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South West Region



Rohan Luke

In my role as ACO, I'm often impressed by our up-and-coming leaders. Unfortunately, we at times limit their opportunities through fear of failure or the need to put our own stamp on the outcome.

Often in leadership roles, there's a perception that all you need to do is outline your vision and prove it's right and your team will line up and support you.

In fact, the opposite is true. The goal of effective leadership is not to focus on results but to create a mission and build a culture, motivating the team to set their own goals and strive for results. I ask leaders in CFA to consider whether your team is motivated and whether each member gets the opportunities needed to grow in the team.

Research has shown time and time again that successful teams trust one another on a fundamental level and are comfortable being vulnerable with each other. As a result, they do not fear conflict and, in fact, welcome robust discussion and differing points of view. It's on this base of trust and acceptance that successful teams are then engaged with their work, stay accountable for their responsibilities and are motivated to get results.

Are you, as a leader, open to feedback?

There is a strong link between effective leadership and emotional intelligence – the ability to understand the environment that you're facing is critical when providing opportunities for your team to develop.

There are any number of leadership styles and no one style will work for every member of a team. Rather, it has been said that leadership is built on character, not style. An effective leader will adopt flexible styles that fit the situation and capabilities of their team or teammates, but it is that base of trust, empathy and reliability that maintains a team's loyalty.

Our job as leaders, is to build the environment that's safe for people to develop their leadership experience. How do you do this within your team?

In leadership roles, it's easy to feel as though we must be perfect, always have the answer and make the right decision. But in reality we are constantly growing and learning from our experiences and colleagues. New challenges force us to draw on past lessons as well as our core values.

CFA is often referred to as a 'people organisation' and, while our focus is to protect the community, we need to continue to focus on our people to get the best outcomes for the community. At times, it's easy to focus on the end result because it's our job as the leader or manager, but if we don't look from within our team to lead us into the future, we won't continue to grow as an organisation.

OPERATIONS MANAGER District 27



Bill Johnstone

When I was asked if I would be interested in writing a column for this edition of the magazine, I jumped at the chance. Immediately my mind went to what to write about as I was inundated by ideas. Now, as I sit contending with the usual 'writer's block' I find myself wrestling not with what to write, but how to write it.

As we approach the third anniversary of the Morwell open cut mine fire (aka Hazelwood), I want to reflect on all that's happened since then. It is not without a degree of humility and some pride that I can say, "We did it". We built District 27.

I was appointed as the district's inaugural operations manager in November 2014. The district had been gazetted and was essentially written into law. District 27 came into effect from 1 December 2014. The only complication was that, apart from on paper, the district didn't exist in the way most of us think a district should look.

It had no mailbox, no headquarters and, other than a small project team to get us off the ground, there were no staff and no structures such as fire brigade groups or a district planning committee. Essentially, we were starting from scratch.

I'm not whingeing about all the things that we didn't have, because the one thing we did have in abundance was people. I didn't come down in the last shower, and I knew that this was going to be tough; change always is. But right from the get-go, it was clear that this was something else entirely.

I believe that our perception is our reality, framed by the lens through which we see our world – and it would be fair to say there were many perceptions to deal with. Like any new initiative we had the early adopters wanting to forge ahead at full steam. We had the cautious, adopting a wait-and-see approach, and we had some outright resistance. That's OK. These are all normal human reactions to change, especially change as profound as the creation of District 27.

Leap forward with me now to January 2017. As I look to the future and what it holds, I do so with a sense of anticipation and, to be fair, some apprehension. I was glad to draw a line under 2016. I was over it. 2016 was very challenging.

My point is that, like death and taxes, change is inevitable. For each of us our part in that challenge is how we come to terms with change and what our contribution is going to be when the time comes – resistance, acceptance, influence or active participation.

Regardless of what option you choose, choose wisely.



CFA's summer



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1 Campbellfield factory fire, 23 January

PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

2 Rescue by Bright SES, CFA brigade members from Bright, Porepunkah and Mount Beauty, and a high-angle rescue team from Wangaratta brigade, at Mt Buffalo on 2 January

PHOTO: GRAHAM GALES

3 Festival of Sails event in Geelong, 21-24 January

4 Career firefighter passing-out parade, 12 December

PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

5 Eltham Fire Station Open Day, 22 January

PHOTO: ANDREW HEATH

6 Midsumma Pride March, Melbourne, 29 January

PHOTO: RYAN VANDERHORST

7 Minimay grass fire, 17 January

PHOTO: LEE SCHURMAN



7

Paynesville Coast Guard riding the swell

Paynesville is the only coast guard flotilla that is both operational on the water and monitors all coastal radio towers from Mallacoota to Portland. Although private company Kordia will soon perform 24/7 coastal monitoring and more repeater towers have subsequently been built, the flotilla is not letting its guard down.

In less than two years, Paynesville Coast Guard flotilla has moved from two qualified marine responders to the current 35 either qualified or well on the way, with guidance from ex-CFA district manager Ross McGregor.

The number of trainers has also risen from one to six including an ex-Royal Australian Air Force security expert and two ex-Victoria Police trainers now teaching general seamanship. One of the latter is also updating all the flotilla's standard operating procedures and instruction manuals, while an ex-MICA paramedic instructor is the flotilla's first-aid trainer.

"We've got a dynamic retired community," said Commander Jeff 'JJ' Williams. "We've managed to attract people with high level and relevant experience who love to mess around in boats."

To serve the reinvigorated flotilla, a new 35-foot boat is being custom-built in Queensland with \$300,000 in government funds and \$150,000 raised by the fundraising team. It will replace their eight-year-old 25-foot vessel which can struggle in local conditions.

A gale means winds of more than 60 kilometres an hour or 35 knots.

"Two-metre-tall waves with 12 metres in between means a short, sharp chop so you can't safely get any speed up in our boat," continued JJ who's sometimes known as Commander Bower Bird.

"Anything bright and shiny, I want it," he said, and when he saw the DELWP nine-metre jet boat unused in the local marina, he sought and got access. In the past year, they've turned out to three fires in that vessel. With marina fires the greatest risk in dollar terms, it's a great boost in response capacity.

Maydays are received by the local Water Police who then dispatch the coast guard. The flotilla averages 80 turnouts a year with running aground on sand the major problem followed by boats breaking down, flat batteries or towing a vessel that's run out of fuel.

Their response area is 100 kilometres long from the port of Sale to Metung and includes 420 square-kilometres in the Gippsland Lakes with Lakes Entrance Coast Guard their backup.

Of the 48 current members, eight are solely involved in monitoring the radios while six help with fundraising. All the rest perform both radio and boat duties and include seven skippers with another five on the way through training.

Australian Volunteer Coast Guard in Victoria is in a season of relatively smooth sailing after navigating rough waters earlier last year when they almost had to close their doors.

"AMSA [Australian Maritime Safety Authority] was putting more compliance pressure on us and some funding promises hadn't been realised," explained JJ. "Now insurance, maintenance, training, infrastructure and fuel is government funded and, within 12 months, we're confident we'll be on a funding platform similar to CFA's."

"There used to be no government oversight but our local commodore led negotiations and we were taken under the EMV umbrella in 2016."

The flotilla does a training exercise once a year with CFA, and JJ praised the support of Operations Officer Glenn Harrap, Operations Manager Daryll Hunter and especially Chief Officer Steve Warrington.

"CFA doesn't put great demands on us, yet," said JJ, "but we're working to become more of a professional tool within the CFA command structure."

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

Firefighters Memorial update

A new CFA Firefighters Memorial is a step closer with the focus now on a central site in Melbourne.

The decision to develop concept plans for the design of a memorial in the city follows consultation with families and impacted brigades. In particular, CFA sought and received advice from families and brigades on the criteria both groups saw as most important for choosing a memorial site as well as the design of the memorial itself.

The criteria were:

- a central location
- accessible by public transport
- safe access 24/7 to the memorial
- an area sufficiently large to conduct CFA's annual Memorial Service
- a quiet and peaceful setting
- access for people with disabilities
- safe from vandalism and natural disasters.

Deputy Chief Officer Bruce Byatt, the Firefighters Memorial project owner for CFA, said the site meets all these criteria.

"The memorial is a touchstone issue with

great emotional resonance for CFA volunteers, brigades and staff," said Bruce.

"It's critical we choose a site that balances practical considerations – things like ready access to the memorial – with less tangible qualities such as a place of remembrance, serenity and respect.

"I am confident that this site gets that balance right."

Using the criteria provided by families and brigades, the CFA project team invited consultant submissions during February to develop concept designs for the memorial itself, landscaping and features that enhance storytelling, among other aspects.

"The project team understands the keen interest volunteers and staff have in the design of the memorial," said Bruce. "We will be sure to provide updates on the progress of the design in future editions of *Brigade* as well as through CFA News & Media and other forums."

This year's Memorial Service will be held at Churchill on Sunday 7 May.

STORY PAUL HUGGETT



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

New LMS launching this year

CFA is rolling out a new Learning Management System (LMS) later this year which will provide a holistic approach to traditional training, digital learning and records management.

The new system will make it easier for CFA members to register and participate in training programs.

"The LMS supports our delivery of the Learning Action Plan," said Deputy Chief Officer for Training Gregg Paterson.

"Digital learning opens up opportunities and brings our enhanced learning into the 21st century."

Replacing CFA's current training systems (TRAIN and webTRAIN) the LMS will be a modern platform to deliver both traditional and digital training programs.

The new system will host online course content and allow members to nominate and receive approval for training courses online. It will be accessible through all devices – mobile, desktop and tablets.

Gregg said the LMS has already been introduced at Emergency Management Victoria, and SES has also bought the system.

"This means there will be opportunities for us to share programs and create inter-agency training schedules."

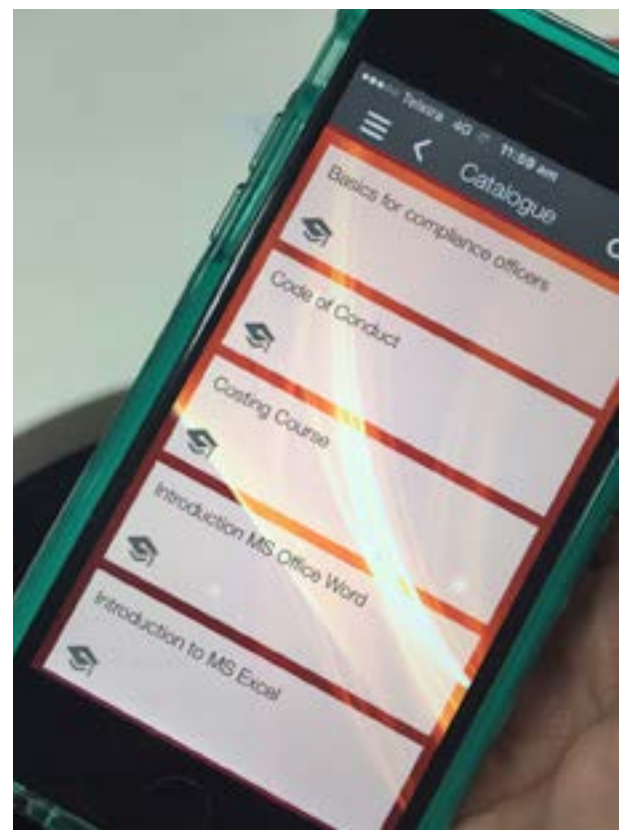
Quick reference guides, training manuals and user training schedules will be made available for brigade training officers and group training officers.

The software developers will also provide system support to CFA members during the transition.

If you want more information:

- read the FAQs and training materials on Brigades Online/CFA Online (search for LMS)
- contact the project team directly via lms_implementation@cfa.vic.gov.au
- ask your question in the 'LMS Implementation' Yammer Group if you use Yammer.

STORY JESS ESLER



CFA apprentice wins award

CFA apprentice William Maynard leads by example in his quest to change the lives of young Indigenous men in his home town of Bairnsdale.

The 23-year-old began his apprenticeship as a diesel mechanic at CFA's Bairnsdale workshop in 2014 under the supervision of Officer-In-Charge Steve O'Shea.

"William's one out of the box that's for sure," Steve said. "He's keen to break through the stereotypes, and do something really meaningful."

William was recently awarded the 2016 Djillay Ngalu Outstanding Youth Leadership Award for his work encouraging Indigenous youths to stay in school and pursue their career goals. He was also a finalist in the Australian Employment Network Apprentice of the Year Awards.

"William is a humble kind of guy. We didn't even know he'd won the Youth Leadership Award until we read about it on Facebook," continued Steve.

But William's future had not always looked so certain. As a young kid, his family moved

around a lot and he often felt disconnected, which led him to eventually drop out of school. Luckily, William's passion for football was later recognised by the Clontarf Foundation, which worked with his family to set up the support and role models William needed to get his life back on track.

CFA's Bairnsdale workshop maintains 140 vehicles from across Gippsland, and William services, repairs and modifies them to meet new requirements and improve safety. He said working with his local CFA gave him the opportunity to learn new things and to work with the people who protect the area where he grew up.

"The best part about my work is getting to help the different brigades and see the whole job through," he said. "From identifying the faults on the trucks to doing the repairs and then delivering the trucks back to the fire station in top condition, it's really satisfying."

STORY JESS ESLER



PHOTO: STEVE O'SHEA

Research into unusual fire weather

One of the most challenging situations in fire management is when predicted benign weather conditions unexpectedly change, resulting in a severe fire. These situations can result in a significant loss of property and life. Identifying why such incorrect expectations arise can help prevent them from recurring.

Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC analysis of the meteorology of recent bushfires has now uncovered three cases, including Victoria's Aberfeldy fire in 2013, where a weather phenomenon known as mountain waves contributed to the severe fire behaviour.

Mountain waves are atmospheric oscillations that occur when air flows over hills or mountains. They can arise in different ways and some are more predictable than others. They are quite a complex phenomenon because their existence and amplitude is sensitive to the atmospheric temperature structure and vertical variation of the wind. Often they cause strong downslope winds on the lee slope of the hill or mountain. If there's a fire, it may become unexpectedly severe as a result.

In the Aberfeldy fire (right), the unexpected fire activity occurred on the night the fire began, 17 January 2013. Modelling has shown clear evidence that mountain waves and strong downslope winds developed overnight. These winds would have directly increased the fire intensity and spread, and the amount of airborne embers and burning wood.

It's also likely that the steep and rugged topography contributed to the intensity of the fire. A further factor was that the elevated fireground was in warm dry air above the cooler air (nocturnal inversion), which would have limited overnight recovery of the fuel moisture.



The Aberfeldy fire was Victoria's largest fire since 2009, burning around 87,000 hectares, destroying 21 houses and 17 vehicles. One man was killed.

For more information about the research, go to bnhrc.com.au/hazardnotes/24

STORY NATHAN MADDOCK

Canaries in the coal mine

CFA's work on the science of smoke exposure – and carbon monoxide, in particular – has broken new ground in Australia and has significantly increased safety for crews on the fireground.

Craig Tonks, CFA's scientific officer, recently shared the results of this work with an international audience at the International Smoke Symposium in Long Beach, California.

"It goes back to the 2006 Hazelwood mine fire," said

Craig. "At that time, there were no state-level procedures for monitoring carbon monoxide at fires, so it was a case of setting up an air monitoring and health monitoring system on the fly."

That early work at Hazelwood immediately helped firefighters. For example, Craig and the monitoring teams recognised that firefighters' symptoms of dehydration and heat stress

were caused by elevated levels of carbon monoxide in their systems. Using this and other observations, the health monitoring teams established protocols that are now standard at all fires with hazardous levels of carbon monoxide.

In 2014, another fire at Hazelwood tested these monitoring and safety protocols to their limit. For 45 days, 600 hectares of brown coal smouldered. At its peak, 250 firefighters and more than 100 support staff worked each shift.

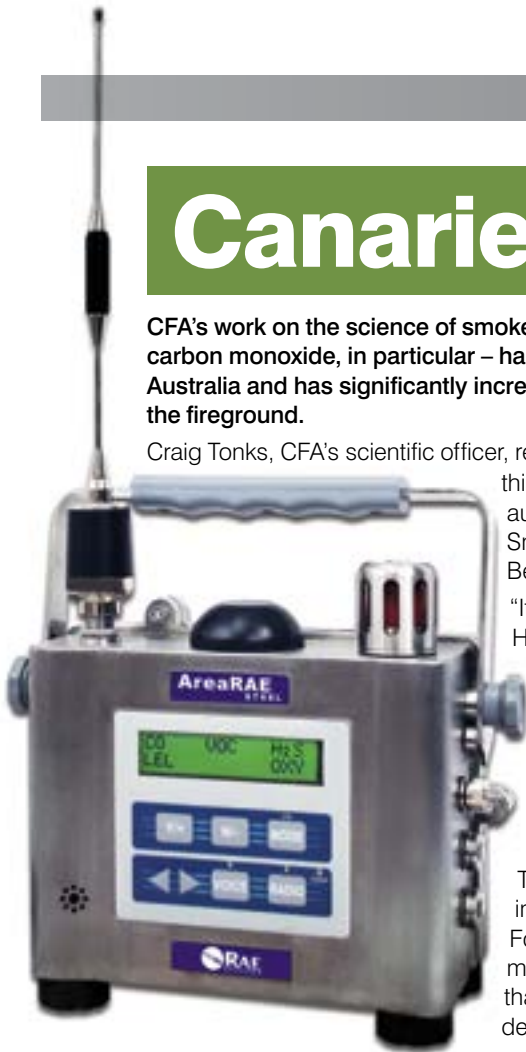
Similar monitoring techniques were also used at the 2015 Somerton tip fire, Strathdownie peat fire and the 2016 Broadmeadows tyre dump fire.

Craig also pointed to the operational benefits of early monitoring. "We can brief the incident controller on the situation. We'll give them quantitative evidence that we have a certain level of risk and they can make the call."

In the end, though, the first priority for Craig and his colleagues is firefighter safety. "It's all about preventing overexposure to these contaminants. They'll have regular health assessments throughout their shift. They'll be working under very strict OH&S guidelines.

"Monitoring and testing provides much greater protection for our people's health."

STORY PAUL HUGGETT



Bullying and Harassment Hotline

CFA members can report incidents of bullying, harassment, discrimination or other unreasonable behaviour via a dedicated hotline.

The hotline is externally managed and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. No steps are taken without the caller's consent, and all matters are dealt with impartially, fairly and confidentially.

CFA has zero tolerance for bullying and harassment and is committed to providing a safe workplace for all our members.

All complaints raised through the hotline will be managed by an external independent complaints manager.

To resolve complaints, a number of options are available such as informal resolution, mediation, education, formal

investigation, internal or external referrals and a workplace culture review.

For more information go to Brigades Online/CFA Online and search for Bullying and Harassment Hotline.

**Bullying and Harassment Hotline
1800 795 075**



CFA as a child safe organisation

All children have the right to feel safe and be protected from sexual, physical and emotional abuse. Victorian law required organisations that work with children to meet specific Child Safe Standards by the beginning of this year.



CFA is currently involved with children and young people through a range of programs and activities. The Junior Volunteer Development Program has about 1,800 young people aged 11-15 years in over 250 Junior brigades across Victoria. In addition, young people aged 16 or 17 are senior members in many brigades. Staff and volunteers may also come into contact with children through programs such as Fire Safe Kids, Fire Safe Youth and the Juvenile Fire Awareness Intervention Program (JFAIP), as well as activities such as community and family events.

CFA is committed to meeting the Child Safe Standards and to an ongoing process to ensure we maintain best practice as a child safe organisation. The Board has endorsed a comprehensive set of actions:

- A new CFA Child Safety Policy will be produced for consultation across the organisation and with key stakeholders this year.
- The People and Culture executive director has been assigned the new role of CFA Child Safety Officer, with responsibility to support members meet the requirements for child safety.

- A new Child Safety Action Plan and Code of Conduct will be developed and circulated for comment.
- Clear guidance will be developed to help members report and respond to circumstances where it's suspected that a child has been harmed or may be at risk of harm.
- New procedures for children or parents wishing to raise child safety concerns will be developed.
- Systems will be put in place to help members involved in child-related work to have an up-to-date Working with Children Check card.
- CFA Executive and Board will have greater oversight of child safety issues through improved reporting and inclusion of child safety within the Enterprise Risk Framework.

Members should familiarise themselves with the Child Safe Standards (go to ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/index.htm) and participate in the consultation and training on child safety this year.

STORY: SHERRI MCKERLEY

Developing lessons learned

CFA has recently established the Lessons Management Centre (LMC) to capture, analyse and identify lessons and trends by promoting a culture of knowledge sharing and continuous improvement through trusted pathways and platforms.

The lessons identified through after-action reviews, debriefs, individual observations, investigations and reviews are analysed to identify trends and understand causes. The LMC will then share these with our members using a number of channels, such as *Brigade* magazine (in the Learning from experience section on page 21), our website and printed pamphlets, with the aim of increasing firefighter safety.

The challenge facing any organisation that wants to use lessons learned from incidents, is to build a culture where we all feel comfortable and motivated to share knowledge in a productive way. Significant work is required by all members in CFA to establish a culture that actively seeks to identify lessons and share those experiences with an aim of learning from them and promoting continuous improvement.

Over the coming months, the LMC will be releasing a new online presence to give members easy access to learning products from CFA and other agencies from around the world. We encourage you to share your

experiences with us through the Observation Sharing Centre on Brigades Online/CFA Online.

We will give regular updates as we progress this work and expand our network of field-based writers. If you would like more information about how you can be involved, particularly in case study development, email lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY JAMIE HANSEN



OM takes on the Tour de Cure

CFA members are known for their willingness to pull together to help the community, and District 10 Operations Manager Allan Rankin is about to demonstrate this perfectly.

On 24 March, Allan sets off on a nine-day, 1,270 kilometre bike ride from Mount Hotham to Hobart as part of the 2017 Tour de Cure.

"Last year was a tough year for my district and I suspect many other districts," said Allan. "Sadly, we lost a number of people to cancer and some others began treatment to try to beat it.

"I want to do something positive to send a message that the loss and the fight to beat it being experienced by too many families and communities, is felt by many who care and who have the will and ability to make a difference to find a cure.

"I'm no cancer researcher, but I can ride a bike and if that's something I can do to help create awareness, show support and raise funds to make a difference, how could I say no to that?"

Allan said he's always wanted to have a crack at the Tour, which is now in its 11th year.

"I'm currently riding 350 to 400 kilometres a week in preparation. I know it will be a tough nine days but it is nothing compared to the challenges cancer patients and their families face every day."

As well as visiting the scenic east coast of Tasmania, the Tour winds its way through many towns and all districts in CFA's South East Region, which Allan said would be a highlight.

"We will be riding through the region and district. I'm proud to be part of sharing positive messages with local communities and making significant donations to local cancer support programs at each of the overnight stop locations including Lakes Entrance, Sale, Traralgon and Inverloch.

"I suspect it will be quite an emotional experience."

To donate to Allan's ride, go to tourdecure.com.au and search for 'Allan Rankin'.

STORY GRACE QUINN



PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY ALLAN RANKIN

Balance in life always adds up

Picture this: at school, your favourite classes are science and maths. You relish the opportunity to solve complex chemical equations and show your intellectual prowess in calculus and statistical analysis.

Everyone calls you a nerd, questions your 'boring' subject choices, and tells you your options will be to work in a lab, become an engineer or teach maths.

This has long been the reality for many students. But, according to CFA's Cassie Pennicui, who recently became an ambassador for the Choose Maths Program, these common perceptions of people who study maths and science are slowly starting to shift.

The Choose Maths Program works with students, parents and teachers to improve the health of the mathematics pipeline in Australia, especially for girls and young women.

"A passion for maths and science doesn't mean you are destined to work in a lab for the rest of your life," Cassie laughed.

"What younger people, particularly young women, need to know is that maths and science can give you the foundation to succeed in so many different fields.

"Choose Maths is all about trying to change the face of maths and science in Australia. Among the ambassadors is a CSIRO research assistant, geneticist, an engineer from Boeing and a maths teacher, of course!

"Ultimately it just goes to show, if you study science and maths, the opportunities are endless."

Saturday 11 February marked International Day of Women and Girls in Science, and Cassie believes this day is an important encouragement to women and girls across the country to persevere with their studies in maths and science and see where it leads them.

As the Program Manager for CFA's Fire and Emergency Management (F&EM) Project Office, Cassie provides project management support and advice to some of CFA's most high-profile projects, including Class B foam, Technical Rescue, Safer Together, Emergency Medical Response, and Planned Burning.

"My science background has really helped me in understanding the more technical elements of the work carried out by CFA, especially working on such a diverse range of projects in F&EM," Cassie said.

For more information, go to choosemaths.org.au

STORY JESS ESLER



PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

CFA and Telstra in-store safety advice



Telstra and CFA joined forces this summer in a new partnership focusing on informing Victorians about how to better prepare themselves and their families for the summer fire season.

Throughout January, Telstra and CFA ran an in-store promotion and competition. Participating Telstra stores encouraged customers to register for MyCFA, a regular email update with tailored fire safety information including Telstra's summer preparedness tips for staying connected. CFA brigades were invited to attend stores and share further fire safety information.

Telstra stores also donated a device, such as a mobile phone or tablet, to the brigades that attended to help with their fundraising efforts.

The competition gave all customers who registered for MyCFA, the opportunity to win \$1000 for their local CFA brigade and a home

fire safety kit which included a fire extinguisher, a smoke alarm and batteries, fire blanket, first-aid kit and a copy of our publication *Your Guide to Survival*.

District 2 Community Education Coordinator Paul Tangey said, "It's great being in store to be able to provide information to local people on how to stay safe, because it's

a convenient way to let people know how to prepare".

The new partnership was an effective way to increase community resilience and build on the local relationships between Telstra stores and CFA brigades.

STORY SASKIA VAN BEVER



PHOTO: VERITY MOTT

Privacy changes to contact details

You may have noticed that some contact details were removed from the CFA Online/Brigades Online contact lists.

These fields will be restored soon but, due to a potential privacy breach, the private information of a number of members has

had to be marked 'silent' to ensure CFA is protecting all members' personal information.

This means that some members' contact details are no longer published online because permission to make this information public via various contact books and online methods has not been received.

If you are happy for your details to be available, or would just like to check and update your details, advice on how to do this will be forwarded soon to all online subscribers and will be available from your brigade secretary.

STORY MONICA BARNES



Looking after your mental health

CFA's Member Assistance Program (MAP) provides a comprehensive range of supports for our members and their immediate family that is confidential, free and accessible 24 hours a day.

There are three strands of support: general counselling; skills for psychological recovery, and manager assist.

Caraniche and D'Accord supply psychological services to CFA, with hundreds of clinicians available for face-to-face or phone consultations during business hours and over-the-phone support available after hours.

CFA members or their immediate family seeking support can refer themselves to the Member Assistance Program or give a peer permission to apply on their behalf. Everyone is entitled to an initial three-and-a-half hours of short-term, solution-focused counselling for any personal or workplace issues.

Skills for psychological recovery (SPR) supports the mental health of trauma survivors, witnesses or emergency responders. CFA has provided for an initial three hours of either general counselling or SPR support, with clinicians able to request additional support or refer on to other services. It can be delivered days, months or years after a traumatic event.

If longer-term support is needed, the client would see their GP for a mental health plan to access support available through a Medicare-registered clinician.

"SPR works to help people regain a sense of control and confidence so they're able to face new challenges," said psychologist, and Caraniche Manager of Training and Workplace Services, Amanda Mechanic.

"People might present with feelings they can't quite pinpoint: 'I just don't feel like myself.'

"People pursuing both general counselling and SPR will be in varied states of readiness to change and clinicians are trained to work with them where they're at. They might be variously stuck, uncertain or have had a previous counselling session they experienced as negative."

SPR sessions look at issues such as emotional regulation where people learn to recognise their feelings and better deal with their needs and concerns. There's an emphasis on becoming resilient in the face of change, which can mean developing problem-solving skills and healthy thinking, managing physical and emotional reactions, pursuing positive activities and strengthening social connections.

The manager-assist strand of MAP primarily involves coaching managers on issues such as effective team and/or performance management.

The magnificent work done by CFA peers is likely one of the factors encouraging more CFA members and their family members to access the support they are entitled to.

In the past six months, 76 per cent of CFA referrals were for men and 24 per cent for women; 29 per cent referred themselves, 23 per cent were referred by a peer and 10 per cent were referred by a family member. A total of 58 per cent of sessions were conducted face-to-face.

Reasons given for seeking support were 30 per cent discussing family and relationship issues; 27 per cent dealing with mental health issues; 15 per cent dealing with CFA incidents and events; 14 per cent covering CFA relationships and conflicts, and nine per cent on workplace practices and employment issues.



At only 26 years of age, Tim Rogers is already in his sixth year as a CFA peer.

He urges all members to care for themselves by regularly doing something simple that they enjoy.

"That might mean going for a walk, listening to music or meeting up with friends," said Tim. "It's so important to maintain social connections, get enough sleep and eat well. If none of that seems to be working, call our support services 24/7. There's always going to be someone on the end of the phone."

GETTING HELP

If you or someone you know needs help, contact **Lifeline** on **13 11 14** or **Headspace** on **1800 650 890**.

If you are in an emergency situation or at immediate risk of harm, contact emergency services on Triple Zero.

CFA Welfare Support Services

Member Assistance Program:
1300 795 711 (24 hours)

Peer Support Program:
contact your local peer coordinator

Chaplaincy Program:
1800 337 068 (24 hours)

HeadsUP online resources:
cfa.vic.gov.au/headsup

Challenge yourself



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED BY CHALLENGE 2017

More than 800 CFA members have now taken part in CFA's future leaders program called Challenge, with most describing it as life changing.

The 2017 graduates likely began the program with the same thought as previous participants – wondering what they were getting themselves into. But 12 days later, they returned as one big family having shared a life-changing experience.

Thirty-one CFA members from across Victoria arrived at Melbourne University's Creswick Campus with feelings of excitement, trepidation and let's-get-this-show-on-the-road.

Sharon Smith from Hilldene Fire Brigade said, "When filling in the application form to participate in Challenge 17, one of the questions was, 'What are your aspirations as a member of CFA?' My reply was, 'I'd like to show the younger brigade members, particularly the females, that you can still contribute and play an active role on and off the fireground at an older age'. I now believe I can certainly do that."

"Challenge 2017 has been one of the best experiences of my life," said Aaron Hume from Warrnambool Fire Brigade. "I was taken outside of my comfort zone and discovered what I am capable of. I met a great group of people, was pushed to my limits, did outdoor activities, got dirty and accomplished my goals. I would recommend Challenge to anyone."

Leonie Woodham from Gembrook Fire Brigade has a talent for writing poetry and she has written two poems about her Challenge experience.



She stood up proudly at the graduation event and shared with the audience her first poem.

Challenge 2018 will be held in January next year and applications and information will be available from August this year.

STORY ROZ LONG

Industrial rescue, Mt Duneed

Summary

A farmer was fighting for his life after he was found trapped by his legs in a hay baler. CFA brigades were called to the industrial accident in Mount Duneed at 6.45pm on 29 November 2016. It appeared that the farmer had been trapped for some time. CFA, Ambulance Victoria, SES and Victoria Police freed the man from the hay baler after three hours.

Overview

The work ethic and professionalism shown by CFA members on the day was second to none. The response involved volunteers from Connewarre and Torquay brigades along with career firefighters from Geelong City.

The volunteers provided fire protection to the crews on scene along with assisting Ambulance Victoria with access to the scene. The access work involved cutting a fence and using rake-hoes to clear a path so the ambulance could reach the air ambulance.

The crew leaders showed strong leadership and ensured the focus stayed on the task at hand. The leaders also helped manage the welfare of their members from a critical incident stress (CIS) perspective and this greatly assisted Incident Controller and Operations Officer Mark Sinkinson.

Geelong City's career firefighters used their high level of skill, training and experience to develop a plan, including contingencies to extricate the farmer. Leading Firefighter Tom Waterson, who was the rescue commander (operations officer), did a fantastic job along with the rest of his crew. He ensured safety was paramount and all decisions and processes were approved by him. Tom liaised closely with SES and Ambulance Victoria commanders to ensure all agencies' concerns were addressed and that the plan was well understood.

From a rescue perspective, the crews were fortunate to have a heavy machinery mechanic at the scene who had been working on machinery at a neighbouring property. His expertise made the decision-making process a lot easier, knowing what each piece of the machinery did and how it worked before the crews began deconstructing the machine to remove the farmer.

Lessons identified

The following contributed to the positive outcome.

- Having a multi-agency response to this incident was crucial, as was having a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Everyone on scene recognised the seriousness and complexity of the incident and they worked collaboratively.
- Using AIMS ensured all incident personnel worked towards one set of objectives. The incident controller, in conjunction with the emergency management team, determined the desired outcome of the incident which was well communicated to all involved.
- The early activation of CIS was paramount to provide appropriate psychological support to all personnel at the incident to prevent or alleviate the effects of stress and trauma.
- The early escalation of additional heavy rescue resources.
- Seeking advice from a specialist about the mechanics of the machinery before attempting to extricate the farmer.

Conclusion

This incident was a team effort across four emergency services: Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, SES and CFA career staff and volunteers. It was a difficult rescue and quite a delicate procedure to extricate the man, who unfortunately died in hospital. The cooperation and collaboration between all the agencies was outstanding, working as one to manage a complex incident.



Tasmanian fires 2016 near miss

Background

On 13 January 2016, a dry lightning storm passed over north and west Tasmania. Hundreds of lightning strikes ignited multiple fires across the state. This marked the start of a firefighting campaign that lasted more than two months requiring interstate support.

From January to March 2016, CFA coordinated the deployment to Tasmania of more than 330 firefighters and specialist personnel, plus 58 agency vehicles and equipment.

Tasmania faced some of the largest fires the small state has seen, with 300 fires burning more than 120,000 hectares. But, despite this, not a single life or house was lost.

On 21 February 2016, CFA firefighters were involved in a near miss during the containment back-burn at the Pipeline Road, Mawbanna fire in the north of Dip Range, in north-west Tasmania.

What was planned?

A back-burning operation was planned to contain the north-east edge of Pipeline Road and Mawbanna Road fires, which had joined to create one fire of 63,300 hectares. This edge was an area of concern because the Dip Range could burn rapidly under strong south-westerly winds and could potentially threaten the Sisters Beach community.

Back-burning operations were scheduled to begin at 4pm on Sunday 21 February and continue into Monday 22 February, with Sunday the most favoured day to complete the containment strategy. There was minimal chance of rain over the next week. Four CFA strike teams were to be tasked to help with the 198-hectare burn of heath and dry peppermint forest, which was seen as a risk to the community of Sisters Beach.

Bass Highway sector

Strike team 0803: Berwick tanker, Lang Lang tanker, Moorooduc tanker, Mt Martha tanker, Springvale tanker, Southern Metro Training 5

Strike team 1421: Sunbury tanker, Point Cook tanker, Hurstbridge tanker, South Morang tanker, Yarrambat tanker, Melton FCV

Rail line sector

Strike team 1432: Research ultralight, Whittlesea Diamond Valley FCV, Bulla ultralight, St Andrews ultralight, Wildwood ultralight

TasFire: Divisional commander

Montumana sector

Strike team 1301: Upper Ferntree Gully slip-on, Belgrave Heights ultralight, Eastern Metro Ground Obs

Rulla sector

Strike team 1301: Yellingbo ultralight, Kalorama slip-on, Warrandyte slip-on

TasFire: Fire truck

What happened

The four CFA strike teams arrived for a briefing at the staging area on Rulla Road. The briefing covered all the usual elements of the burn objective such as weather, ignition, contingency resources and the location of the safe area. The plan seemed well organised and resourced. After the briefing, crews headed to their assigned locations.

Strike teams 0803 and 1421 were assigned along the Bass Highway sector (see map, right). Strike teams 1432, 1301 and TasFire crews were assigned to the rail line sector and Montumana sector, though these two sectors were later combined and both 1432 and 1301 were assigned to the rail line.

TasFire crews began burning at the Telstra Tower at 3pm, an hour before the planned ignition time. CFA crews noticed this as they arrived at their starting points. Strike team 1301 began burning at the quarry in the Montumana sector just before 4pm and observed a low rate of spread.

They then moved on to the disused rail line. The crew had been told during the briefing that a dozer had cleared vegetation away from the rail line and turning points had been put in. This had not been done, however, and there was no clear access at the side of the rail track.

"When we got there, it was like Puffing Billy without the trestle bridge," said one crew member.

The two strike teams decided to continue and mounted the tracks. The line was narrow and the CFA vehicles had difficulties proceeding towards their destination, the landslide, a collapsed mass of rock partially blocking the rail line.

"We were already committed to the track before we realised how bad things were, and at that point we couldn't turn back because we discovered there were no turning points on the rail."

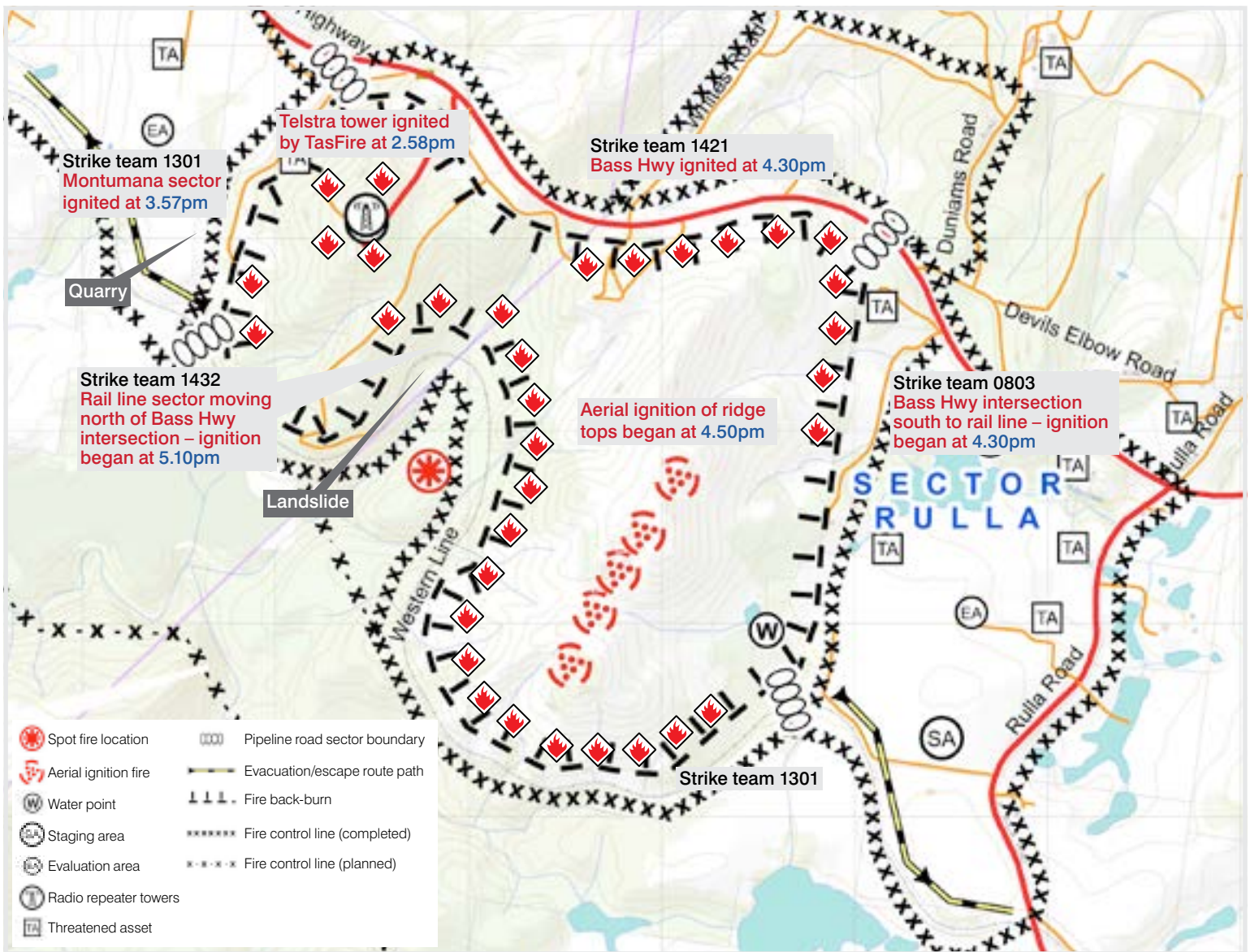
The crews also noticed that radio communication was now an issue on the rail line sector and no TasFire portable radios were available. However, the crews kept moving slowly along the rail line.

Strike teams 0803 and 1421 had started to burn along the Bass Highway and along Rulla sector on the other side of the mountain.

The rail line crews "had to crab the vehicles with the front wheels on the right hand side of the track and the back wheel on the left hand side of each track, otherwise you would have slid sideways down the embankment".

The last two ultralights from strike team 1432 (Research and St Andrews) became stuck on the rail line and a dozer was requested to free them. Time was getting on so the vehicles in front of the stuck ultralights kept moving along the rail line towards the landslide to start burning.





The St Andrews ultralight was able to free itself quickly and it joined the others travelling towards the landslide.

Everyone was getting frustrated because they were behind schedule and under pressure to start the burn. The rail track was not as explained and they were travelling towards the landslide with only three out of 11 allocated CFA vehicles plus the Tasmanian divisional command vehicle. The vehicles that couldn't pass the stranded Research ultralight were redeployed to other sections of the mountain.

The Research ultralight was freed by a dozer at around 5.15pm and was redeployed elsewhere.

Unknown to the crews on the line, aerial ignition had started and incendiaries were being dropped into their area on the other side of the ridge.

Strike team 1432 began to back-burn using drip torches at the entrance of a cutting. The crew moved through the cutting and all was progressing well. But they soon noticed the incendiary-start fire heading for them and it

was intensifying. Spot fires began falling around them from the aerial ignition and smoke reduced visibility and made it hard to breathe.

The crew stopped burning and concentrated on extinguishing the spot fires. The TasFire divisional commander asked the St Andrews ultralight crew to hold back at the start of the cutting to watch out for spot overs.

Fire jumped over the rail line with crews struggling to get on top of the spotting. There was a noticeable increase in wind speed as the wind shifted direction from a north-easterly to an easterly. A large fire now headed towards the crews on the rail line.

Strike team 1432 lost communication with the divisional commander because he was not in his vehicle and 1432's escape route was now blocked by the unmanned divisional command vehicle.

At this point the crews at the landslide were becoming nervous about their safety. When they were able to get comms without interference, the strike team leader requested aerial support. However, the smoke was too



thick and the helicopter wasn't able to help. They tried again but all the helicopter could do was circle around the smoke.

"I was feeling nervous... this is when the textbook stuff started to run through my head. LACES, Watchout. We knew we couldn't go forward and we didn't know how far away the rail line exit was. We were stuck.

"You couldn't see smoke because of our location and we didn't get a visual of any column building.

"Fire was coming down like a steam train. Within minutes it got dark, was completely smoked out and the winds were constantly changing.

The incendiary fire approached them from above, causing spot fires below them which raced up the hill towards them.

"The crews were working strategically fighting the spot fires below them. They were not worrying too much about the fire coming down the hill towards them which, in fact, scorched the vehicles. The aim was to deal with the fires moving uphill towards them."

Strike team 1432 vehicles quickly adopted defensive tactics using their fog lines. Water was running low. Whittlesea FCV, which was first in line behind the TasFire vehicle, was now overrun by fire.

The fire continued to increase with the winds along the rail line and flames began to impact the St Andrews and Bulla ultralights.

"As far as fire behaviour was concerned, it wasn't that bad. We were out of the vehicles combating the fire. The vehicles got scorched because we couldn't move them."

The divisional commander returned to his vehicle and moved forward. He didn't know that the Warrandyte and Kalorama slip-ons and Yellingbo ultralight from strike team 1301 were now also heading towards him from the opposite direction, having been redeployed to this area, blocking the exit of the rail line.

The fire finally subsided and the vehicles were able to head out of the rail track.

The radiant heat from the fire caused superficial damage to the Warrandyte slip-on, Whittlesea Diamond Valley FCV and Bulla slip-on.

Why did it happen?

As is often the case, the crews – who were working in unfamiliar terrain and helping another fire service – were not confident voicing their concerns. It is often documented from our crews during after-action reviews that they are worried about asking too many questions in large briefings because they don't want to embarrass themselves or CFA, particularly when working with other agencies.

As has been identified by the crews, a greater adherence to LACES (lookouts, awareness, communications, escape routes and safety zones) would have highlighted the safety issues present.

Will you do anything differently in the future?

- "Before proceeding with the burn, we should have scouted the route more thoroughly."
- "We would discuss in detail what the potential is for a worst-case scenario and what we would do if it occurred."
- "We wouldn't proceed in any situation again without radio communication being available to all, and fall back until it was established again."
- "Monitor the water supply."
- "Don't expect that interstate agencies operate with the same processes as Victorian agencies."
- "Need to ask questions at briefings if you aren't clear on anything."

Conclusion

Although there were no injuries in this incident, there was a significant risk to life. It's imperative that all members take responsibility for the safety of themselves and their crews. Being familiar with the principles of LACES and Watchouts means our people can follow a simple checklist that encourages questions and discussions. There is no shame in seeking clarification or requesting more time to ensure the safety of our firefighters.

Community building in Benalla Group

“There are no boundaries for our brigades,” said Baddaginnie Captain Phil Rees of their close relationship with Goomalibee-Upotipotpon, also in Benalla Group.

“A lot of our members have Goomalibee’s pager codes and we turn out with them. We’re a busy brigade with about 70 turnouts a year but we’re still able to help out our neighbouring brigade. I’m right on the border so I might go on our truck or Goomalibee’s.”

After six years as captain, Phil (on the right of the photo) is in his last term with the next four captains already lined up. He has plenty of other irons in the fire – some literally – with a passion for blacksmithing and a forge on his farm. His shed has also hosted fire safety meetings and a wood auction to raise money for a new brigade truck.

Phil has been a mentor in a 10-week student wellbeing program, run by Tomorrow Today, Benalla’s community foundation. It connects Year 9 students with adult mentors to help them set life and career goals and lead them to new sports, hobbies and professional connections.

Doubling as the community safety coordinator for Benalla Group, Phil helped organise a breakfast club at Baddaginnie Fire Station because of concerns about children being dropped off early to school before teachers arrived. The children were fed a healthy breakfast and Benalla CFA volunteers and the Victoria Police youth liaison officer talked to the students about fire safety. Their school bus was given a water salute from both Baddaginnie tankers by members who were past students of the school; a real highlight.

Benalla was the first group to roll out the Violet Town Red Bucket initiative with all local residents being presented with a bucket holding fire safety information and guides to help them prepare.

“It’s been really brilliant for us,” said Phil. “Baddaginnie, Goomalibee and Warrenbayne brigades along with SES and Benalla Rural City council, door-knocked 400 households in our areas in 2015 to pass out buckets.

“We were backed up by 14 emergency services vehicles. It really made an impact

and got households thinking. At the same time, we compiled a register of vulnerable and isolated people who need advance notice to leave.

“That’s why we live in the country. It’s that sense of belonging that means you do what you can for your neighbours because you know they’ll back you.”

The reciprocal brigade support flows from the close friendship between Phil and Goomalibee-Upotipotpon Captain Peter Bailey (on the left of the photo) and their mutual community mindedness.

Both captains have received Australia Day achievement awards for their district. As BASO Dianne Simpson said, “Those two captains and brigades do a spectacular job uniting their communities.”

There’s no community infrastructure in Peter’s brigade area other than the fire station, but that’s about to undergo a renovation with a \$69,000 VESEP grant partly funding an adjoining meeting room and community hub complete with air conditioner, kitchen and toilets.

It’s a project that’s been driven for 10 years by Peter, now 12 years as the captain.

“This new room is all for the community,” he said. “We haven’t had a community hall since the 1960s but every year we have a combined Christmas party with Baddaginnie and more than the entire population of Goomalibee turns up. We’ve also had shared medal presentations with the Baddaginnie and Goorambat brigades, catering for 300 people.”

STORY LEITH HILLARD





The art of roadside burning

Roadside burning is being elevated to an art form in three brigade areas south of Ballarat where a long black ribbon of burnt ground now stretches from one side of District 15 to the other.

Cape Clear Fire Brigade's techniques have been tested over decades and are now documented in their self-published *The Art of Roadside Burning* written by Captain Michael Rowe with comprehensive support from members Terry Kelly and Brenda Haskins.

Their season usually begins before Christmas with the burning of the recreation reserve. They then watch conditions using the chain of weather stations around the district to identify the golden opportunity to burn 40 kilometres of roadsides.

The fire danger index must be below eight, the temperature under 30 degrees and the winds under 15 kilometres an hour, and those conditions must hold for two days after the burn.

This year the major 38-kilometre burn was brought forward to mid-January. It was carried out by a 70-strong team representing multiple Grenville Group brigades as well as crews from Buninyong, Dereel, Shelford, Bannockburn

and Grovedale brigades and Forest Fire Management Victoria. They were backed up by VicRoads traffic control units with everyone using WorkSafe procedures.

Michael's safety mantra – "calm and relaxed" – set the tone for the day.

The crews are run like three strike teams and aim for each truck to include an experienced driver, one 'rock solid' and one new member.

Prior planning is done with Vegetation Management Officer (VMO) Tony Brady, while Brenda liaises with all the owners along the roadsides. The brigade thinks of everything from technical issues through to the stomachs of firefighters. (There are casseroles, apple crumble and ice cream!)

"If you don't treat crews like royalty, they won't come back," said Michael.

Buninyong Captain Marc Cannan was one of the members of the royal family and confirmed "there was no 'hurry up and wait'. The speed we progressed really impressed me".

That's because momentum is one of the key burning principles at Cape Clear.

"Stopping and starting put the wind and flame in control. You need 'go' people, not 'whoa' people to lead from the front," it says in *The Art of Roadside Burning*.

Momentum is maintained using a method they call the double burn. Here we get to Michael's second mantra: "all road rules stand" starting with only being able to legally block the road for 15 minutes.

Two crews burn 1.1 kilometres apart within the traffic control points. Fifty litres of water per minute are put down by the lead tanker to create a wet break on one side to ensure the second burn crew isn't driving towards a live fire.

Again, the publication explains: "Follow-up tankers put out spot overs and getaways, not smokers in the burn zone.

"The aim of burning off is to burn but you don't have to scorch the earth. A 90 per cent burn is all that's necessary.

"When walking and lighting a burn, it can take over two hours to burn two kilometres by the time you get set up. When walking and lighting on a double burn at seven kilometres per hour,

it takes under 10 minutes to burn two kilometres of road.

"By using momentum, you can control the window of risk."

VMO Tony gives Michael the credit for the double burn innovation.

"We double the area we can burn and halve the time," Tony said. "It requires double the resources but we can safely cover long distances in a single day."

About 21 truckloads of water were used over the 38 kilometres. Crews returning to the recreation reserve to fill their tankers were moved away for a drink and some cake while local brigade members filled their trucks.

"This mentally removes them and calms and relaxes them," Michael repeated. "We see it in their body language by the end of the day. They have confidence which they then take to their call-outs.

"Roadside burning is the best fire training there is. It gives you a full understanding of how volatile ground fuels are."

The annual burn is embedded in the Municipal Fire Prevention Plan and consolidated by Golden Plains Shire's construction of a graded break along its edge on lesser roads while VicRoads contractors do the grading on the main roads.

With the potential commercial loss from a major local fire being agricultural machinery and crops averaging \$900 per hectare, the pulling up of two

large fast-running grassfires within the past 10 years is solid proof of the burn's success.

Regular burning has markedly reduced the variety and volume of weedy introduced pasture species, particularly Phalaris, and a resurgence of indigenous grassland species.

"The burn leads to fewer call-outs and that means more time at home with our families," continued Michael. "We've produced the book because we know we've got a good system. We want to lead other brigades back to burning so those members can also have that extra time with their families."

To buy *The Art of Roadside Burning*, visit theartofroadsideburning.com

For more information, phone Brenda on **0408 558 710**.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



Above: Captain Michael Rowe holding *Phalaris*

Left: High-quality Victorian volcanic plains grassland natives found in Cape Clear in December. From left clockwise, *Xanthorrhoea minor* or small grasstree; *Eryngium ovinum* or blue devil; and *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* or common everlasting

PHOTOS: LEITH HILLARD



Coimadai cements its future



Coimadai Fire Brigade members have kept alive a fine tradition by once again building their own fire station.

Their 1968 shed was built by ex-captain George Rogers when he was an apprentice and donated back to him after its replacement was built. By 2013, their 1980 besser block station was a chock-a-block two bay and it was time to start on its replacement.

"Fifteen years of fundraising persistence and saving had finally given us the right combo of design and dollars," said fourth lieutenant and ex-captain Brad Dawson. "Every year we doorknock every one of our 300 households to give them fire safety information and we also ask for a donation."

With the \$100,000 design fully funded by the brigade, six-months of construction and landscaping began. It wasn't quite all hands on deck, however, as only those qualified to be on a building site could work. Builders, plumbers and electricians got busy, member Ray Chapman worked through the complex legal and compliance issues, and engineer Brad dug trenches and shovelled concrete.

He claimed that "the rest of the brigade shouted encouragement while they were refreshing themselves" but gladly admitted that every member hit the phones and worked their networks hard.

"Everything was done by members and their families, friends of friends and corporate supporters," said Brad. "We also cast our net wide and talked to business owners including those out of our own area. We explained that every dollar we spent was donated or raised through sausage sizzles and they saw it was a good cause.

"Our neighbour Boral donated crushed rock and concrete. The only thing we paid full price for was crane hire for the erection of the structure."

The new four-bay steel shed houses their two tankers as well as their ultralight and hose lay trailer which is both brigade owned and designed. There's storage space for turnout gear and room for briefings.

Further brigade funds along with VESEP, federal and local government grants were then invested into the renovation of their 1980 station

which now has a meeting room doubling as a community hub with air conditioning, audio-visual equipment and a modern kitchen.

The brigade's pride in ownership was on show at the official opening with the ribbon cut by brigade life member Mary Flanagan (pictured below with Brad).

It's not all free and easy now, however. All members must learn the new house rules: turn off the air conditioner and NO BOOTS on the carpet in the meeting room!

STORY LEITH HILLARD



Fire ready garden at Huntly

Huntly Fire Brigade has developed a fire ready demonstration garden with fire resistant and fire retardant native plants to complement the new fire station.

The plants in the garden are rated as fire resistant or fire retardant by the Australian Plants Society (Victoria).

This garden is readily accessible and will allow members of the community to see fire resistant and fire retardant plants growing, and decide which ones may be suitable for their own gardens.

Signs with photos clearly identify the plants, their common and botanical names, their preferred location and growth habit, and their fire rating.

Fire resistant plants are those that will not burn when exposed to continuous flame, while fire retardant plants are those that will not burn in

the first pass of flame but may burn when they dry out.

The demonstration garden was developed as a community initiative. Bendigo Northern District Community Enterprise gave a grant towards the cost of the garden, and Northern Bendigo Landcare Group helped select the plant species and plant the garden.

The project was coordinated by Huntly brigade member Trevor Strauch.

“All the plants in the demonstration garden are indigenous to the Bendigo area and it provides people with the opportunity to view and compare fire ready plants,” he said.

The fire ready demonstration garden is in Buckley’s Lane, Huntly and is open all hours.

STORY ALAN ROBERTS



Above: (from left to right), Sandy Young (Bendigo Northern District Community Enterprise), Huntly Fire Brigade’s Trevor Strauch and Nicole Howie (Northern Bendigo Landcare Group)

PHOTO: ALAN ROBERTS

Macedon goes automatic

Shortly after Ash Wednesday, the Macedon community rallied to raise funds for the town’s first brigade-owned vehicle which was also brigade built.

Late last year, Macedon Fire Brigade received a new tanker, once again brigade owned.

Macedon Tanker 2 is a milestone piece of equipment. This new medium tanker was the first automatic transmission version of that tanker to be delivered to a brigade.

Macedon brigade Captain Greg Snart is very impressed, and not just with the six-speed automatic transmission.

“The cab is air-conditioned with room for five people. Before, it was two in the cab and the rest on the back. They’d be rattling around in the dust and dirt on long-haul strike teams,” Greg said.

“Now the crew can be up in the cabin listening to the radio traffic and planning as we drive.”

The new hard suction features come in for special praise from Greg. “In the old truck, you’d need to connect three lines and operate the manual priming pump before you could draught water from a dam.

“This truck has an electric priming pump and one long, flexible line of hose. It’s a massive improvement.”

The tanker is also equipped with a remote controlled monitor, allowing crews to direct water in a 180-degree arc from inside the cab.

“The monitor can do the first knock down on a running grassfire or grass flank with the rear crew picking up the pieces,” continued

Greg. “It allows us to be much more efficient in how we fight fires.”

While Greg is enthusiastic about the new tanker, he saves his greatest praise for the fundraising effort that secured the vehicle.

“The brigade started fundraising for this truck 15 years ago and because \$360,000 was a big total we really ramped up a few years back. We got our flea market up to \$20,000 a year.

“In 2015 we got really lucky when a local business asked, ‘How much do you need?’ They offered three dollars for each dollar CFA raised from the community. In six weeks, we had \$80,000.”

STORY PAUL HUGGETT



PHOTO: ROSS LUKE



PHOTO: STEVEN DOWDEN, MELTON & MOORABOOL STAR WEEKLY

CFA firefighter helps out during WA fire

Towards the end of last year, a lightning strike ignited a major bushfire on Ellenbrae Cattle Station, in the heart of the Kimberley in Australia's far north-west.

Temperatures regularly surpass 40 degrees in this region's dry season, and the sun-scorched landscape is anything but forgiving. The dry, dense scrubland fuelled the bushfire over several days, spreading it right across to Mt Barnett and the Gibb River Road.

Bacchus Marsh Fire Brigade firefighter Chris Eggleston was on a swagging trip, refuelling at Mt Barnett Station when he heard the news. Chris's trip had taken him deep into cattle and billygoat country, and he was well aware of the perils of this dry and dusty terrain.

By then, the fire had burnt for nearly 10 days. ABC Kimberley Radio reported the front to be 180 kilometres long, with the fire impacting six or seven cattle stations and showing no signs of slowing down.

It's common for cattle station operators in this region to leave fires to burn out and use graders to put in control lines rather than call in emergency services. The long, corrugated roads connecting communities make it difficult for WA's Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) and local park rangers to get in and out during major emergencies.

Chris decided to volunteer to help. With 37 years of experience as a CFA crew and strike team leader under his belt, DFES immediately issued Chris with a 24-hour casual firefighter registration. The first priority was to set up a series of water pumps from the river to protect the major assets at Mt Barnett Station.

"The station manager was particularly concerned about the 2,000 head of new cattle, as well as other key structures around the property," Chris said.

Later that day, Chris teamed up with one of the local indigenous workers to conduct a spot ember attack and assist with back-burning at the firefront.

Chris described the intensity of the fire as being very different to what we experience in Victoria.

"The Kimberley fires don't tend to crown like ours do, so there was just this really intense heat," he said.

"One of the local tourist helicopters was brought up to give us some aerial oversight. From up in the air, this was one of the most intense grassfires I've ever seen."

Chris also supported the back-burning operations on Mt Barnett Station and the Gibb River Road. After three days, additional park rangers and support crews from nearby stations finally arrived and Chris was released.

The fire continued to burn for some time and burnt over 1.7 million hectares.

It wasn't until some weeks later, when Richard Patterson, station manager of the Mt Barnett Cattle Company contacted Bacchus Marsh brigade on Facebook, that Chris's fellow CFA members were made aware of the role he had played in the WA fire.

"Chris turned up just at the right time," Richard wrote to the brigade.

"He was thrown straight into the action in the Police Valley, where the fire was pushing hard on the breaks and spotting over."

Richard said Chris was a great help during the spot ember attack, and he also played a pivotal role in coordinating the other firefighters, rangers and parks and wildlife crews.

"We'd like to pass on our deep appreciation for what he did for us," Richard wrote.

STORY JESS ESLER



Merino Group flocks to training

The turnaround in the fortunes of District 4's Merino Group started two years ago with Group Officer Wayne Munro asking for support.

Training and new recruits were lacking. Multiple brigades had disengaged members and amalgamation was looming for those that struggled to respond.

Volunteer Sustainability Team member Emma Taunt compiled a survey which was given to several members of each brigade and the call came back for regular meetings, recognition after the fire season that included the community, and more training, please, and make it efficient. It might seem incidental to emergency response, but underlying each of those requests was a desire to make brigade membership more sociable.

One member from each brigade and one other from the group were appointed as training officer and a group training committee was formed. Activities started to roll out including local hill climbing in four-wheel drives. A session was also conducted with the CFA road accident rescue specialists at Casterton.

"You have to give people an incentive to learn and relationship building is a major one," said Wayne. "Learning a skill for the fireground is the incentive to acquire more skills and so enthusiasm builds and people start looking forward."

Sixty per cent of Glenelg Shire is plantation and



Left: Merino Group Officer Wayne Munro and Victoria Pullen from the Volunteer Sustainability Team

Bottom Left: From left, Rick Lane, Victoria Pullen, Gordon Nolte, Megan Wild, Chris Edwards and Rex Morris

PHOTOS: LEITH HILLARD

native forest. There are also more than 120,000 hectares of commercial forestry plantation in District 4 which is about 20 per cent of the total land area of District 4.

That challenge means shared capacity and relationship building with Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV). There are also two forestry industry brigades (FIBs) in Merino Group with forester Martin Slocombe one of Merino's deputy group officers.

"Share the load, share the skills," said Wayne, and that was the idea behind a major group training exercise last November. FFMV took a dozer out and explained their tactics of fighting fire with fire, burning right out to the edge without putting water down to get rid of unburnt

fuels. Members learned how to work with dozer drivers, then attention turned to the FIBs and how a plantation fire might run.

"We ran a hose lay drill into the plantation," said DGO Martin, "and also talked about our fire breaks and internal compartment breaks.

"FIBs are a specialist resource operating within CFA's command and control using our own equipment. We have about 15 slip-ons and heavy and medium tankers spread across our green triangle in the south-west. On hot days we stop operations in the forest and put crews on stand-by.

"Early sit reps and wordback from CFA crews on scene are critical in helping us allocate our response.

"We're all locals working towards the same ends."

"What's crucial is the network to respond and converge on an incident," agreed Wayne.

To expand that CFA network by recruiting more members, the group was again offered practical support by District 4 staff. New BASO Leanne Munro, Emma Taunt and Operations Officer Mark Gunning went to Wallacedale Fire Station last year and registered 18 new members who turned up with identification documents. Most of them are already through recruit training which was conducted in their area.

"Now we're working as a team," continued Wayne. "We're turning out trucks earlier.

"Farming is becoming more isolated but Merino Group has been concentrating on face-to-face contact. We sent out two strike teams last year and none of those members went away with strangers. They all knew each other from training."



STORY LEITH HILLARD

Casey Group's concept FCV

Casey Group of brigades has developed a new-style FCV with an enhanced radio capability of seven radios.

Deputy Group Officers Kevin Sullivan and Linden Barry were tasked to dispose of the two existing vehicles – a Nissan Patrol field command vehicle (FCV) and Ford Transit field operational vehicle (FOV) – and buy and fit out the new FCV.

Built on a Ford Ranger XLT twin cab, the back module was built by MFI Service Bodies in Warragul, which was recommended to the group by other brigades and groups.

This new FCV allows one-minute set-up and gives the on-scene incident controller rapid access to a small work station and three fixed Tait radios. The vehicle combines the radio equipment from the group's previous FCV and FOV.

It has two Tait radios, a Motorola and a UHF radio in the cab, which are used for turnouts or when deployed as a sector commander's car.

When parked and used as a static brigade control point vehicle, the rear command module has three Tait fixed radios, and a Tait portable with fixed roof aerial for enhanced command activities.

The custom-made work station has two clear work areas, one for the incident controller and one for the operations officer. All radios are within easy reach of both officers, and an enhanced T card folder has been developed and is key for the operations officer to achieve resource management of the on-scene trucks and aircraft deployed to the fire.

The work station area has room for maps, the T card folder, whiteboard and access to three to five Tait radios for use on Vicfire, command, aircraft and fireground channels simultaneously.

The vehicle set-up means the officers responsible for managing the fire also manage the radio work, rather than vehicle operators managing the radios and relaying the information to the officers.

Now operational in Casey Group, the vehicle supports the 11 member brigades and neighbouring groups. The car's first deployment was a grassfire at Lyndhurst in early January 2017, and it was extremely

successful in helping the first on-scene officers manage the 21 CFA vehicles attending the incident. It achieved the car's primary goal of providing an enhanced static brigade control point from which to work. This vehicle is a major investment to allow Casey Group brigade officers the best chance to manage their fires and incidents in the most appropriate and successful way.

STORY LINDEN BARRY, DGO CASEY GROUP



Above: Group Officer Shane Keen (left) and Deputy Group Officer Linden Barry with Casey Group's new FCV

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED BY LINDEN BARRY



CFA keeps the faith

CFA's first multicultural liaison officer/multicultural presenter Nada El-Masri was appointed to District 8 in 2016.

Nada is delivering Home Fire Safety and Early Fire Safety programs to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities including Indian, Burmese, Afghan, South Sudanese, Iranian and Indigenous Australian. She presents in venues such as maternal and child health centres and AMES Australia schools where new migrants and refugees attend language classes, and also conducts cooking safety sessions.

"Networking is the foundation of my job," said Nada. "I'm trying to open up paths to communities that perhaps haven't been open to CFA before."

"I might turn up at an event in the Indian community and they will be open to me because I present as a person of faith – it doesn't matter which faith it is. It makes me someone to trust."

Nada has visited the local Aboriginal cooperative and numerous faith sites with

Dandenong Fire Brigade to ensure they're familiar with the buildings and customs in the event of an emergency. With about 20 worship sites in the Dandenong area, it is hoped that more members will visit and learn more about their various faiths and customs.

"We can't make assumptions about what our communities need and want from us," continued Nada. "The more we know in advance, the better prepared we'll be when we turn up to an incident in terms of cultural respect."

"By understanding and educating our CALD communities, the better the chance of them following fire safety advice and reducing the risk of injury or death."

Nada's CFA uniform has been specially designed for a loose fit and she always wears a headscarf.

"What I wear doesn't make me any less an Australian or a person," said Nada. "And I'm always in my red boots."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

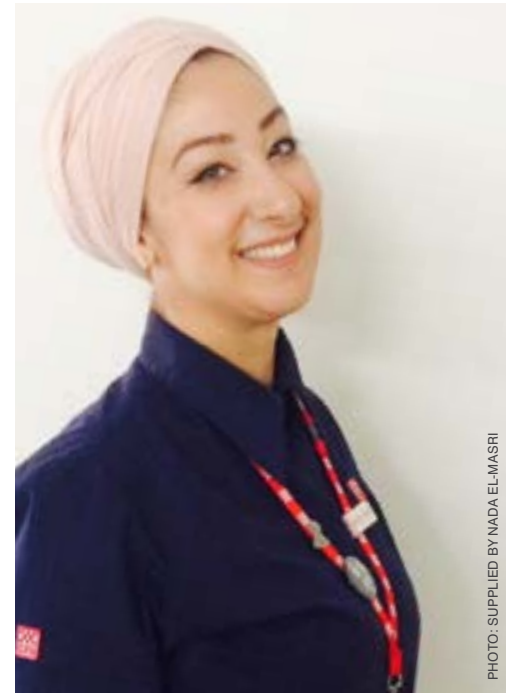


PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY NADA EL-MASRI

On the ball with fire in her belly



PHOTO: COURTESY OF CARLTON MEDIA/GRAEME FURLONG

A country girl at heart, Sarah Last, a CFA volunteer with Powlett-Salisbury Fire Brigade, is now tackling her new career as a professional footballer.

"I love being involved in things in my community," said Sarah. "CFA has such a big impact and you can really see how they help you and people around you."

Her dad Alan is the current treasurer of the brigade and she often helps him with the bookkeeping.

"When I can get home on weekends, I do non-operational roles for the brigade. I take the trucks out for a drive and help Dad on the computer with rostering."

Sarah moved to Bendigo two years ago to start her university degree in health promotion. She loved playing football and started her footy career with Bendigo Thunder in 2015, but never imagined she would be playing football professionally one day.

"I started playing football because I love sport and it was a hobby. The Carlton Football Club scout watched me play and recommended I try out for the AFL women's league. Never in a million years did I think I would get in," she said.

"When I was drafted to Carlton Football Club last October I was in shock. I had a wave of emotions – obviously I was very excited but the reality of it all hit me too."

Sarah's humble personality and kind-hearted nature is no doubt a great asset to her team and her brigade, and her colleagues will no doubt be looking forward to her kicking goals on and off the field.

"From my personal experience, the earlier you start playing the better off you'll be. Don't ever rule yourself out. Work hard, put in the effort and be open-minded. Be willing to give anything a crack."

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

Michael Henningsen Caroline Springs Fire Brigade, D14

faces of
CFA



PHOTO BY BRIAN MORRIS

What are your CFA roles?

I'm a Level 3 Firefighter on B shift. I've been at Caroline Springs since I got out of Recruits in 2014.

Why did you apply to become a career firefighter?

I was always interested in the role of firefighter as someone who actively maintains fitness as part of their work. I was a physical education teacher in secondary schools so I've always had that emphasis.

It also appealed to me to help out in the community rather than take. I wasn't 100 per cent sure how I'd handle night shifts but shift work appealed to me.

What was the first incident that made an impact on you?

Within my first week we were responded to an MVA with possible person trapped. Josh Martin and I were new recruits on the same shift and, unfortunately, it was a concrete truck versus a car and there was a fatality.

I thought, "Wow, this is it. We're not in the training environment any more." AV [Ambulance Victoria] and VicPol were there as is standard but it was all new to us.

What I remember most was my superiors conducting the debrief afterwards on scene. The support was immediate. We all introduced ourselves and said what we'd done and if there were any problems. It put my mind at ease that we'd never be left on our own.

What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

Unfortunately, it's always the nasty ones that stick in your mind, and that's where the professionalism of your colleagues stands out.

Last Christmas morning we were called to assist AV with CPR but the patient didn't make it. I related the patient to my father who was the same age and who I was lucky to be spending Christmas Day with when, unfortunately, Christmas Day would never be the same for that particular family.

What CFA support has made the most difference to you?

I wouldn't hesitate to access CFA support if I felt the need. If there's an issue, we're hugely encouraged to get it out and talk about it.

I have professional colleagues who support me and I also rely on them for advice. You know each other so well that I think you're able to pick up if something's up.

You're trained for the difficult times and we discuss issues in advance so, when you turn up at a scene, you know your role. The very defined rank structure also helps with that. You trust your superiors.

Who have been your mentors in CFA?

I've relied heavily on my Leading Firefighters Andy Barry and Adam Leslie. Part of their role is to assist our professional development and we rely on them to guide us through the process of qualifying for the next level.

Station Officer Peter Higgins has given me great guidance with his extensive experience and calm demeanour on the fireground.

Qualified Firefighter Garry Green has been at Caroline Springs for a long time and he's always my first port of call for questions about how the station or the trucks operate. He's very mechanically minded.

What has been the highlight of your time in CFA?

I'm most proud to implement my training and work within a tight-knit crew in a professional manner to complete a job efficiently.

I really enjoy the camaraderie and I look forward to work every week. Everyone gets along.

INTERVIEW BY LEITH HILLARD

Goodwill helps recovery



While attending a buck's party in Melbourne on Saturday 7 February 2009, Chum Creek resident David Laity received the phone call he'd been dreading.

"We think your house has burnt down," a close friend told him.

Heart sinking, David phoned his partner, who was at a hen's party in Melbourne, and passed on the devastating news.

All week Victoria had been sweltering through its worst heatwave on record. The state was in the middle of a serious drought and little rain had fallen in over two months. This, combined with extreme heat, high winds and low humidity had created the worst bushfire weather conditions ever recorded.

For David and his partner, the main concern was their dog, who they had (luckily) decided that morning would be safer at their new rental property in Toolangi which they were due to move into the following Monday.

The pair immediately left Melbourne and drove back up into the hills, only to be blocked by police road closures. After a few tense and emotional days in Healesville, they were finally able to gain access to Toolangi, where they found the fire had 'skipped over' their new property.

"Our dog came bounding out when we arrived ... I can't explain how relieved we were," David said.

"Even then, knowing we'd probably lost everything at Chum Creek, we considered ourselves to be extremely lucky. We were safe and our dog was safe."

Tuesday 7 February 2017 marked the eighth anniversary of Black Saturday, a day when the lives of many Victorians and CFA members were changed forever.

One hundred and seventy-three people died, making these fires Australia's most devastating bushfires on record. Black Saturday was David's first experience of bushfire and his introduction to CFA.

"The time feels fuzzy now," David said. "Serious events were unfolding, but we had no idea about the magnitude in those early days."

As predicted, David's property at Chum Creek was well and truly destroyed. During the weeks that followed, he and his partner

stayed at a close friend's place down the road, helping her and her neighbours defend their homes.

Nearly a month later, the township of Toolangi finally reopened. David and his partner sifted through their meagre belongings and moved into their new home.

But the recovery journey is long and complex, as David would soon find.

Reflecting on the utter devastation and loss of life from that fateful weekend, David felt increasingly grateful to the firefighters, support agencies and local community members who had given their all during those dark days.

David joined Daylesford Fire Brigade as a volunteer firefighter, later transferring to Woodend brigade where he still regularly attends callouts.

But he longed to do more so, in 2010, David put the money he received from the Red Cross Bushfire Appeal towards establishing a new social enterprise, Goodwill Wines. The internet-based enterprise sells boutique wines from small wineries, with 50 per cent of the profits going to not-for-profit organisations selected by the customer.

"It took nearly five years to get the initiative off the ground," David said.

"But now we have raised over \$180,000 for around 350 different not-for-profits and community organisations right around Australia."

David is humbled by the success, and believes the business has played a major role in his personal recovery and acceptance of what happened in 2009.

"I didn't lose anywhere near what others lost. We had close friends and family who were impacted, but we didn't experience the horrors some communities had to endure.

"We were extremely lucky, and Goodwill Wines was a way for me to acknowledge this and give back to those who really needed it. Eight years on, these social and community organisations still provide much-needed services to those who were impacted by the 2009 fires."

STORY JESS ESLER



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY DAVID LAITY



PHOTOS: ROD TAYLOR

Women set the pace

Almost a third of Winchelsea Fire Brigade's 26 operational members are women, and they are all heavily involved in the community and the township's fire season preparedness strategies.

These eight women have a range of skills and experience from formal training and turnouts, and are an important part of the brigade's response 24 hours a day. Their skills include grass and scrub fire suppression, low structure, hazmat, using breathing apparatus, driving, advanced pumping, first-aid and community engagement. They also take part in the annual roadside burn program.

Debbie Rowley (pictured below, right) who works in retail, has been a member of the brigade for more than 20 years. Her passion is to drive fire trucks. She gets enormous satisfaction serving her community, especially delivering Fire Safe Kids at the local primary school. She has gained many skills during her time in the brigade and has attended all types of incidents including grassfires, vehicle accidents, structure fires and local burn-offs, and has joined strike teams.

Kaylee Stocks, a student nurse, joined the brigade in 2015. Kaylee was a little nervous at first but is very motivated and excited to give something back to the community. She has been to many callouts including sandbagging during floods, traffic control, vehicle accidents, grassfires and on two strike teams including to the 2015 Wye River fire.

Kaylene Stocks, a stay-at-home mum and photographer, has also been an active member of the brigade since 2015. She loves what she does in the brigade and has been on many callouts including to grassfires, vehicle accidents, structure fires, sandbagging, and on a few strike teams including to the 2015 Scotsburn fire and to South Australia. Recently, Kaylene completed low structure, hazmat awareness and Property Advice Visit Service (PAVS) training, and is looking forward to delivering PAVS knowledge into the community.

Both Kaylee and Kaylene are part of three generations of family members currently in the brigade, and sometimes all three generations are on the same truck at the same time.

Helen Hunt has a young family and turns out to incidents and takes part in roadside burns. She was also part of a strike team to the Wye River fire. Helen loves serving the community through Winchelsea brigade and plans to serve for many years.

Kate Allen, a horticulturist, works at the local hospital. She has been an active member of the brigade for around seven years and has completed low structure and chainsaw training. She's attended grassfires, structure fires and vehicle accidents.

The newest members, Marley Smith and Trudy White, became active members in November 2016. Both have attended brigade training and continue to gain new skills through formal and practical training including the brigade's roadside burn-off program. Trudy wants to be involved in the local command facility learning map reading and logging duties.

Kathy Taylor (pictured above right) is a business consultant and has been a member of CFA for 30 years. She worked in support roles before training to be a firefighter. Kathy has gained many skills during her time in the brigade including breathing apparatus and rescue and hazmat awareness. She has attended grassfires, vehicle accidents, structure fires and burn-offs, and been on several strike teams.

Winchelsea brigade encourages and welcomes women to become both operational and support members of the brigade.

STORY KATHY TAYLOR



Smoking ceremony ushers in FDP in D20

A traditional smoking ceremony at Rochester Fire Brigade ushered in the Fire Danger Period in mid-November, and readied the local firefighters for a safe passage through the summer fire season.

The ceremony, the first of its kind for CFA, was performed by Aboriginal elder Kerri Douglas from the local Dja Dja Wurrung clan, the cultural custodians for a substantial part of country in District 20.

"This is one of the most significant and timeless ceremonies performed by our people," Kerri said, "and I'm proud to share this with CFA on behalf of my community".

"We are privileged to host the event," Rochester Fire Brigade Captain Luke Warren told the attendees. "It's a unique way for us to learn about each other and to bring our communities closer together."

Smoking ceremonies have great meaning for Aboriginal people. As Kerri Douglas lit the

leaves of local cherry ballart, wattle and gum, she spoke about how the rich aromatic smoke cleanses the air and wards off bad spirits. She then invited guests to enter the smoke as a sign of good intentions and respect.

CFA District 20 Operations Manager Peter Taylor (pictured in the smoke) spoke about the importance of engaging with Victoria's Koori community.

"This smoking ceremony is all about building partnerships based on cultural exchange and knowledge sharing," he said. "District 20 is committed to the CFA Koori Inclusion Action Plan and this ceremony is one of many steps we hope to take in building lasting partnerships."

CFA has a new website to help build partnerships between CFA and Victoria's Koori communities: kiap.cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY DEBRA SALVAGNO



PHOTO: MARCUS SALVAGNO

Mount Martha family on film

It started with a university project but turned into a film that has inspired a community.

Mount Martha Fire Brigade volunteer Will Smith created *Passing the Torch* – a documentary about his family's involvement with this brigade. Will has been a CFA volunteer since he was 13 and is now in a leadership role as a Junior brigade coordinator.

Will made the film for his Film and TV bachelor degree at Deakin University. Mimicking a professional documentary, Will teamed up with four students to create the film. Each team member took on a role, with Will as director/producer.

The film tells the story of three generations. Will is the son of Mount Martha brigade captain Brian. His late grandfather Wilfred was one of nine founding members of the brigade, which was formed in response to a growing community.

"Originally we were going to do a more general film about Mount Martha brigade's history but our tutor recommended we focus on my family's



involvement with the brigade, which the team agreed would be a strong angle," Will said.

"It was a lot of hard work but we all had fun creating something that has really resonated with the community. Dad enjoyed taking part too and he has already been recognised by a few people."

Since *Passing the Torch* was published on the brigade's Facebook page, it has been viewed more than 4,000 times.

"It's a great way to highlight the strong sense of community CFA

brigades have. They're all great groups of people dedicated to protecting their neighbours' lives and properties," Will said.

"Seeing the finished product so well received by the broader community has been the most rewarding part for me."

STORY BRIE SNARE

Brigades snag funds

Shepparton East Fire Brigade was one of more than 40 CFA brigades to take part in the Bunnings Aussie Day Weekend Fundraiser BBQ, raising \$1,239 for the brigade's much-needed shed extension.



PHOTO: EMILY MARSLAND

Once again, Victorians headed to their local Bunnings stores to buy a snag and soft drink to support CFA and SES volunteers.

More than \$125,000 was raised, of which \$70,487 went directly to 43 nominated CFA brigades. In addition, another \$7,273 in cash was donated by customers on the day.

Shepparton East Fire Brigade Captain Matthew Dwyer thanked Shepparton brigade for its support.

Knowing it was trying to raise funds for its shed extension, Shepparton brigade gave over the fundraising opportunity to its smaller, rural neighbour.

"It was a great day for our brigade," said Matthew.

"One of our members showed children how to sit in a fire truck, operate the beacons and spray water, which the kids enjoyed," Matthew said.

There was a fire extinguisher display and brigade volunteers handed out pamphlets and CFA merchandise. Bunnings team members manning the barbecue also had a well-earned opportunity to cool down while learning how to use the fire hose.

CFA extends its thanks to Bunnings and its customers for supporting this important fundraising event, not to mention our own volunteers who gave their time to make it a success.

STORY AMANDA BOLCH

Brigade Trader on Facebook



It's such a great idea, you wonder why it hasn't been running for years: an online forum where brigades can arrange to swap or give away excess items.

With 711 followers so far, the closed Brigade Trader page is exclusive to CFA members.

If brigade members are having a clean-up and come across items that are not needed, the page can put you in contact with a brigade that wants what you have. In the process, you will be expanding your statewide networks, building CFA's broader capacity and providing practical support to others.

That's what happened at Wollert Fire Station where members cleaning out a shed found turnout hooks gifted to them, an old quick-fill pump and a hose reel.

"We'd rather give them to another brigade than put them on Ebay and get 50 bucks," said Captain Colin Clune. "We've also got a trophy cabinet and some shelving we don't need but others could use."

Wattle Glen Fire Brigade, also in District 14, needed some extra turnout hooks and jumped at the gift.

"A station upgrade to a three-bay meant we didn't have enough hooks for our non-regular, wildfire-only members," said Captain Stephen Gaunt. "We were grateful to get something for free that we needed and wanted."

Search for CFA Brigade Trader on Facebook and request to join the group. Upload a picture of the excess item(s) and provide a brief and accurate description including its condition and measurements. Other brigades in the Facebook group can then express their interest.

STORY LISA PETERS



PHOTO: MIKE EDMONDS

Donations fund Dromana 4WD

Dromana Fire Brigade recently notched up more than \$300,000 in donations from the Ritchies Community Benefit (CB) Program – making it the highest individual CFA brigade recipient of the local community fundraising program.

“This unique program has provided significant financial support to our brigade through the generosity of community members who chose Dromana Fire Brigade as the recipient of a percentage of their shop which is donated directly to us,” said Captain Timothy Desmond.

The brigade’s most recent purchase was a Mazda Crew Cab and Ritchies CEO Fred Harrison was invited to hand over the keys at Dromana Fire Station.

“I am really proud of our association with Dromana CFA,” Mr Harrison said.

“From the day we launched our CB program, the local brigade was incredibly proactive in the community. I am delighted we have been able to support them in a meaningful way.”

Timothy said the new car supports rescue calls within the Peninsula and Westernport Group boundaries and is also used by members to attend meetings and training including at VEMTC Sale campus, which is a 500-kilometre round trip.

The Ritchies Community Benefit Program started in 1993. Timothy

said it had allowed the brigade to concentrate on its core business of response and training members rather than worry about fundraising.

“The ability to make significant purchases during this time, not to mention extensions to the current station to the tune of \$85,000, has only been achievable through this substantial initiative,” he said.

STORY AMANDA BOLCH



PHOTO: LEITON MCLEAR

CFA and the Good Friday Appeal

CFA brigades are the backbone of the Royal Children’s Hospital Good Friday Appeal, collecting more than \$25 million for the lifesaving appeal since the late 1950s.

Donald Fire Brigade members have been collecting since 1963, and Lindsay Wood, a brigade member for more than 65 years, remembers when they first started participating in the appeal.

“We called it the Donald-Charlton Barrow Push,” Lindsay recalled.

“Members would push wheelbarrows along dirt roads through Donald and Charlton, visiting houses and encouraging people to throw money in for the cause.”

They were so passionate about the cause that, in 1964, the Donald-to-Charlton push began travelling down to Melbourne.

“Each year on Good Friday, Donald members would start up the 1926 T-model Ford fire truck and head for the Royal Children’s Hospital in Melbourne,” said Lindsay.

“We’d aim to visit as many towns as possible along the way.”

The nine-hour trip travelled through Charlton, Wedderburn, Inglewood, Bridgewater, Marong

and then across to Ravenswood, Harcourt, Castlemaine, Elphinstone, Malmsbury, Kyneton, Woodend and Gisborne before arriving at the Royal Children’s Hospital.

“The truck’s highest speed was only 40 kilometres an hour, so it was transported from town to town on the back of a trailer,” explained Lindsay.

“As we entered each town the truck was unloaded, the engine started, the air horn blown and off around the streets we would go.”

Donald’s members enthusiastically pushed wheelbarrows down the road beside the truck, inspiring locals to throw money in for the cause.

“Sometimes we might collect up to 300 pounds, which was a lot of money back in those days.”

After visiting the Royal Children’s Hospital, the truck would head through the city to the Good Friday Appeal counting rooms at The Herald & Weekly Times printing rooms in Flinders Street to hand over the money. Lindsay said it was always a great feeling delivering the collection.

“It’s a tradition and appeal that we hold close to our hearts. We hope it continues for many more years to come.”

Brigades interested in registering as an official fundraiser for the Good Friday Appeal can contact Eموke Bakaca at the Royal Children’s Hospital Good Friday Appeal on **9292 1166**.

STORY GEORGINA HILL



PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY DONALD FIRE BRIGADE

Tennis, treats and a big thanks

Delicious nibbles, drinks and a bird's-eye view of Venus Williams and Andy Murray were just a few of the perks that ten CFA members and their partners were treated to at this year's Australian Open.

On Sunday 22 January, Peter Bailey (see story on page 25), Neil Beer, Bradley Fisher, Peter Harbridge, Jamie Herd, Joanne Melton, Kevin Bolwell, Niki Habibis, David Pollard, Barry Planner and their partners were given the chance to enjoy all the thrills and spills from a corporate box to thank them for their contribution to CFA.

Nominations for the event were put forward by each of the districts to recognise members who had achieved something significant over the past 12 months.

Limestone brigade's Kevin and Jenny Bolwell, who collectively have over 80 years of service to CFA, said the day was fabulous from start to end.

"Not only did we get to see some fantastic displays of tennis and mingle with fellow CFA members, but we also got spoilt rotten in the process," said Kevin.

"The experience was more than we could have ever imagined, and we were so grateful to be nominated."

CFA Deputy Chief Officer Alen Slijepcevic, who attended the event on behalf of the Chief Officer, said it was important to show our thanks to some amazing CFA members.

"All these people went above and beyond for their local area, and we're truly thankful," said Alen.

The hospitality was provided by Delaware North Companies Australia.

STORY GRACE QUINN



PHOTO: LAURA BRACKEN

Mates helping mates

Kiewia Fire Brigade Junior member Will Damm and his father Steve recently dropped into CFA's District 24 headquarters for a chat about Will's involvement with CFA's North East Region Youth Crew program.

The practical training and leadership skills Will gained from this program enabled him to help out a mate who'd been thrown off a motorcycle while camping with Will and other friends last year.

Will and his mates were celebrating a 16th birthday, camping overnight in a shearing shed on one of their mate's family properties. The group was riding motorbikes around the hills, with four mates following in a ute. During the ride, one of Will's friends fell off his bike, landed heavily and was knocked unconscious. The fall broke both his arms and he received chest injuries which made breathing difficult.

Will put his first-aid training into action, instructing his mates in how they could help the situation. They had to clear and maintain their friend's airways and treated his injuries with the limited supplies they had on hand.

"One mate drove the ute to where he could get to a landline and call for help as there was no mobile reception," Will explained.

"He came back with his parents, a couple of police officers who happened to be in the area and paramedics.

"They transported my mate back down the steep terrain after spending three hours stabilising him so he could be moved, and met an



ambulance at the road. Thankfully, he made a full recovery."

At the Youth Crew's break-up event last September, Will received the Bruce Vine Leadership Award which was in part for helping his friend after the accident.

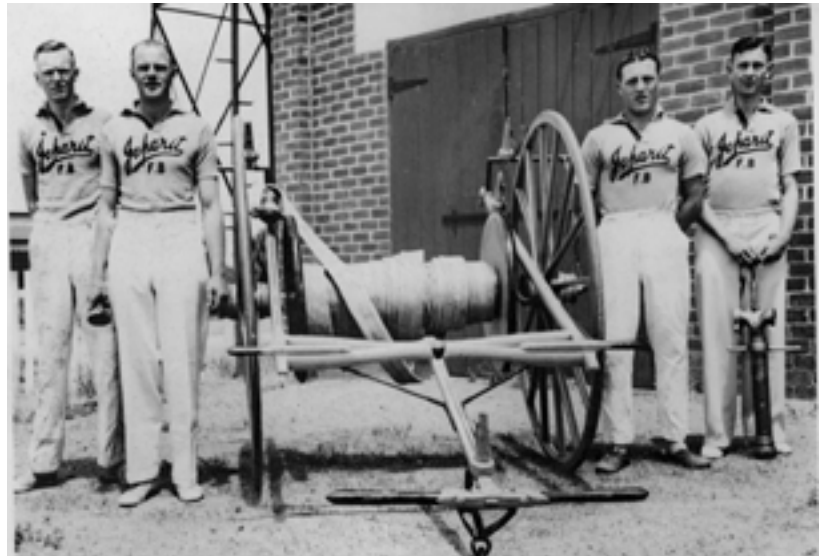
Above: Will Damm (left) receives his award from Bruce Vine, the founder of North East Youth Crew, and Jack Scanlon, the friend Will helped

PHOTO: SHELLY DAMM

STORY DAVID BOX

Through the ages – Jeparit





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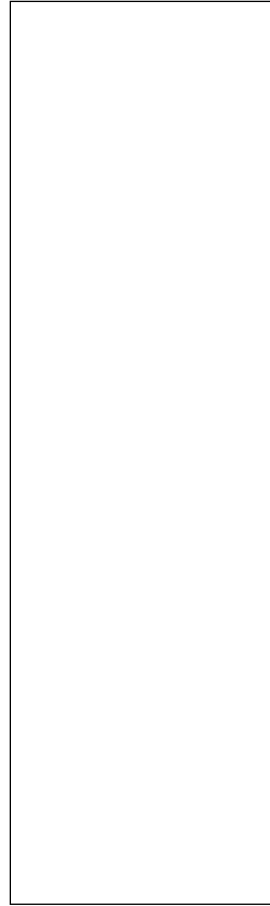
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- Get \$50 off your next new booking when you spend over \$1,500 at **Flight Centre**.
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