

# Brigade

OUR COMMUNITY • OUR CFA



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**New faces at CFA**

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### Useful resources

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 [twitter.com/cfa\\_updates](https://twitter.com/cfa_updates)

CFA intranet:

[members.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://members.cfa.vic.gov.au)

Free CFA images for download:

[digitallibrary.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://digitallibrary.cfa.vic.gov.au)

Community engagement material:

[cfa.vic.gov.au/cecontentportal](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/cecontentportal)

CFA templates for download:

[cfa.vic.gov.au/templatetoolkit](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/templatetoolkit)



PHOTO: NATHAN YOUNGHUSBAND,  
YOUR STORY STUDIOS

## Winter 2022

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# Independent review of CFA culture



**We are on a journey to improve CFA's culture. It has been very clear that this needs to happen and is an important part of securing our future as a great place to volunteer and work. We have heard many stories where that has not been the case.**

There has been a lot of activity over the past 18 months to improve things but we know there is a lot more to do. To ensure that we create the best CFA we can be, we commissioned an external review in September 2021. This was in response to member feedback and concerns. We wanted advice about how CFA can enhance its culture and improve the management of issues when they arise.

We know that today and historically there are behaviours and actions in CFA that would not meet community standards. As the senior leaders of CFA we do not and must not shy away from these issues and we accept the need for CFA to build further on actions taken to date to strengthen the right environment for our CFA people.

We have released the independent External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support the CFA of the Future. This review was conducted by Allen and Clarke Consulting and led by independent expert Dr Helen Szoke. We thank the review team for their efforts over recent months as well as the many CFA members who have courageously contributed their experiences.

The review presents 10 recommendations which address:

- the way CFA establishes and manages the behavioural and cultural expectations of its members
- The way CFA manages grievances, complaints and issues and the escalation paths and options for matters that cannot be resolved
- CFA's overall organisational culture to support diversity, productivity and innovation.

CFA has accepted all 10 recommendations in full. The full report and summary document are available at [cfa.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-values-and-behaviours/external-review-of-culture-and-issues-management](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-values-and-behaviours/external-review-of-culture-and-issues-management).

## About the review

Some of the issues raised in this report are distressing reading. It may be challenging for those who have experienced any of the behaviours described, but also for the tens of thousands of CFA members who serve their communities with pride and exemplify CFA values of teamwork, respect and integrity.

We are deeply sorry that the experiences of some CFA members have left them feeling undervalued or harmed. We are committed to making sure that being part of CFA is an enriching experience for everyone.

All of us play a role in making sure this is the case – no matter what your role is in brigade, group, district, region or Burwood. There can be no place in CFA for behaviours

that do not live up to our values and our behavioural standards. A diverse and positive culture will ensure the future of CFA.

We will be using this review to help build on the positive work we have done and to take CFA forward. Our immediate next step is to develop a five-year implementation plan to progress the findings. We will regularly report to you on our progress against the actions.

The review shows us there is much more to do, however we are already moving ahead in addressing issues management, diversity and inclusion and you can read more about these initiatives on the External Review Members Online page.

## Improving our culture

All of us who are part of CFA have a role to play in setting and embedding a positive culture which embraces diversity. We know how widely respected and trusted CFA is across Victoria which is why we must all take accountability for ensuring a safe, inclusive and equitable CFA.

Over many years our people have shown a tremendous ability to grow, adapt and respond to changes in the organisation and the broader environment. We have every confidence that working together we can build a brighter, stronger future for CFA as an organisation which embraces diversity and opportunity.

## Support and feedback

If any CFA member – current or former – wishes to raise a concern about their experience at CFA they can do so by contacting their manager/district ACFO/HR business partner or via our complaints process. There is advice about your options on Members Online.

If you have any questions or further feedback about the review, please email [externalculturereview@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:externalculturereview@cfa.vic.gov.au).

Remember if you or a family member need support please call our confidential Wellbeing Support Line on **1800 959 232**.

We are proud of the work our members undertake to support and protect their communities and we want CFA to be sector-leading, with a culture which truly lives up to our vision as a great place to volunteer and work.

**Greg Wilson**  
Chair

**Natalie MacDonald**  
CEO

**Jason Heffernan**  
Chief Officer

# Culture and issues management review

Over the past few years CFA has been working hard to improve our culture and manage issues when they do arise. We want to make sure we are doing everything we can to create a positive, diverse and inclusive culture where members feel safe and supported.

Following feedback received about the outcome of previous reviews, CFA's Executive and Board considered it was important that independent expertise be used to identify what steps need to be taken to further improve our processes for addressing issues.

## Background and consultation

In late 2021 we commissioned Allen and Clarke Consulting, led by Dr Helen Szoke to undertake a review of CFA's culture and issues management.

Dr Szoke has extensive experience in identifying, examining and addressing issues relating to equal opportunity, sexual harassment and discrimination and human rights in a number of organisations. She also has experience working with volunteer-based organisations.

CFA members participated in multiple forums to share feedback, as well as individual sessions, with the review team. Members also submitted feedback to the review team using an external email address.

Subsequent rounds of engagement included focus groups with key cohorts within CFA including the Women's Advisory Group, the Young Adults Advisory Group, regional and district business managers, training managers, Allies of Inclusion Network, Volunteer Sustainability team members, HR leaders, brigade administrative support officers, operational leaders, brigade captains and group officers.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria and relevant industrial bodies were also consulted.

More than 500 stakeholders participated in individual or group consultations and we are grateful to all those who contributed.

## Final report

The final report was presented to CFA and was released to members via email in June 2022 and released publicly in the interests of transparency.

You can read a summary report and the full report on Members Online ([members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/culture-and-issues-management](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/culture-and-issues-management)) and on our website ([cfa.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-values-and-behaviours/external-review-of-culture-and-issues-management](https://cfa.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-values-and-behaviours/external-review-of-culture-and-issues-management)). A hard copy can be mailed to any member – contact [externalculturereview@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:externalculturereview@cfa.vic.gov.au).

The authors of the review made 10 recommendations, all of which have been fully accepted by CFA. These are shown on the next page.

The wide-ranging full report outlines what's working well and where we need to change, providing a detailed roadmap for the future.

Some actions are already underway to address the issues highlighted and there is more information on the following pages, along with how we will develop the implementation plan.

Since the release of the review, CFA's senior leaders have been talking with volunteers and staff about the contents and the findings, discussing the recommendations and giving members opportunities to explore the recommendations and what they mean for us.

We are heartened by the number of members who have welcomed this report and are ready to play their part in making CFA an enriching experience for all.





**Recommendation 1:** Develop and implement a plan for organisational change to improve culture and issues management.

Develop, communicate and implement a five-year action plan for organisational change to improve culture and issues management which builds on positive initiatives already underway, embeds the recommendations of this Review, provides a five-year timeline for implementation, including consideration of independent monitoring.



**Recommendation 2:** Build on the Values and Standards of the CFA.

Build on the Values of CFA as set out in the organisation's Strategic Framework, the Behavioural Standards and the Volunteer Charter, and support adherence to these values in all aspects of the engagement and work of the members of CFA.



**Recommendation 3:** Ensure effective support to Assistant Chief Fire Officers (ACFOs), Commanders, Brigade Management Teams (BMTs) and Group Officers.

The relationship of ACFOs and Commanders with Group Officers and Brigade Management Teams (BMTs) should be reviewed to ensure that they are effectively supported, not only in their operational duties, but also in their key roles of recruiting new members, ensuring understanding and application of values and the behavioural standards, and localised conflict resolution.



**Recommendation 4:** Continue to improve the process for issues management.

Processes for issues management should build on the work of Right Environment Initiatives to continue to bring transparency, timeliness and effectiveness in dispute resolution to all levels of the agency.



**Recommendation 5:** Increase the avenues for conflict resolution.

Additional avenues for conflict resolution and surfacing of behaviours that have harmed people should be implemented.



**Recommendation 6:** Continue to improve the focus on health and wellbeing.

CFA should ensure that its Health and Wellbeing Strategy is comprehensive, accessible to all members, regularly audited and that data is used to inform changes, training and operational responses.



**Recommendation 7:** Increase diversity and inclusion across all levels.

CFA must align and extend its current initiatives to develop diversity and inclusion in its membership, to expand the volunteer base of CFA and ensure contemporary and current perspectives guide the work for CFA into the future.



**Recommendation 8:** Increase measurement of cultural change.

There should be regular audits of Brigades to identify structural, system and intangible barriers to improving culture and to identifying supports to make the necessary changes.



**Recommendation 9:** Increase collaboration across Victorian fire services.

Prioritise the strengthening of collaboration and partnerships between the Victorian firefighting organisations, their leaders and members.



**Recommendation 10:** Invest in best practice Resource Management Systems.

To support the implementation of this Review, CFA should invest in best practice Resource Management Systems that enhance Human Resource Management and support prevention of bullying, harassment and discrimination across CFA.

## Addressing the review findings

We are deeply sorry that the experiences of some CFA members, as outlined in the review, have left them feeling undervalued or harmed. There can be no place in CFA for behaviours that do not live up to our values and our behavioural standards.

We know that the vast majority of our tens of thousands of CFA members serve their communities with pride and exemplify the CFA values of teamwork, respect and integrity and the review will be challenging for them as well.

All of us must work together to make sure we have the right environment for everyone to feel safe, included and supported.

To address the findings, an implementation plan will be developed through a project team overseen by the Executive, with the outcomes regularly reported to members.

Please continue to visit the dedicated Members Online page for information and updates – [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/culture-and-issues-management](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/culture-and-issues-management).

We have every confidence that by working together we can build a brighter, stronger future for CFA as an organisation which embraces diversity and opportunity.

## What we are already doing

### Rollout of Behavioural Standards

CFA is committed to fostering an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or violence and where all CFA members, officers and contractors are treated with dignity and respect. Creating the right environment to make CFA a safe place to work includes setting expectations around acceptable and lawful behaviours.

CFA's Behavioural Standards have been developed to complement existing values, codes of conduct and business rules, which include:

- CFA values
- VPS Code of Conduct (employees only)
- Volunteer Code of Conduct (volunteer members only)
- CFA Executive Integrity Policy Suite and associated Business Rules
- Health Safety Environment and Wellbeing Policy
- CFA Values and Behaviours Executive Policy
- Chief Officer's Command Philosophy.

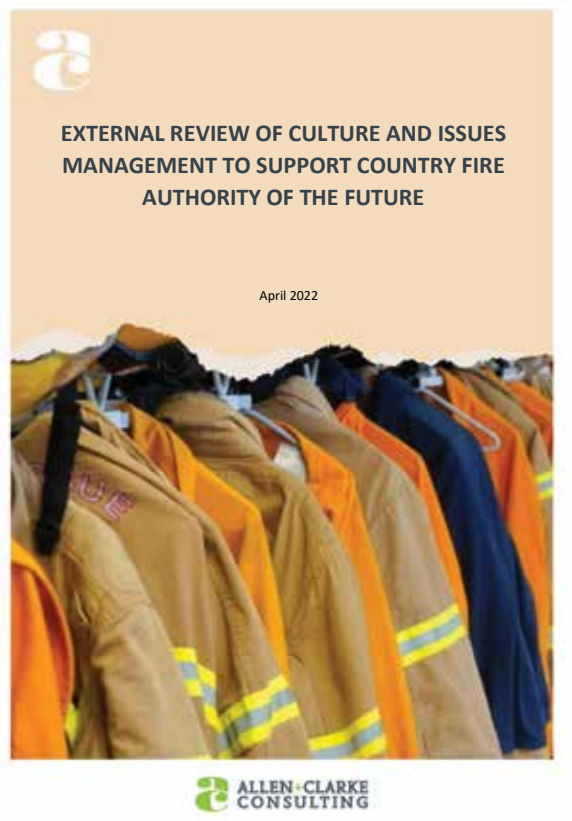
The Behavioural Standards are currently being rolled out across CFA through regional and district workshops.

### Women's Advisory Committee and Young Adults' Advisory Committee

CFA established the Women's and Young Adults' Advisory Committees to provide a forum for these groups of volunteers to directly engage with the CEO and Chief Officer about issues of concern which need to be addressed to support diversity and inclusion.

Since being established the feedback received through these advisory committees has resulted in, or supported, some significant initiatives including:

- a successful budget bid for gender-appropriate facilities at a number of stations
- a new video outlining the requirements for participating in a strike team
- the rollout of female hygiene kits.



### Gender Equality Action Plan

CFA's Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2021-25 outlines a roadmap to reduce barriers to gender equality at CFA and to support a culture of inclusion. The plan, which has been endorsed by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, initially focuses on staff and looks at how we will strive for gender balance at all levels of leadership; build awareness and understanding of diversity and equity.

In 2022-23 we will be exploring with the Gender Equality Commission how the principles underpinning the GEAP for our staff might also be applied to support increased diversity in our critical volunteer workforce.

### Complaints management

Over the past 12 months, CFA has had a strong focus on addressing the processes for managing complaints through:

- increased HR resources for regions and districts to support management of local issues as soon as they arise. We know that the quicker a matter is addressed, the more likely it is to resolve positively
- engagement of external support to accelerate the resolution of complex, long-standing complaints. During this period, the number of outstanding legacy complaints has reduced from 119 (as at Sept 2020) to zero.

If you have experienced or witnessed any behaviours that you are concerned about while at CFA you should raise it immediately by contacting your line of command or HR business partner in the first instance. Alternatively, you can contact the Complaints Team on **0409 105 594** or [complaints@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:complaints@cfa.vic.gov.au).

There are also other options for making complaints, including anonymously. These are outlined on Members Online: [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/behavioural-standards/make-a-complaint](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/behavioural-standards/make-a-complaint).



# Recognising Excellence

The Spirit of CFA Awards recognise outstanding achievements and significant contributions made by CFA staff and volunteers to CFA, local communities and the State of Victoria. On 17 July CFA presented awards to both staff and volunteers that covered a range of categories from community engagement to innovation, and for individuals and teams alike. COVID-19 restrictions meant we had to postpone the 2020 ceremony, so this year's ceremony in Ballarat included winners from 2020 and 2022.

Chief Executive Officer Natalie MacDonald said she was pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the Spirit of CFA Awards, which reinforce that CFA is a great place to volunteer and work.

"Hearing about the accomplishments of the nominees was tremendously humbling. Meeting our devoted winners confirms the significance of CFA in the community and the principles we stand for," Natalie said.

"While all award winners are deserving of praise, I'd like to make special note of Emma Conway who received the inaugural Excellence in Leadership Award. Emma demonstrates exemplary leadership and truly embodies the Spirit of CFA."

Acting Chief Officer Gavin Thompson congratulated the recipients and finalists on their significant contributions and outstanding achievements.

"CFA is incredibly proud of its volunteers and staff and it is great to see our members recognised for their contributions to both our organisation and local communities," he said.

"Their dedication and effort are essential to help us achieve our mission of protecting lives and property."

Over the following pages, we have highlighted the winners of the newly introduced Chief Officer Emerging Leader Award and CEO Excellence in Leadership Award and the prestigious Living the Values Awards, and page 11 has a full list of winners.



EMERGING LEADER AWARD WINNERS KATY MILLARD AND KYLIE DAVIS WITH ACTING CHIEF OFFICER GAVIN THOMPSON

## Chief Officer Emerging Leader Award

Newly-introduced for the 2022 awards, the Chief Officer Emerging Leader award was won jointly by Port Campbell Fire Brigade Captain Katy Millard and Eaglehawk Fire Brigade Captain Kylie Davis. The award acknowledges the importance of fostering future leaders who exemplify innovation and inclusiveness in CFA.

### Katy Millard

Port Campbell Fire Brigade Captain Katy Millard is a joint winner of the Chief Officer Emerging Leader Award. According to Katy, the award is recognition that what she's working to accomplish in her local area and the wider CFA community is also in line with what CFA is aiming to achieve for the organisation.

"Winning this award gives me the confidence and encouragement to continue working to improve CFA for all members, both volunteers and staff, not just women," Katy said.

"It also serves as a measure for the extra time and effort I put in to working with others to accomplish goals and make CFA a better place to volunteer. Unlike responding to fire calls and turning out, these extra things just can't be measured."

Katy said this award also builds on the confidence gained during her time with CFA.

"My journey with CFA started when I was in a cycling group with a member of Timboon brigade," Katy said. "He saw value in me joining given my previous experience with Victoria Police. After joining, I became aware that despite being encouraged to try new things, I was restricted from doing so because I'm female. I became really frustrated as a result which had a negative impact on my confidence."

"This was very unfamiliar to me because when I was a police officer other officers supported and encouraged female officers."

While at Timboon Fire Brigade, Katy was nominated for the Building Confident Leaders Program, a leadership program specifically aimed at emerging women leaders in District 6.

Using her newly acquired skills a few months into the leadership program, Katy received endorsement by her fellow brigade members by being elected as brigade captain.





PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIN

CEO EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNER EMMA CONWAY WITH CEO NATALIE MACDONALD

Katy says the combination of being nominated for and elected as brigade captain along with the experience of the leadership program gave her the confidence boost she needed to put her leadership skills to use. This confident leadership didn't go unnoticed, with Katy then nominated for the CFA Women's Advisory Council.

Deputy Chief Officer Rohan Luke, who nominated Katy for the Chief Officer Emerging Leader award said Katy played an active leadership role in the Women's Advisory Committee as well as local diversity and inclusion initiatives.

"Katy has continued to forge new opportunities to enhance CFA culture through her experience, leadership and her balanced approach to discussion," Rohan said. "I look forward to her pursuing future opportunities such as district planning committee roles and state-based committees."

### Kylie Davis

Eaglehawk Fire Brigade Captain Kylie Davis said it was a great shock when she first heard she was nominated for the award.

"It's an honour to be recognised, but I'm not the only one who does everything," Kylie said. "As a captain, I'm only as good as the brigade management team, our officers and the brigade around me. It makes it a lot easier when you've got good members to support you."

She said the Emerging Leader Award is recognition that she is on the right track in her development as a strong leader.

"To me, leadership is not just about standing at the front and directing. It's also about having a quiet word to someone and seeing if they're OK, recognising the members who might be quiet achievers as well, and surrounding yourself with a good network of people to run things by when making decisions."

Acting Chief Officer Gavin Thompson nominated Kylie for the new award and said she has done a wonderful job rebuilding the brigade's morale and response capability after a difficult period.

"She has led the brigade back to a stable, strong dynamic brigade that's growing in membership," Gavin said.

"Kylie should be proud of what she has achieved and I look forward to watching her continue to shine as a CFA leader.

## CEO Excellence in Leadership Award

The CEO Excellence in Leadership Award was introduced in 2022 because of the extremely unusual leadership situation created by the impact of COVID-19. This award recognises a CFA member who has demonstrated inspirational leadership and consistently models the CFA values and behaviours.

### Emma Conway

The inaugural winner was Commander Emma Conway. Acting Deputy Chief Officer Glenn Pröbstl, who nominated Emma for the award, said she was an amazing role model and leader who represented CFA's values in all her work and led with genuine heart and passion.

"Since achieving the rank of commander (previously operations officer), Emma has devoted her time and energy to assisting members and brigades in South East Region," Glenn said.

"Emma is highly respected by staff and volunteers alike, and has spent a significant amount of time performing higher duties as assistant chief fire officer in District 10, where she made significant advancements.

"She is passionate about helping members grow, and devotes her time, expertise, and experience to crucial initiatives such as the Captains Peer Mentoring Program and the Commander Development Program."

Emma said winning this award meant a lot and was significant recognition of her efforts from the organisation she valued deeply.

"CFA is where my heart is. I value the culture, history and meaning deeply," Emma said. "I joined CFA after a 12-year career with the Australian Navy. While I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Navy, it was quite isolating at times with no connection to community.

"CFA epitomises community, with volunteers taking so much from their brigades back into their communities. This was something I wanted to be part of, as connection to the community is so important for me."

When Emma initially learned she was a finalist for the Excellence in Leadership award she was quite humble.

"It means a great deal to be a finalist for this award, as CFA is where my heart lies," Emma said. "Even just being nominated is pretty amazing."

## Living the Values Award

The prestigious Living the Values Award honours CFA members who have and continue to exemplify CFA's values. Nominees promote safety at all times. They show respect, empathy and understanding and they act with integrity, honesty and fairness. Nominees also work collaboratively, maintaining open communication and responding and adapting to change.

### 2020 Living the Values Award – Peter Clarkson

Peter Clarkson, former Captain of Diamond Creek Fire Brigade and current volunteer at Cobram Fire Brigade in District 22, won the 2020 award. Peter joined CFA in 2002. He was a member of the Scouts at the time and a fellow member asked him to join the local fire brigade. Peter said it was one of the best decisions he's ever made.

"To win a Spirit of CFA Award is an honour and a privilege as you do things for the community and not to be recognised," Peter said. "But when you do get recognised it's an absolute honour. I've spent 20 years on my journey at CFA and when your peers nominate you for an award, it's a real honour.

"My proudest achievement at CFA was when I was elected captain of the fire brigade five years ago as I wanted to make the brigade a place where people wanted to come. I also wanted to make the brigade more diverse and inclusive which I felt was lacking previously, and it was good to make sure females joined the brigade."

Peter said he now feels like he's achieved his goal. "Out of four of the lieutenants at the brigade, three are female.

"I am so grateful to have represented CFA and it's even more special to be able to have my family join as well – my youngest daughter and son are now both members of Diamond Creek brigade," Peter said.

Diamond Creek Brigade 2nd Lieutenant Fiona Macken nominated Peter for the award because of his empathy and the way he encourages inclusivity and diversity in the brigade.

"Peter wears his heart on his sleeve and said he's not afraid to share his story and show his emotions," Fiona said.

"He creates a safe place for members to share their feelings and talk about the challenges they are experiencing. Peter always reminds members that he is happy to chat with them and to provide a shoulder to cry on if necessary."

While on the Black Summer strike team to Gippsland in 2020, Peter provided diesel to a local resident who had no power or fuel for his generator. He also encouraged his crew to look after the suffering local wildlife. These actions were also commended by the Chief Officer in an email in January 2020.

### 2022 Living the Values Award – Paul Spinks

Paul Spinks from District 13 was the 2022 winner of this award. Paul is currently Deputy Group Officer of Yarra Valley Group and a volunteer with Yellingbo Fire Brigade. Throughout 2019 and 2020 he dedicated his time to delivering a safe environment.

Paul joined CFA when he was 16 years old because one of his friends was a member of the local fire brigade.



"Once one of my friends joined, we all decided to join. A bunch of us joined as juniors and this is where I am today, 31 years later," Paul said.

Paul said it's a huge honour to win a Spirit of CFA Award and especially to be nominated by his peers and some other great leaders.

"Winning this award is an acknowledgement of not just my own work but the great team at Yellingbo, and the work that we've been able to do both in the community and emergency response. It's quite humbling. With all the work that we do as volunteers, this is some great recognition.

"My proudest moment at CFA was to work as a team at Yellingbo to build a station and build a specialist vehicle for Yellingbo rehab. We also have the greatest membership that's been constant for many years.

"My most memorable time at CFA was receiving my National Medal and being nominated by my brigade to recognise my service and my Life Membership at Yellingbo Fire Brigade. This was a huge honour for myself and my family and it's something I hold very dear. Another standout moment was the work the team did in the Black Saturday fires."

Yellingbo Captain Jeremy Hardy nominated Paul for the Award because Paul often took on the role of incident controller where the safety of firefighters and the community were always his priorities.

"Paul is continually looking out for brigade members and the general public's safety and their wellbeing," Jeremy said.

One of Paul's recent roles has been to deliver hot fire training through the CFA live fire training pod program.

"He has been responsible for teaching volunteers how to use and deliver this training to their brigades and he has also committed an incredible amount of time to CFA and his community for over 30 years," Jeremy said.

Congratulations to Peter and Paul who are a great representation of CFA in the community and truly exemplify the CFA values.



PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIN

LIVING THE VALUES AWARD WINNERS PETER CLARKSON AND PAUL SPINKS WITH ACTING CHIEF OFFICER GAVIN THOMPSON



## 2020 and 2022 award winners

### Living the Values Award

2020 winner: Peter Clarkson (formerly Diamond Creek Fire Brigade)

2022 winner: Paul Spinks (Yellingbo Fire Brigade)

### Chief Officer Emerging Leader Award

2022 winners: Katy Millard (Port Campbell Fire Brigade); Kylie Davis (Eaglehawk Fire Brigade)

### CEO Excellence in Leadership Award

2022 winner: Emma Conway (District 9 Headquarters)

### Excellence in Inclusion and Fairness Award

2020 individual winners: Peter Green (Hamilton Fire Brigade); Terry Heafield (District 4 Headquarters)

2020 team winners: Travis Ledger, Clayton Henderson, Emma Cleal, Simon Williamson, Tim Loffler, Bernie Reynolds, Emma Williamson, Rick Robl (Killawarra Brigade Management Team)

2022 individual winner: Ramon Relph (Boronia Fire Brigade)

### Excellence in Innovation

2020 team winners: Wayne Munro, Tim Phillips, Miriam Day, Trudy Deller, Steven Cooper (District 4 Remote Brigade After Action Review Project Team)

2022 individual winner: Robert Waters (Montrose Fire Brigade)

2022 team winners: Christina Hanger, Lauren Young, Chris Barber, Lisa MacKenzie (Community Engagement Transformation Team)

### Senior Award

2020 individual winner: Kevin Atteridge (Springhurst Fire Brigade)

2022 individual winner: Ralph Ross (Kallista-The Patch Fire Brigade)

### Youth Award

2020 Joint individual winners: Daniel Answer-Waddell (Orbost Fire Brigade); Caitlin Roberts (Wandong Fire Brigade)

2022 individual winner: Liam Gallagher (Epping Fire Brigade)

### Excellence in Partnership Development Award

2020 individual winner: Garry Nash (South Wangaratta Fire Brigade)

2022 team winners: Angela Cook, Kelly Stoner, Ellisa Bourne (Preparing Vulnerable People Project Team)

### Excellence in Capability Planning

2020 team winners: The late Leighton Wraith, Simon Wilson, Bobbie-Lee Nelson (Hamilton Airbase District 5 Headquarters Brigade)

2022 individual winner: Nigel Swinn (South East Region)

2022 team winners: Lisa Clinch and Kirsten Dudink (District 6 and District 20 Volunteer Sustainability Team)

### Excellence in Interagency or Group Cooperation

2020 individual winner: Mark Roberts (Cobden Fire Brigade)

2020 team winners: Matthew Allen, Jennifer Blyth, Cindy Harrison-Roberts, Daniel Salt (Dangerous Goods and Key Infrastructure Team)

2022 team winners: Justin Dally, Rob Van Dorsser, Jake Kociancic (District 12 Headquarters and Hilldene Fire Brigade)

### Excellence in Community Engagement

2020 individual winners: Jo Hardy (Yellingbo Fire Brigade); Philip Rees (Baddaginnie Fire Brigade)

2020 team winners: Lisal O'Brien (Arthurs Creek Fire Brigade) and Jane Haywood (Strathewen Primary School)

2022 team winners: Amanda Maglaras, Danny Gordon, Peter Stephens (District 5 and 6 Community Education team)



PHOTO: ROB LACEY PHOTOGRAPHY

## CFA Behavioural Standards workshops are rolling out across the state

**CFA members will be participating in workshops to work through the CFA Behavioural Standards which apply to all CFA members, officers and contractors whenever they are doing work for, or on behalf of, CFA or undertaking CFA activities.**

This workshop format follows the release last year of CFA's Behavioural Standards and these workshops are an important part of ensuring CFA is a great place to work and volunteer.

Barnawartha member Geoffrey 'Jethro' Barter (pictured), who participated in a recent workshop, said the key feature was how participants were encouraged to talk about workplace behaviour.

"I wasn't aware of the workshop format, so wasn't sure what to expect. It's highly interactive and you're an active participant in discussions," Jethro said.

The workshops run for two hours and are being rolled out progressively across the state. They encourage engagement and open discussion using two real-life scenarios to explore people's thoughts and reactions to the issues presented. The scenarios vary between workshops and are selected from a range of 20 realistic scenarios based on experiences our members have reported.

CFA's General Counsel Kathryn Levi is a strong advocate for the training because it demonstrates how CFA's Behavioural Standards relate to our everyday lives.

"The two scenarios discussed in my group showed there are often different viewpoints to the one situation," Kathryn said.

"People raised points that I hadn't thought of before and the scenarios used in the workshops encourage you to take on someone else's viewpoint and have the courage to allow your viewpoint to change.

"Nothing is as clear and simple as we imagine. Every matter is different and has its complexities."

Kathryn added that the diversity of experience in the workshop she attended, which included staff from different areas of the organisation, brought a broader perspective to the group's engagement and dynamic in the training session.

Jethro's regional group was similarly diverse and consisted of people performing various roles and seniority. He said the facilitator delivering the workshops was crucial to its success by knowing the subject matter well and enabling conversations to flow.

"The scenarios can be triggering so it's important to have a facilitator with the skills to manage this as well as someone with knowledge of CFA," Jethro said.

HR Business Partner Victoria Griffiths is one of CFA's facilitators and is passionate about the Behavioural Standards and the role everyone plays in strengthening organisational culture.

"The Behavioural Standards ensure we hand the next generation of CFA members a safe, inclusive and sustainable organisation to protect the Victorian community," Victoria said.

"The true learning comes in the group discussion around examples of real scenarios of behaviours experienced by CFA members. Participants will leave with tools to have challenging conversations and know who to reach out to for help to address or report issues."

Jethro, who performs various roles including group officer at Rutherglen, a peer coordinator, trainer and assessor and Barnawartha brigade's community safety coordinator, said there were many opportunities to grow the training and run it on an ongoing basis.

"These workshops have created a great starting point from which Behavioural Standards awareness can be regularly refreshed. These scenarios should be viewed in the same context as safety shares, and it would be beneficial if team building opportunities or workshops around these could be developed within brigades."

He added that this training provides members with the tools and empowers them to act when they see unacceptable behaviours.

You can read the Behavioural Standards on Members Online: [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/behaviour-standards](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/behaviour-standards)

STORY LERNA AVAKIAN

# Women's Advisory Committee

The excellent work that's being done by CFA's Women's Advisory Committee (WAC) will lead to long-term benefits for all women in CFA. The Advisory Committee provides a forum for women to share their experiences, ideas and solutions to improve the volunteer experience, with a focus on ensuring CFA is safe, inclusive and reflects the communities it serves.

The WAC comprises volunteers from all 21 districts, representing a range of roles. The members were nominated by their districts.

Among the WAC's achievements are the establishment of a women's mentoring program, a Women Captains Online Forum and the piloting of a Women's General Firefighter Course.

The members also provided feedback about issues relating to women's access to appropriate changerooms and toilets at a number of CFA locations, with the Victorian Government providing funding in the 2022-23 State Budget to build gender-appropriate facilities at three training campuses – Sunraysia, Peshurst and Bangholme – and upgrades at 40 stations.

The Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes has publicly acknowledged in Parliament the WAC's work in providing ideas to attract and retain women in the organisation. As well as recruitment and retention, the committee has focused on the delivery of training, including opportunity for access and pathways for participation and leadership and mentoring.



PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

## Profile of a committee member

Katy Millard (pictured receiving her Spirit of CFA Award) is one of the district representatives on the WAC. She is also the captain of Port Campbell Fire Brigade and was recently honoured with a Spirit of CFA Award as an Emerging Leader. She has been part of CFA for six years after 15 years of emergency services experience with Victoria Police.

## How have you found the experience of being part of the WAC?

Being part of the WAC was a platform where I was given a voice that was heard, my opinions taken seriously and my experience and initiatives acknowledged. I have really enjoyed being part of the WAC for several reasons, but mainly the feeling that my contribution has taken CFA one step closer to being a more modern emergency services organisation. I have been able to lead and initiate discussions on issues that the committee found important and in some instances made suggestions for implementation.

## What's been most valuable?

When I first joined CFA I wanted to understand more about the organisation and how it worked. I was familiar with the structure of Victoria Police and I was intrigued to learn more about how CFA functioned. Being part of a remote, rural brigade, I had infrequent contact with management. The WAC introduced me to a network of management and started to put the organisation into perspective.

For me, a valuable aspect of being a member of the WAC is being able to speak confidently and confidentially to this network of management openly about issues that were affecting not only women but CFA members more generally. I was able to discuss how things could be done better to improve the job of the volunteer and to give management an understanding of life as a volunteer.

## What achievements from the WAC are you proud of?

I have been proud of the initiatives we have been able to implement including addressing the suitability of PPE, the provision of sanitary packs in vehicles and the need for separate change facilities for women.

Some of my achievements aren't necessarily physical changes. From time to time, I get asked to do some different tasks, such as being given the opportunity to be a judge in one of the categories of the Spirit of CFA Awards. I am also a member of the working party looking into some of the recommendations of the AFAC Training Review. I have also contributed to local Inclusion and Fairness meetings and I was asked to be part of a volunteer forum for the South West Conference this year.

As part of the WAC, we were able to make a significant contribution to the review of culture and issues management at CFA. The release of the recommendations of the review has given the responsibility of implementing these recommendations to every member of the organisation, not just myself or groups like the WAC.

## What benefit do you think the WAC brings to CFA in terms of its ability to elevate the voice of women?

The WAC not only captured my ideas, but those of women across the state. Although some of our experiences were unique, many experiences and frustrations were similar. Although I wasn't able to immediately change the attitudes of some members, I think overall my involvement in the WAC has brought about changes that make CFA a better place for not just women but all members.

# Volunteers to boost cardiac arrest response

**Volunteer firefighters from 50 CFA brigades will soon be trained and equipped to provide life-saving first-aid and resuscitation in response to Triple Zero (000) calls in support of Ambulance Victoria.**

The Fire Medical Response (FMR) program will be established in strategic locations across Victoria to best complement Ambulance Victoria's response.

While Ambulance Victoria already delivers some of the best cardiac arrest survival rates in the world, patient outcomes can be further improved in areas where a CFA brigade may be able to reach a patient sooner than an ambulance. FMR brigades will be dispatched simultaneously with the nearest emergency ambulances, providing life-saving CPR, defibrillation and support to paramedics.

CFA Deputy Chief Officer Garry Cook said the program was a natural fit for CFA. "CFA has the largest geographical footprint of any emergency service in Victoria with more than 1,100 volunteer fire stations with more than 50,000 members," Garry said. "This puts CFA in a unique position to complement the Ambulance Victoria response and deliver early intervention to cardiac arrests.

"Our members care deeply for their communities and this program is another way for them to serve and literally save lives in their local area."

Ambulance Victoria Acting Executive Director Clinical Operations Anthony Carlyon said the FMR program further

strengthened Ambulance Victoria's close partnership with CFA and was fantastic news for regional communities.

"We know that when a person suffers a cardiac arrest, every minute that CPR and defibrillation is delayed reduces their chance of survival by 10 per cent," Mr Carlyon said

"There's no doubt FMR will improve survival rates for people in rural and regional Victoria and make access to emergency care in a cardiac arrest more equitable for all Victorians.

"Like the GoodSAM app which alerts bystanders to people nearby in cardiac arrest, FMR will complement Ambulance Victoria's world-class service and improve patient outcomes."

Paramedic educators from Ambulance Victoria have developed a training course which they will deliver to FMR responders over several days. Brigades will be equipped with Ambulance Victoria-compatible defibrillators.

CFA will consult with brigades in priority areas over the coming months before finalising the 50 locations. The first tranche of FMR brigades is expected to be operational in early 2023.

Almost \$4 million will be dedicated to the development and ongoing delivery of the program.

CFA brigades that currently offer Emergency Medical Response will continue to deliver this program with FRV.

STORY SOPHIE JENNINGS



PHOTO: COURTNEY WALKER

# Update on workwear rollout

**The rollout of new workwear for CFA members continues as more brigades receive the new items of clothing. It is being supplied by four local companies and secures 15 jobs in Victoria.**

Victorian communities can expect to see the smart new look on members when they participate in brigade activities, fundraising, training, community events and incident management teams. The new workwear doesn't replace CFA's iconic yellow firefighting gear which remains the primary personal protective clothing for our firefighters.

More than 3,000 volunteers contributed to the extensive design consultation process to ensure the final product met their needs. Steven Hill, CFA's project manager leading this initiative, was pleased that \$9 million was being invested to provide brigades with fit-for-purpose workwear.

"More than 150 parcels are leaving our State Logistics Centre each week. This will increase over the coming months as we receive more stock," Steven said.

"The feedback I've received from members has been extremely positive. It's great to see the Chief Officer and DCOs wearing the new workwear with many of our brigade members doing the same. The workwear is also comfortable and easy to maintain.

"Like all industries, we are not immune to the challenges of COVID-19. The workwear team has conducted more than 60

sizing sessions to date and the team is hoping to complete sessions in all 21 districts by the end of August 2022."

Captain of Killawarra Fire Brigade Tim Loffler said the brigade had 18 members who would be receiving the new workwear.

"Most of our active members decided to get a set once they had the opportunity to see the style of the workwear," Tim said.

"As a rural brigade we haven't had a full uniform before. The workwear replaces the brigade polo shirts that we've rolled out from time to time. The workwear gives a more unified look to the team and is more versatile for a range of uses and weather conditions.

"It's also great to have a full complement of workwear suitable for a range of events like fundraising, meetings, community engagement and training. Being supplied the workwear is a nice recognition of the contribution our members make in so many areas."

Killawarra Fire Brigade volunteer Emma Williamson said it was great to look unified when out in their local community.

"The brigade members are excited about the new workwear which gives us a more professional look," Emma said.

The roll-out of workwear to hundreds of CFA brigades will continue over the coming months.

**STORY MARISSA MCKISSOCK**



# Young members turn out for cadets

**The Cadet Pilot Project was developed by the CFA Youth Team following a request from the CFA Board to create a program that could address decreasing retention and participation rates of 16 and 17-year-old members across CFA.**

Findings from CFA Young Members Survey and Exit Survey results showed that while young people are drawn to volunteering at CFA to serve their community and to develop and diversify their skill set, some leave the organisation because they don't feel valued or accepted and have experienced bullying.

A blended model of practical face-to-face training and online learning through The Learning Hub was developed. It was hoped that some of the cultural issues identified in the feedback surveys would be addressed by providing a supportive, safe environment for structured learning for our 16 and 17-year-old members.

Through consultation four key areas emerged regarding content: emergency response skills, leadership, community connectedness, and health and wellbeing. The Youth Team worked with subject matter experts across directorates to design

and develop content, specifically targeted at 16 and 17-year-old members to reflect the key areas identified.

The Pilot was delivered over three school terms between October 2021 and June 2022 and participation was in addition to normal brigade duties. All 16 and 17-year-old members were invited to participate in the online modules and given the opportunity to register to attend a training weekend called a Cadets Camp for practical training.

The first Cadets Camp took place in May 2022. Located at Camp Sunnystones in Bacchus Marsh and VEMTC Central Highlands, 36 young members came together for the weekend to take part in practical firefighting drills and team building activities.

Friday night kicked off with a visit from Deputy Chief Officer Rohan Luke and an evening of 'getting to know you' and team building games. Young members from 32 different brigades, most of whom had never met each other, embraced these activities like they'd known each other for years, making sure everyone was included.

On the Saturday the group headed off to VEMTC Central Highlands for a full day of fire drills on the pads, where they







PHOTOS: NATHAN YOUNGHUSBAND, YOUR STORY STUDIOS

were visited by CEO Natalie MacDonald. Although some of our cadets were working through or had already completed General Firefighter, for several this was the first time they had been around live fire. As each session was delivered by qualified instructors, the maturity shown by our young members in supporting each other – whatever their level of experience – was impressive.

“I really loved the weekend. I loved getting out of the brigade and not only just doing activities and training but actually going and doing it at a proper facility,” Matthew Williams from Longwarry Brigade said. “Also, it was good meeting a lot of new younger people from brigades. I made a few lifelong friendships I reckon and had a lot of fun.”

Cadets also got the opportunity to experience being an incident controller through a virtual reality (VR) software computer simulation, as well as a ‘show and tell’ with a heavy rescue vehicle and medium pumper from Ballan Fire Brigade and a ground rescue vehicle from District 15. This allowed members from smaller brigades to see some of the trucks and vehicles available in other areas of the state.

Oliver Bree from Glenburn Brigade said, “I’ve seen a different side of CFA. Because I’m from a country brigade I don’t see some of the big fancy trucks and all the procedures and equipment they use. It’s been really good to get a wider knowledge of that.”

The Aviation Team brought their VR trailer on Sunday with opportunity for the cadets to experience what it would be like to fly a helicopter partnered with a water bomber. Keeping it virtual, the Virtual Reality team brought the FLAIM System to provide a fully immersive VR experience for the cadets. The FLAIM technology can be used to simulate a wide range of scenarios from structural fire attack, car/truck fires and size-up exercises.

“I would honestly really recommend this weekend. It’s a good opportunity to make new friends from different brigades and

learn new skills,” Amelia Delahey from Euroa Brigade said.

It wasn’t all fire-based activities, though. Cadets took part in a trivia night and tried archery and canoeing. Despite the cold weather, Cadets embraced the latter, developing team building skills and just having a fun time together.

“The highlight for me was being around live fire as well as doing archery and canoeing,” Asha Guld from Warrnambool Fire Brigade said. “If you ever do get the chance to do this camp, I highly recommend it. It’s great fun and you’re going to make great friendships.”

A second Cadets Camp took place in Sale in June 2022.

“This is such an amazing opportunity for our young members to build their skills, develop their journey with CFA and experience training in a great facility,” DCO West Region Peter O’Keefe said. “Our cadets are our future leaders so investing in them now will bring great benefit to our organisation.”

Targeting this age group cultivates a more diverse membership and workforce and can help us future-proof CFA. The Cadets Pilot Project has been instrumental building a culture of inclusion and accessibility to training for our young members. Project evaluation is currently being finalised and a project closure report will outline recommendations for the future engagement of 16 and 17-year-olds in CFA. It is hoped this work will feed into the development of a Youth Pathway, setting clear expectations and opportunities for members aged 11-24 years old.

In the meantime, the online modules will remain on The Learning Hub and there will be a Cadets Camp in Central Highlands in October 2022 and one in Bangholme in May 2023. For details about how to sign up for these, go to the ‘Young People in CFA’ pages on Members Online or email [cadets@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:cadets@cfa.vic.gov.au).

STORY JEN CLEMENT

# Coming on 1 September

## Australian Fire Danger Rating System

On 1 September 2022, all Australian states will adopt one consistent system for determining and displaying Fire Danger ratings.

The development of the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) based on the latest technology and with clear messaging and practical advice was recognised as a national priority in 2014 with planning beginning in 2015.

The AFDRS gives emergency services and industry better decision-making tools to predict and manage the impact of fire, while providing clearer safety advice and guidance to the community.

### Latest technology

The latest science and community input provide comprehensive and more timely information about fire danger.

### Broader range of data

We know more about environmental and climatic conditions and fire behaviour. The AFDRS considers fire risk for eight different types of vegetation (previously only two), making it more locally relevant.

### Simplified system

Four levels (instead of six); Moderate, High, Extreme and Catastrophic.

### Easy to understand

Clear, concise and recommendations for how to act at each level can be easily understood and followed.

### Consistent throughout Australia

The AFDRS replaces differing systems used by the states and territories.

### Launch of the AFDRS

A statewide media campaign will begin in August to inform the public about the changes ahead of 1 September. AFDRS guidance will be included in the state's 2022-23 Summer Fire Safety campaign.

Changes to roadside signs will be phased in with new signs appearing from around 1 September. Prioritisation will be given to those communities facing earlier starts to the fire season.

### Introductory phase

Victorian fire agencies will continue to calculate Fire Danger Index (FDI) figures for internal agency preparedness and response decisions, running both systems in parallel to help us better understand the application of the new system in the Victorian environment and increase confidence during the change.

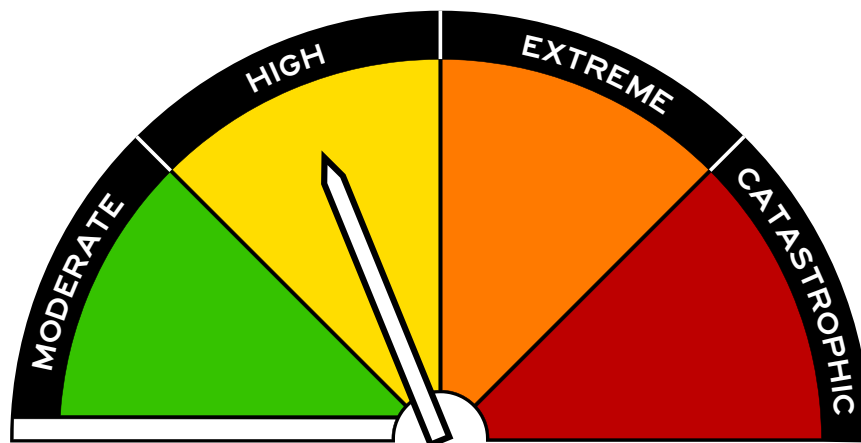
The Chief Officer will consider both the AFDRS and the FDI when making Total Fire Ban declarations and operational readiness decisions.

### Updates for members

The AFDRS page on Members Online gives information about:

- system overview
- implementation updates
- links to training for members to complete and resources you can use to answer questions from communities.

For AFAC Frequently Asked Questions go to [afac.com.au/initiative/afdrs/afdrs-faqs](https://afac.com.au/initiative/afdrs/afdrs-faqs).



**NO RATING**

**NO ACTION  
REQUIRED**

**MODERATE**

**PLAN AND  
PREPARE**

**HIGH**

**BE READY TO ACT**

**EXTREME**

**TAKE ACTION NOW  
TO PROTECT YOUR  
LIFE AND PROPERTY**

**CATASTROPHIC**

**FOR YOUR SURVIVAL  
LEAVE BUSHFIRE  
RISK AREAS**



# Fireys honoured for Black Summer efforts



**Three hundred and forty-eight East Gippsland volunteer firefighters and CFA staff members were honoured with National Emergency Medals (NEM) in early May for their efforts in the 2019-20 Australian bushfire crisis.**

The NEM is part of Australia's honours and awards system and recognises significant or sustained service to others in a nationally-significant Australian emergency. The East Gippsland ceremony was the first of many to award more than 5,500 medals to those who served in the crisis. The second ceremony was in Bairnsdale in May and there were eight ceremonies in the north-east in July.

His Excellency Governor-General David Hurley, Board member Dawn Hartog and Chief Officer Jason Heffernan attended the event to present the medals. His Excellency Governor-General David Hurley said it was an essential part of recognising the service of CFA volunteers.

"The National Emergency Medal acknowledges the efforts that have been made during some of our country's most challenging periods," His Excellency said. "The NEM is a means of saying thank you to recipients – and that Australia recognises their service.

"In recognising individuals here in East Gippsland, we also highlight and

celebrate the tremendous contributions that have – and continue to be made – by CFA volunteers across Victoria."

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan spoke of his pride for the CFA members' efforts.

"The 2019-20 fires devastated East Gippsland and north-east of Victoria. But from that crisis arose the most remarkable human spirit of generosity and 'lending a hand'," Jason said. "Our medal recipients have exemplified that spirit and I'm incredibly proud of every one of them.

"Recovery efforts are continuing in affected communities to this day, and hopefully this recognition and celebration of service contributes towards the process of healing."



**Above:** (from left to right) Lakes Entrance Captain and MC Phil Loukes, South East Region DCO Trevor Owen, Board Member Dawn Hartog, Board Member Peter Shaw, Mossi-Tambo Captain Christine Bittner, Chief Officer Jason Heffernan, VFBV CEO Adam Barnett, ACFO Daryll Hunter

**Below left:** Governor-General David Hurley with Tracey Johnston from Mallacoota Fire Brigade

**Below:** Governor-General David Hurley with Ben Hoffman from Bairnsdale Fire Brigade



# Healing Country – NAIDOC Week

**CFA is committed to working closely with Traditional Owners and to advancing reconciliation and engagement with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.**

To mark NAIDOC week 2022, District 8 Headquarters in Dandenong held a NAIDOC Week learning session (see photo right).

ACFO Jamie Hansen spoke about the work being undertaken by CFA to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people in the area.

Aboriginal artist and cultural heritage adviser Adam Magennis spoke to staff about the history of Bunurong Country. The day ended with a smoking ceremony where members learned about how different mobs use different plants for these ceremonies and the symbolism they hold.

CFA is in the process of developing an organisation-wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategy with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inclusion. This work builds on the excellent work in the Koori Inclusion Action Plan.

Earlier this year CFA supported a Wadawurrung Traditional Owner-led burn in Lethbridge. Bannockburn Fire Brigade firefighter Dale Smithyman shared his experience learning cool burning techniques.

“The Moranghurk Traditional Owner burn was a terrific example of Wadawurrung and CFA working together to return traditional burning practices to Country,” Dale said.

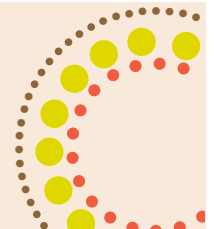


PHOTO: NADA EL-MASRI

“The Wadawurrung crew led the ignition using traditional methods with CFA providing support resources. CFA firefighters got to see Traditional Owner burning practices in action and when invited joined in lighting up Country using those practices. It was a great learning and sharing experience.”

You can learn more about this burn by watching Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation video: [facebook.com/wadawurrung/videos/766994378015297](https://www.facebook.com/wadawurrung/videos/766994378015297).

# Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners



**The Victorian Government has updated the endorsed wording for an Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners, also known as an Acknowledgement of Country. The new wording adds an acknowledgment to Aboriginal Elders of communities other than the ones on whose land the event/meeting takes place.**

It's important we pay our respects by acknowledging Traditional Owners and Elders when we are gathering at CFA events and meetings. As an organisation we have a responsibility to acknowledge the history of the areas in which we live, work and fight fires. This is a way of showing awareness of, and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their unique history and connection to the land.

CFA's strength lies in its diversity. We are proud to recognise our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. First Nations' communities have been looking after Country for more than 80,000 years through complex land management

practices. By continuing to build partnerships, trust and mutual respect we will further improve how we use planned fire in the landscape.

An Acknowledgment of Country is appropriate at all CFA official meetings, events, forums or conferences and can be said by anyone. If your event or meeting is taking place in an area where the Victorian Government has formally recognised the Traditional Owners, you should specifically acknowledge those Traditional Owners.

Such an acknowledgment is: “Our meeting/conference/workshop is being held on the lands of the [Traditional Owners' name] people and I wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Owners. I would also like to pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and Aboriginal Elders of other communities who may be here today.”

If the Traditional Owners have not been formally recognised or you are not sure, you should acknowledge Traditional

Owners generally without mentioning any specific Traditional Owners:

“I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are meeting. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Aboriginal Elders of other communities who may be here today.”

If your event/meeting is taking place online and on the lands of many Traditional Owners, you can say:

“I acknowledge that we are meeting on the lands of many Traditional Owners. I pay my respects to all Elders, past and present.”

An Acknowledgement of Country is different from a Welcome to Country which can only be performed by Aboriginal Traditional Owners. For more information go to the Victorian Government's First People's web page or read CFA's Koori Inclusion Action Plan: [kiap.cfa.vic.gov.au/about](https://kiap.cfa.vic.gov.au/about)

STORY DR TASHA WEIR

# Queen's Birthday 2022 Honours

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

## Richard Cromb

Richard first joined CFA as a volunteer in 1970. As then-captain of Sassafra-Ferry Creek Fire Brigade and acting as incident controller for the 1997 Dandenong Ranges bushfires fires, Richard's deep local knowledge and operational experience allowed him to make key decisions during these fires. He went on to be a highly valued member of many incident control teams on the fireground and as a member of incident management teams across the state during major events including the 2009 and 2019-20 Victorian bushfires.

In 1999 Richard joined CFA staff as an instructor at Fiskville Training Centre before moving to District 13 as an Instructor where he remains to this day. He also had significant input into the research and development of components of the 2.4C medium and 3.4C heavy tankers.



## John Cowan

John Cowan joined CFA in 1978 and has served as a member at several CFA brigades including Hurstbridge, Research and District 14 HQ East. John was an early adopter of the Australian Inter-agency Incident Management System (AIIMS) and developed his skills and experience to become accredited as a planning officer. He's currently a highly-respected Level 3 accredited planning officer and has carried out the role at many large and prolonged campaign fires.

John's passion is making sure there will be a sustainable pool of future leaders who are experienced in emergency management. He's an experienced fireground commander who identifies emerging operational leaders with whom he shares his significant experience. He does this both formally through training sessions and informally as a coach and mentor.



## Alistair Drayton

Alistair Drayton, who joined CFA as a volunteer 40 years ago, is one of only a handful of volunteers who is an accredited Level 3 incident controller. He has participated in multi-agency incident management teams both interstate and internationally. His exceptional fire and emergency management expertise has enabled him to be included on the duty roster for regional controller, a senior position in the state's emergency management arrangements.

Alistair began with Highton Fire Brigade in 1982, and since 1996 he has been a member of Wallington Fire Brigade. In July 2004 he became group officer of Bellarine Group. He was appointed as an instructor and project officer at CFA's Fiskville Training College and has also mentored members in IMT roles. He now holds the position of group manager of Bellarine Group.



## Debra Luke

Debra Luke's involvement with CFA goes beyond her full-time role as regional operations coordinator for Northern and Western Metropolitan Emergency Management Region. She is also a well-respected volunteer who has just been elected as captain of District 14 Headquarters Brigade. Throughout her 42 years as a member, she has inspired others through her belief in high-quality service delivery. She received a CFA Honorary Life Membership for her outstanding contribution, and in 2014 a National Medal 1st Clasp and a National Emergency Medal.

Debra has been involved in operational deployments to numerous major fires in Victoria, interstate and internationally. In 2014 her expertise was instrumental in establishing effective logistics management systems during the Hazelwood Mine Fire. In 2015 she assisted in the wildfires in British Columbia, Canada.





PHOTOS: EDDIE SEAH

# Women's General Firefighter Course

**CFA recently conducted a pilot of a women-only General Firefighter (GFF) block course to assess the benefits of providing the foundational course as an option for the future. The pilot, which was held at Kinglake over several days, comprised around eight to 10 hours of practical training and six to eight hours of theory.**

CFA CEO Natalie MacDonald and Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes met participants of the course as they carried out some drills.

"It's important that we offer a range of options to members to undertake the necessary training in an environment which suits their needs," Natalie said. "A women-only training course may be an opportunity that some members choose because they are more comfortable in that environment.

"As an organisation this is one of the ways that we can encourage diversity and attract more women to join CFA."

Among those to participate in the pilot course were CFA recruits from Plenty Fire Brigade and mother and daughter Emily and Olivia Rumble. Both found the experience extremely rewarding and valuable.

"I think the idea of doing the training course with other women is beneficial as you really rely on each other. There's a bit of a sisterhood there and I think that we need to ensure we can be there for each other," Emily said.

"It's pretty amazing. It's a great opportunity to do this course with my daughter so it's something we'll probably look back on for many years and be really proud that we've shared this experience together."

"You don't get to do many things like this and to do it with my mum is pretty special," Olivia said. "I definitely think it helped with my confidence doing it with someone that I knew."

CFA is committed to continuing to grow gender diversity in our brigades and has established many new initiatives over the past 12 months.

The Training team will be assessing the outcomes of the pilot program before making further recommendations about including this as an ongoing future option.



# New equipment for brigades

**CFA is investing more than \$2.8 million in new equipment for volunteers to increase operational efficiency and safety of brigades.**

- Each of our 128 groups throughout Victoria will receive a 3M Scott V320 thermal imagery camera (TIC). This will ensure TIC capability statewide for both structural and bushfire incidents.
- Our groups will also receive a Kestrel 5500 Weather Meter, which ensures hand-held portable weather monitoring access for strike team leaders and groups. These essential intelligence tools are rugged and waterproof and allow data graphing, data recall and link technology as well as in-field calibration of sensors.
- New saltwater-proof battery-operated Lukas rescue gear (pictured right) will be issued to Lakes Entrance and Apollo Bay brigades to replace equipment that isn't saltwater-proof. Old equipment will be placed on the two state spare rescue units, replacing the old hydraulic equipment.
- Nineteen rescue brigades will receive 50-tonne lift jacks to provide enhanced operational rescue capability in situations involving agricultural, rail and heavy industry entrapments. This jack was successfully trialled by Ballarat Fire Brigade over the past 12 months.
- Brake testing capability will be enhanced at DMO workshops to improve vehicle testing capability and the safety of firefighters using CFA fleet. We're also bringing forward the replacement of seven mobile hoists for DMO workshops.

- We will also continue to replace petrol-powered positive pressure ventilation fans with battery-powered ones. This initiative began with an additional 26 units following the mid-year budget review.



# Young Adults Advisory Committee

**Elevating the voices of younger members and helping to shape the future of the organisation are key drivers for the representatives of CFA's Young Adults Advisory Committee.**

Since the Committee was established in late 2021 it has focused on issues which impact new and young members including:

- attracting and retaining young members
- training pathways
- leadership and mentoring
- monitoring the volunteer journey

The Committee initiated a project to develop a strike team video to provide information for members about what to expect when deployed to a large incident as a volunteer. You can view the video at [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-operational/incident-management/strike-teams](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-operational/incident-management/strike-teams).

Liam Gallagher (pictured receiving the 2022 Spirit of CFA Youth Award) is an active member of Epping Fire Brigade and one of the 26 members of the Committee which has delegates who represent all 21 districts.

Liam said he has benefited from connecting with like-minded young adults in a forum which has provided an opportunity to influence change for the next generation of members.

"Being a part of CFA's Young Adult Advisory Committee has provided me with an opportunity to share some of the lessons and experiences I have had in CFA with the key decision holders to ensure that young adults across the state have a positive experience in the organisation," Liam said.

"CFA is a wonderful organisation that provides so much to its young adults. Participating in CFA's Young Adults

Advisory Committee has allowed me to ensure we maintain and improve on areas where we can and ensure the longevity of the organisation as it achieves its mission of protecting life and property."

You can find out more about the Young Adults Advisory Committee by visiting Members Online: [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/about-cfa/advisory-committees/young-adults-advisory-committee](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/about-cfa/advisory-committees/young-adults-advisory-committee)



# New alpine pumpers commissioned

**Victoria's alpine communities will be further protected with CFA welcoming three new specialist firefighting vehicles to its alpine brigades in time for the 2022 snow season.**

The tracked pumpers have been specifically designed to operate in snow and other challenging conditions unique to alpine environments. The three new Prinoth Panther T6 vehicles have replaced a model of tracked pumper at Mt Hotham-Dinner Plain, Falls Creek and Mt Buller brigades that was more than 30 years old.

Mt Hotham-Dinner Plain Captain Terry Crisp said it was a great improvement for volunteers and the community.

"The roads and tracks in the resort are not suitable for traditional vehicles so the only firefighting appliance that can get to a scene is a tracked pumper," Terry said. "Between Mt Hotham and Dinner Plain there are enough beds for 7,000 people and thousands of day visitors can be here over winter. That all presents a significant risk.

"This is also a vehicle that we can use all year round, so if we were to have a lodge fire during summer we know that this vehicle can get to the scene."

The new tracked pumpers cost \$2.03 million and were funded by the Victorian Government after the Fire Services Statement listed new specialist vehicles among its priorities.

Alpine Commander Mark Owens said the new pumper has upgraded capability.

"It has an improved cab chassis for the safety of our members and an improved pumping capacity to allow us to effectively fight structure fires in the alpine environment," Mark said.

CFA Deputy Chief Officer Garry Cook said the vehicles were designed in consultation with local volunteers to ensure they provided appropriate capability for the alpine environment.

"In such extreme temperatures water can freeze and damage the piping inside firefighting vehicles. These tracked pumpers have the ability to drain all the water from the internal plumbing system," Garry said.

"They also have improved ergonomics and are operated with a steering wheel rather than a joystick to ensure ease of use. They also have lower storage containers to ensure ease of access."

Garry said the replacement of the three tracked pumpers was part of CFA's Alpine Service Delivery Strategy Plan which includes improving community safety, enhancing the volunteer workforce, improving equipment, and ensuring building safety and compliance.

"People often associate the mountains with bushfires in summer but the risk for alpine resorts like Mt Hotham is substantially higher during the winter," Garry said.

"Chimney fires, house fires and motor vehicle accidents are among the many incidents our alpine brigades turn out to.

"These new vehicles will be a fantastic boost to the professional service our volunteers provide to their communities."

STORY MARK BLACKMAN





# 2022 CFA Photo Competition winners

## 1st



## 2nd



**A stunning picture of a firefighting helicopter flying over Strathfieldsaye Fire Brigade's tanker has won the annual CFA National Volunteer Week Photo Competition.**

Strathfieldsaye brigade's 3rd Lieutenant Jonti Hansen snapped the picture of the tanker and Helitack 335 while helping to battle a large grassfire in February that had reignited at Harcourt North.

"We were working along the top of a ridge and it was pretty cool to see the helicopters do their drop in the valley then head back over the top of us to fill up at the dam," Jonti said. "I noticed a chopper was crossing over the top of the tanker a few times and thought it would make a good photo."

The image was among more than 70 submissions received from volunteers across the state, with the photos judged on several criteria including how they best represent the CFA values of safety, teamwork, adaptability, integrity and respect.

Mt Eliza Fire Brigade firefighter Jake Manning was runner-up for his photo of brigade member Bethany looking over a planned burn at Lismore, Victoria.

"I was on a three-day deployment with the Planned Burn Task Force and we were undertaking a roadside burn at the time," Jake said. "My mate was looking out from the back of the truck as the smoke passed by and I thought it would be a nice picture.

"For any volunteers, I'd recommend just taking a few photos when you get the chance and you never know what gems you'll come up with."

Jonti and Jake will receive gift vouchers, while their brigades receive framed copies of their images and non-operational equipment as part of the prize.

# 2022 CFA and FRV smoke alarm campaign

**CFA and FRV have launched the 2022 smoke alarm campaign called 'A Bedroom Essential'. This new three-year campaign encourages Victorians to install smoke alarms in all bedrooms and living rooms by raising awareness of a bleak fact – fires that start in bedrooms are the most likely to cause fatalities.**

The results of market research from the previous smoke alarm campaign 'Silence is Deadly', which ran from 2019 to 2021, led to this new focus. The research found that people who recalled seeing at least one element of the campaign were more likely to undertake fire-safe actions. Disappointingly only 15 per cent of Victorians had a smoke alarm in any of their bedrooms and only 59 per cent of Victorians said they had a smoke alarm in every living room. These percentages have remained constant across the past three years.

The data also showed that:

- 72 per cent of fatal fires start in bedrooms and living rooms
- almost no children wake up to the sound of a smoke alarm
- when fires start in bedrooms with closed doors, the adjacent hallway smoke alarms didn't activate.

The new smoke alarm advertising campaign focuses on home improvement and lifestyle trends and urges people to consider smoke alarms as an essential item that no bedroom is complete without.

The campaign images tap into people's desire for their bedroom to be well-designed and picture perfect. This is often prioritised over the safety of themselves or their family. By drawing a comparison between the relatively low cost of a smoke alarm and other expensive items you might buy for your bedroom, the images demonstrate that smoke alarms are a low-cost essential item that can keep you safe.

The campaign is designed to persuade homeowners and parents to install smoke alarms in bedrooms by emphasising the need to keep children safe.

The campaign will be promoted through radio, social media, and digital advertising to the end of August, and will include culturally and linguistically-diverse audiences.

Video and social media tiles have been produced as part of campaign material and are available to our members on the community engagement portal: [members.cfa.vic.gov.au/communitycontentportal](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/communitycontentportal). We encourage brigades to use these resources on their Facebook and Instagram pages.

To find out more about the campaign or the resources available contact [cfapromotions@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:cfapromotions@cfa.vic.gov.au).

STORY NANCY THOMPSON

**72% of fatal fires start in bedrooms and living areas.**



Smoke alarm  
From **\$20**

**A smoke alarm is a bedroom essential**



Authorised by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

# Members have their say about SAS

**Improved dashboard functionality, availability, mapping layer improvements and the ability to work offline are the features members want to see in future releases of the Supplementary Alerting Service (SAS).**

More than 1,150 volunteers and staff responded to the SAS User Survey which asked members about their use of the SAS app as well as what features they would like to see prioritised for development.

While an analysis of the survey results is still being carried out, the need for improved dashboard functionality was clearly the most pressing issue. This would allow the web-based version of the app to be used as a basic station turnout system as well as offer additional features for SAS administrators.

Continued improvements to the availability function and the inclusion of additional mapping layers such as water points were also ranked highly by survey participants.

The survey also asked about members' overall use of SAS, with more than 75 per cent of survey participants saying they were very satisfied, satisfied or felt neutral about SAS.

Half the survey respondents said they use SAS every day, with incident response and availability of members the most popular functions.

ACFO Operational Communications Jason Lawrence thanked members for their participation in the survey, saying feedback would now be analysed and prioritised alongside requests from all the agencies involved in the project.

"The responses we received, particularly the ranking of functionality improvements and development priorities, were very much in line with the priorities of CFA's SAS Working Group, which includes CFA volunteer and VFBV members," Jason said.

"It's great to see that we are on the right track with our thinking. The added detail from the survey will also help to fine-tune the requirements of this functionality."

Jason said release 7 would include some key functionality improvements such as copy and paste from chat, hyperlinks and the addition of new points of interest including emergency marker detail.

"We will present the feedback from the survey to EMV, the app developers Ernst & Young, VICSES and Ambulance Victoria and it will be incorporated into development requests from all agencies involved," Jason said.

"Once again, thank you to our members for providing their feedback through the survey. We look forward to continuing to develop the app in line with member and brigade needs."

You can download the latest version of SAS from the Apple and Android app store or access the desktop version at [sas.em.vic.gov.au/#/login](https://sas.em.vic.gov.au/#/login).

Launched in 2020, SAS works alongside the existing EAS paging system to give members increased functionality and enhanced communication during incident response. Developed by CFA, SES and Ambulance Victoria in conjunction with EMV, the free SAS app gives members the ability to confirm their response to events, set availability, view response times, chat with fellow members and view responding members' core qualifications and competencies.

EAS pagers remain the primary way to receive alerting and other important messages because of their reliability and extensive coverage across Victoria, and CFA members are expected to continue to use and carry their pagers.

For more information about the app, the user guide, training videos and FAQs go to [cfa.vic.gov.au/sas](https://cfa.vic.gov.au/sas) or email the SAS Help Desk at [sas.help@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:sas.help@cfa.vic.gov.au).

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN



PHOTOS: TIAH WRIGHT

## Simulator for the skies

**A prototype training simulator developed by CFA's aviation team has supported the training and accreditation of hundreds of airborne volunteers and staff from all agencies.**

The trailer-based prototype enhances the training of fire aviation personnel such as air attack supervisors and observers, allowing them to undertake mapping, air attack missions, direct aircraft and practise communication and radio skills in a simulated environment.

Replicating the interior of an aircraft, the trailer uses photorealistic mapping software and communication technology to immerse pilots and students in the flight experience, with large screens providing a 180-degree view of the surrounding landscape.

The assessor or scenario leader coordinates each mission from a control area, feeding the pilot and student communications just as they would if they were in the air.

It can be programmed to train students in any scenario in any of the aircraft used for aerial firefighting in Australia including re-enacting past operations for after-action reviews and pre-season training.

The simulator was designed and developed by CFA Commander Operational Response and Coordination John Katakouzinos, who started the project in his garage during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020.

With the help of CFA training staff Paul Cockrill and Chris Thom, John finessed the final concept using CFA Training's virtual reality technology, a prop trailer and existing audio and visual equipment.

John said the simulator provides real-world training and skill testing in a safe, controlled environment as well as the ability for training to be tailored to suit a student's needs.

"In addition to enabling airborne firefighters to train prior to completing their practical sky-based assessments, a simulator of this kind allows for reaccreditation of aviation personnel in situations such as the pandemic where restrictions meant in-person training couldn't take place," John said.

Over the past few years, 220 air attack supervisors, air attack observers and airborne mission commanders were trained or reaccredited using the prototype simulator. It has also been used to train pilots and ground staff in team resource management.

John said this is the first fire aviation trailer-based simulator of its kind in Australia.

"Our goal now is to seek funding to develop one fixed and two of the trailer simulators with the view to sharing these across the emergency services sector – similar to how we book and use our CFA trailer-based props across the state," John said.



Chief Officer Jason Heffernan tried out the simulator before it was presented to leaders from across the emergency services sector.

"Aerial firefighting plays a pivotal role in supporting our firefighters and personnel on the ground during a fire," Jason said. "It was great to sit in the seat again and put my skills in mapping, radio communication and air observation to the test."

"It's important that we have training options such as this available to increase the experience and skills of our people and ensure we are as prepared as possible for our fire seasons."

The prototype has been approved by all agencies to proceed, with a funding model to be developed over the coming months.

**STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUCHLIN**

# QUARTERLY OPERATIONAL UPDATE



## Chief Officer's Message

During the coldest months of the year, we will likely experience an increase in structural fire as well as storm and flood response.

Although autumn was relatively quiet on the operational response front, it was packed with events including the State Championships, the 2022 National Memorial Service held in Canberra, the CFA Annual Firefighter Memorial and International Firefighter's Day. In addition, many of our members continue to engage in planned burn and community engagement activities in preparation for the 2022-23 fire season.

With the cooler weather, our key risks shift. In this edition of the quarterly update, we are sharing information about:

- Chief Officer expectations for winter
- Alternative energy and firefighting, which includes:
  - battery energy storage systems
  - thermal runaway
  - electrical vehicle fires
  - photovoltaic solar systems
  - low voltage fuse removal
- Technology in firefighting:
  - remote piloted aircraft systems (drones)
  - thermal imaging cameras

All topics include important information that I expect members to familiarise themselves with to ensure brigades are prepared and informed.

Points that should be at the front of your mind when undertaking CFA activities in winter are:

- take every opportunity to learn and improve – whether that be in the form of taking part in regular brigade training or undertaking debriefs regularly after incidents
- take advantage of the quiet times and support services on offer to all members – it is important that everyone has a chance to rest and recuperate
- engage and communicate with your community to ensure they are ready and knowledgeable – we don't need to save community engagement for right at the start of the fire season. It is something that can be done year round
- confidently make decisions at all levels – back your training and knowledge
- work together with all agencies and at all levels: state, region, district, group, brigade and, most importantly, the community.

As always, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the lessons and information contained in this update for discussion during your brigade meetings and to guide some more focused brigade training activities.

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

Use this QR code to access the Quarterly Update.



## Importance of after-action reviews

After-action reviews (AAR) help everyone to learn from both mistakes and achievements. By applying learning a team can improve and perform to higher standards.

The spirit of an AAR is one of openness and learning. It is not about fixing or allocating blame. Lessons are not only shared by the individuals

involved but can also be documented and shared more widely in CFA for continuous improvement.

The best way to share AARs is to send them to the catchment officer and emailing them to [aar@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:aar@cfa.vic.gov.au).

Many products are developed by sharing these lessons such as the Quarterly Operational Update, case studies, training programs and much more.



# Low voltage fuse removal

The removal of the low voltage fuse service for either an above ground or underground electrical supply at a residential or commercial property is done to isolate the electricity mains power to the structure. This can be conducted by a qualified low voltage fuse removal (LVFR) firefighter before the power distribution company arrives on scene.

The removal of the service fuse improves firefighter safety by reducing the risk of electrocution or electric shock when either internal or external firefighting operations are taking place.

## Training

To become a qualified LVFR operator, you must complete an LVFR operator course and be nominated by your district operations team based on brigade classification and operational requirement. This course is run over one full day or two evenings.

In 2018 CFA acquired new LVFR equipment. Members need to be trained in the current course using current equipment even if they have held LVFR prior to 2018. **Old fuse removal equipment must be taken out of service.**

The prerequisites for this course are Wildfire Firefighter qualification and Electrical Safety Awareness (ESA). The ESA is available on the Learning Hub ([learninghub.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://learninghub.cfa.vic.gov.au)).

The ESA training package is designed to give you an understanding and knowledge of electrical concepts and electrical hazard identification. This will give you immediate knowledge that you can use at any emergency incident. It's beneficial to do this course even if you're not selected to participate in the LVFR operator course. The ESA course can also be offered face-to-face by your district training department.

## What to do

- Ensure only authorised people remove the service fuse.
- Only remove the service under the direction of the incident controller and follow Chief Officer's SOP 9.14.
- Conduct a dynamic risk assessment to determine if it's safe to do so.
- Conduct a size-up to identify any hazards in relation to LVFR. These may include inaccessible service fuse, difficult identification, poorly secured point of attachment, power lines down, illegal wiring and alternative power supplies.
- Only remove the service if it's necessary to do so.
- Even after the fuse has been removed, assume power is live.
- Only use CFA-issued LVFR equipment and wear the appropriate PPC.



## What not to do

- If you are not trained DO NOT remove the service fuse.
- Don't remove the service fuse if impinged by fire and/or smoke.
- Don't use ladders to remove the service fuse.
- Do not reconnect power once it has been isolated.

## Further information

More information about low voltage fuse removal can be accessed on Members Online using the QR code.



# Alternative energy

## Thermal runaway

Thermal runaway is a chemical chain reaction in lithium-ion batteries and occurs when a battery cell short circuits and starts to heat up uncontrollably. In lithium-ion batteries this can create a flammable and toxic vapour. Temperatures can exceed 1000°C, igniting vapours, and can be violent and explosive in nature.

Indicators of thermal runaway in a battery are:

- Intense or uneven areas of heat on the battery surface.
- Dark vapour cloud, white vapour cloud – this may look like smoke.
- Popping noises as battery cells burst under pressure.
- Venting gases that create a hissing, whistling, whooshing noise from the battery.
- Battery temperature is above ambient or increasing in temperatures, prepare for thermal runaway.
  - Battery temperatures around the 70°C, thermal runaway very likely.
  - Battery temperatures near or above 120°C, thermal runaway likely to be occurring.
- A jet-type flame coming from the battery.

Actions to take when thermal runaway happens:

1. Conduct a dynamic risk assessment.
2. Wear correct PPC and BA.
3. Approach from uphill and upwind.
4. Do not enter the smoke/vapour cloud.
5. Set up an exclusion zone. Be aware that projectiles may be released (explode) from the battery.
6. Protect exposures.
7. Seek expert technical advice eg scientific officer, Hazmat, manufacturer, site manager.
8. Further information: See the Australian Emergency Response Guide 2018 for more about the management of lithium-ion batteries.
9. Use a thermal imaging camera to monitor battery temperature and to locate the hottest area of the battery.
10. Cooling the battery with water can potentially prevent thermal runaway.
11. When the battery is at ambient temperature, continue to monitor the battery for a further 60 minutes.
12. Water is the best cooling and extinguishing agent as foam does not assist in cooling and may inhibit use of a thermal imaging camera.
13. A large and sustained supply of water may be required.
14. Watch out for hose lines laying in contaminated fire water run-off.

Note: the difficulty firefighters face is getting the water into the battery pack onto the seat of the fire/heat.

See page 35 to read about an incident where a large battery energy storage system went into thermal runaway and how the firefighters dealt with it.

## Battery energy storage systems (BESS)

BESS are designed to store and release energy products from renewable energy sources. The battery systems use various chemical compositions, the most common of which is lithium-ion. BESS are expected to become more popular due to falling costs and the technology's versatility, along with government targets and initiatives to reduce fossil fuel emissions. BESS are increasingly used for a variety of purposes, designs, size and locations.

A large number of batteries installed together, known as grid-scale or large-scale battery storage (LSBS), can act as a large-scale power generator connected into the electricity network – for example, the Victorian Big Battery.



Smaller-scale batteries can be installed in homes to provide backup power during blackouts, to be used at night for self-consumption and to enable off-the-grid capability. Energy is stored during the day, usually from solar panels, which is then used at night. Residential BESS can also be operated as a collective in what is called a Virtual Power Plant.

BESS are also found in many common household items, such as laptops and power tools, as well as cars, buses, trucks, E-bikes and scooters. BESS may also be referred to as traction batteries (in electric vehicles) or packs.

With the increasing use of BESS in various situations, it's important brigades know how to deal with a BESS fire and the risks posed. The main hazards posed by BESS are explosive gas, electrical, fire, chemical and toxic fume hazards.

The two main factors to consider when dealing with a fire involving a BESS are thermal runaway and vapour cloud explosion. Both pose a risk to safety of responders, and it's important they understand how to deal with these situations, including what actions to take afterwards regarding PPE and decontamination.

Brigades are encouraged to use the QR code to access more information about battery energy storage systems and thermal runaway.



## Electric vehicle fires

As more electric vehicles (EV) take to the roads, attention is turning to their safety, in particular fire safety.

An electric vehicle fire needs a lot more attention than a petrol or diesel car fire because:

- the technology is new
- EV fires are complex and often heralded by a highly toxic/flammable vapour cloud
- they can spontaneously ignite.

There are several hazards posed by electric and hybrid vehicle incidents:

- High voltage direct current (DC) electricity. Detectors found in CFA's low voltage fuse removal kits do not detect DC. The detector is AC only.
- EV have high voltage cabling connecting the battery to the motor. Cabling colour is standardised as orange. However, the location of these cables varies between vehicle makes and models.
- Lithium-ion batteries when in thermal runaway or on fire produce toxic and flammable gases/vapours, which can have serious health effects if inhaled or ingested. (These gases are similar to what is experienced at most vehicle fires).
- PHEV will also have a flammable liquid (petrol) risk.
- Unexpected vehicle movement.
- Secondary ignition which could cause the battery to reignite up to four weeks after extinguishment.
- A damaged cell can leak very small quantities electrolyte. Electrolyte is colourless and characterised by a sweet or pungent odour. It is flammable and corrosive/irritating to the eyes and skin.
- White salt residue may be evident on the outside of damaged battery casings indicating remnants of evaporated electrolyte.

When safe to do so:

**Identify** – look for identifying features indicating the vehicle is electric such as:



### **Immobilise and stabilise the vehicle –**

approach from the 45° or side and chock wheels with wheel chocks and apply the brake.

**Disable the vehicle** – (Isolate the HV traction battery) disable the vehicle as instructed by the manufacturer's instructions (eg turn off the ignition and disconnect the 12V battery). Avoid contact with orange HV cabling. Do not cut, pierce, or touch damaged batteries.

Do not remove the 'service plug'. This is used by qualified vehicle mechanics to disable the traction battery.

*The QR code on the previous page links to a Members Online page with information about identifying electric vehicles and other factors to consider during response.*

## Photovoltaic solar systems

With the increased popularity of photovoltaic solar panel installations on houses, caravans and recreational vehicles, it's becoming increasingly likely that our members will encounter them.



### **What is it?**

A photovoltaic system, also known as a PV system or solar power system, is an electric power system designed to supply usable solar power by means of photovoltaics. It consists of an arrangement of several components including solar panels to convert the sun's radiation in the form of light into usable electricity. A solar inverter converts the output from direct to alternating current. A system also includes mounting, cabling and other electrical accessories.

Three types of solar (PV) systems:

- **Grid interactive:** Most commonly seen on domestic homes, factories, commercial buildings and most solar farms
- **Off-grid:** Traditionally located in remote areas where grid power is not available or expensive
- **Hybrid:** Also called grid connected battery backup. This is the latest technology driving the battery storage revolution.

### **Hazards**

- AC and DC electric shock and fall from height.
- Difficult to isolate (unlike typical electricity 240-volt supplies).
- Covering with tarps can still allow enough light through for the PV array to produce power. The detector found in the Low Voltage Fuse Removal Kit cannot detect DC.
- When in structures firefighters should watch out for wires hanging from a roof. These can be connected to PV arrays so treat them as live.
- PV arrays can be connected to a BESS (battery energy storage system).
- Removing the low voltage service fuse does not remove the risk of electrocution from PV array and battery systems. All systems must be isolated individually.

### **How to turn off solar panels**

Light is the source of the power. As long as solar panels are exposed to light, they continue to produce a dangerous amount of DC electricity.

Turn off the isolator but be aware the panels are generating power.

*See page 38 to read about an incident involving a solar panel fire and how the brigade approached it.*



# Thermal imaging cameras

Thermal imaging cameras (TICs) are an important item of equipment that have a wide variety of applications during operational response. For example, TICs are used in bushfires to help with size-up, fire attack and blacking out, and used in structure fires for size-ups and internal searches.

During the cooler period of the year structure fire responses increase, so members should be equipped with the skills and knowledge to operate TICs to assist the response.

In addition to traditional methods used during a 360-degree size-up, a TIC can be used to identify the seat of the fire, fire spread and general fire conditions, including convection flow paths and potential for flashover, and the threat of radiant heat on nearby exposures. A TIC can be used to effectively gather necessary information in a timely and safe manner, which is vital to determine the best strategy and tactics to ensure safe, effective and efficient fire suppression.

Unfortunately, when only one TIC is available, the BA crew may take the camera with them when arriving on scene which means the incident controller may not take advantage of its use for size-up. Ideally, the camera should be used by the officer-in-charge for the initial size-up while the crew is making equipment ready before entry. When a size-up has been completed and the crew has been fully briefed and tasked, the camera can then be handed over to the BA team for door entry and use throughout the structure.

A TIC can be used for continued size-up and assessment of conditions throughout the firefighting operations. But if there's only one TIC, following the initial size-up it may be more advantageous to use that single camera in roles such as search and rescue or fire attack until another one is available.

## Training

All members are encouraged to upskill wherever possible and undertake further training to gain competency in the use of TICs in their varied applications as they can be very useful in providing critical information during response, identifying hazards and quickly checking blacking out for remaining hot spots. CFA offers two training courses for TIC operation - Thermal Imaging Camera (General) and Thermal Imaging Camera Operation (Structural). Both courses have prerequisites, so members should ensure they meet the requirements before enrolling in training.

## Want to learn more?

Members are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the brigades that have TICs in and around their response area that could support them at an incident. You can also request a TIC through FireCom if you think it would be beneficial at an incident.

Members are also encouraged to register the TICs by emailing [rmsadmin@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:rmsadmin@cfa.vic.gov.au) with the make, model, serial number and the location (station or vehicle rego).

*CFA has a variety of resources available to develop your understanding of TIC usage in both structural and wildfire settings. To access these resources use the QR code.*



# Remote piloted aircraft systems (drones)

Drones are also known as remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). Drones are currently used for operational purposes by FRV.

There are many different types of drones currently being used by FRV. Operators of these drones must hold a certification from CASA, known as an RPA Operators Certificate or ReOC.

Currently, FRV has a dedicated RPAS unit, consisting of a commander, chief pilot, maintenance staff and a further 19 qualified pilots across all platoons. They are all part of the FRV Aviation Unit.

Technology has come a long way and the use of RPAS has proved to be a valuable tool in fighting fires and in other situations requiring emergency services. It allows incident controllers and fireground command personnel to make timely and informed decisions.

FRV has about 14 RPAS in use with varying capabilities including stills imaging, 4K video, HD video, optical zoom and thermal imaging.



## Deployment of drones

As part of the Greater Alarm Response Systems (GARS) used in FRV response areas, RPAS will be deployed for the following incidents:

- Structure fire 4th alarm
- HazMat 3rd alarm
- Technical Rescue 5th alarm

Alternatively, if not automatically deployed through GARS, a request can be made which must come through FRV Firecom or from other agencies through the SDO.

Information to be given must include:

- tasking (do you require optical or thermal imaging or both)
- who to report to on arrival
- RPAS commander must also be notified



## What can RPAS be used for?

- Situational awareness for incident management teams.
- Hazmat: identification of placards, temperature of containers, monitoring of operations.
- High angle rescue team (HART) and urban search and rescue (USAR) intelligence.
- Crew supervision and safety.
- Fire duty checks.
- Aerial thermal imaging.
- 'Over the hill' surveillance in difficult-to-access areas.
- Impact assessment.
- Searches.

## Limitations

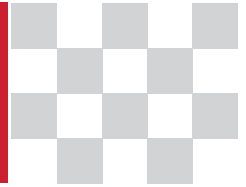
RPAS limitations include:

- Operations at night, though FRV has CASA approval for this.
- Operations beyond the visual line of sight of the pilot.
- Operating in potentially flammable atmospheres.
- Operating in adverse weather conditions (this varies with aircraft).
- Operations near controlled aerodromes or within controlled airspace.
- There are only a small number of pilots available for deployment over an extended period.
- Pilots can only be deployed from the metropolitan area.
- They must operate under 400 feet above ground level.
- They cannot fly over people.

There are hopes for more pilot training, enhanced aircraft capability, partnerships with other agencies and CASA exemptions and permissions.

Use this QR code to access more information about the use of remote piloted aircraft in firefighting, as well as more information about the Greater Alarm Response Systems.





## Victorian Big Battery fire

### Summary

CFA attended a fire at an energy storage site under construction, where a 13-tonne lithium battery had caught fire and was threatening other batteries in the area. Crews were on-site for more than four days to manage the fire and limit its spread. The event was unique because it was the first significant fire in a battery energy storage system (BESS) of this nature Australia-wide.

More than 150 firefighters from CFA and FRV responded to the blaze and worked extremely well together. The two agencies were also supported by Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), the municipality, water authority, Regional Roads Victoria and the site builder/battery supplier.

Similar incidents could occur in other locations so it is important our brigades are aware of the potential challenges and issues they may face if they attend a similar incident, even if it is on a smaller-scale BESS or electric vehicle fire.

The fire at the Victorian Big Battery (VBB) emphasises the importance of partnerships and relationships, both in the planning, preparedness, and response phases of the emergency. These relationships with the renewable energy industry, site builders and the emergency management sector enabled responders and the incident management team (IMT) to access technical expertise and information that was critical to develop a response strategy for the incident.

### The battery

The fire began in one of the 212 Tesla Megapacks that make up the VBB, before spreading to the immediately adjacent Megapack. A Megapack is a premanufactured cabinet containing a self-contained lithium-ion BESS. Two Megapack cabinets (located side-by-side) have similar proportions to a shipping container.

The battery was part of a complex set to become Australia's largest lithium-ion BESS. The VBB is a joint collaboration between French renewable energy corporation Neoen, tech giant Tesla and state and federal governments. With a total energy storage capacity of 300MW/450mwh and 212 Megapack storage units, it's currently the largest battery energy storage project in Australia.

In the week before the fire, testing and commissioning of sections of the site had begun, the site had been connected to the grid and various transformers and conductors had been energised allowing them to normalise through a process known as 'soaking'.

### Incident overview

On 30 July 2021, a call was received by ESTA from an on-site supervisor about a battery fire at a construction site in Geelong. Flames and smoke were visible from the Megapack.

The initial EAS page was sent to CFA Lovely Bank Fire Brigade and FRV Station 62 at Corio at 10.34am. The first truck on scene was FRV pumper 62B (P62B) followed by other CFA and FRV vehicles. While en route and when on scene, the Senior Station Officer in P62B escalated the incident for additional resources (firefighting, water supply, Hazmat and command and control). Following initial escalation FRV established control. The incident was in CFA jurisdiction. There was initial agreement that FRV would provide the initial incident controller in accordance with the CFA/FRV Joint Operational Activities MOU, prior to a planned and structured transfer of control to CFA at 3.30pm. The two agencies supported each other throughout the incident.

The first pumper was met by a Tesla employee who gave them a copy of the Tesla Lithium-Ion Emergency Response Guide and important information in relation to safety, electrical isolation, smoke hazard and initial tactics. At this stage the Megapack of concern was in thermal runaway (see below for more information) when crews arrived on scene. The recommended strategy was to protect the exposures around the burning Megapack, stay out of smoke and do not put water on the flames – i.e. let the Megapack burn itself out.



Photo by FRV Aviation Unit



Photo by FRV Aviation Unit

Following consultation with UGL (the construction company), TESLA and the FRV scientific officer, the strategy was:

- to establish a 20-metre exclusion zone (due to potential rupture and explosion of an electrical transformer)
- to cool the surrounding Megapacks and electrical transformer with water from ground monitors to prevent fire spread
- thermal monitoring of the burning Megapack, surrounding Megapacks and electrical transformer (with a remotely piloted aircraft and thermal imaging cameras)
- to maintain breathing apparatus crews in reserve to enter the exclusion zone to adjust ground monitors as required
- to establish a water supply for the operation, initially via a tanker relay and subsequently with a hose relay.

The nature of the fire meant there were significant resource demands, both with the initial escalation and the ongoing operation.

The site was disconnected from the power grid so there wasn't an impact on electricity supply. Hazardous smoke warnings were issued for the surrounding areas because of the fire, and residents were advised to stay indoors, close their windows, and keep their pets inside. Advice messages also provided advice regarding road closures.

An IMT was established early at the scene with an incident controller, operations officer, planning officer, logistics officer and safety officer. The IMT was expanded following the transfer of control. An incident emergency management team (IEMT) was also established on site in the temporary building site huts and included the following agencies: EPA, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, FRV, CFA, City of Greater Geelong (remote), Tesla and UGL. Additional agencies participating in the IEMT throughout the response as required included

WorkSafe, ESV, Regional Roads Victoria, SES and Neoen.

Brigades were on scene for four days both cooling and monitoring the Megapack fire before fire investigation commenced on 3 August. The site was handed back to site managers on Friday 6 August.

### What worked well

- **Site development:** CFA was a referral authority for planning approval when this site was in the scoping and planning phase. This allowed CFA to provide specific conditions to be complied with as part of the planning approval. These conditions were based in part on CFA's Guidelines for Renewable Energy Installations. While referrals for planning approvals for complex sites are made to CFA Headquarters, there are opportunities for CFA districts and regions to get more involved in the planning referral process to better understand the potential risks and response issues surrounding new sites.
- **Resource activation:** Upon arrival, members with local knowledge and an understanding of the site were able to identify and call upon the rapid escalation of additional emergency services resources needed to deal with the complex fire. Also, the District 7 DCC provided timely support to the fire and used resources from throughout the district and other districts. Security of the district (including move-ups) was addressed as part of the resourcing effort.
- **Site specific technical knowledge and expertise:** There was a steep learning curve for our responders and IMT who were learning as the incident progressed because there were no previous examples of BESS fires to base the response on. The IMT rapidly built relationships with personnel supplying specialist advice from UGL (the site builder), site manager, TESLA specialists on-site and remote and FRV's scientific officer.

Given the complexities associated with the fire the following specialist equipment was used:

- FRV Hazmat appliance to assist with decontamination and the FRV DEBRIS process
- Fire agency atmospheric monitoring and thermal imaging equipment
- Breathing apparatus support
- CFA and SES field and mobile command vehicles
- FRV remote piloted aircraft (RPAS).
- **Site handover (response to recovery):** The scene remained under CFA's control until mid-afternoon on Friday 6 August 2021 (post identification of the area of origin). Due to the need for further expert technical examination, the scene and investigation was transferred to Energy Safe Victoria, with support from Tesla engineers for final root cause analysis. A 'transition to recovery' document was developed by the incident controller in consultation with the UGL site manager. This ensured the site of the fire remained under the control of CFA and ESV for the duration of the fire investigation and the recovery of the damaged Megapack was done safely.
- **Fire investigation:** Given the scale of the incident and the political interest it would generate, it was vital that a thorough investigation was undertaken to gather all available data and information to reach an accurate conclusion. This process was highly successful, incorporating representatives from 10 agencies: CFA, FRV, WorkSafe Victoria, Energy Safe Victoria, Victoria Police, EPA, fire services scientific officer, Tesla engineers/subject matter experts, and UGL engineers. The CFA lead Investigator ensured safe access to the site and thorough daily briefings with the investigation team to ensure safety and clarity throughout the process. The investigation was conducted in accordance with CFA Standard Operating Procedure 14.03: Fire Investigation, under the provisions of Section 98 of the Country Fire Authority Act of 1958.
- **COVID management:** At the time of the fire, Victoria was in the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 protocols were implemented during the fire response and also incorporated the protocols of the site builder in the response.
- **Water supply:** Maintaining water supply to the operation was complex and challenging at times. There were a number of appliances working towards establishing a water supply to the incident, with 300+ vehicle movements occurring across the site. There were also some issues experienced with the water supply on site, including identifying a water source, maintaining sufficient water supply through the tanker relay and problems with tanks not being interconnected. Water supply was maintained through the establishment of a tanker relay initially, following by a significant hose lay from the mains water supply to the site.

## Lessons identified

- **Site familiarisation:** As the site was under construction, and due to COVID-19 restrictions, there were no opportunities for brigades to formally visit the site to better understand arrangements for communications, water supply and appliance response during the construction phase. Brigades and districts should consider opportunities to undertake site familiarisation visits during construction of significant assets, if circumstances allow.
- **IMT and resourcing:** The fire response required around-the-clock IMT and fireground resources. The first night shift IMT was challenging because most people had worked during the day. The fire response continued over four days and nights and it was a challenge resourcing it.
- **Doctrine:** Response strategies at the site were guided by the site (TESLA) Emergency Response Guide. While CFA has some existing and proposed doctrine (including standard operating procedures, guidelines, operational bulletins and safety alerts) for renewable energy, technology in the sector (including BESS) is rapidly evolving and it is important that doctrine can adapt and maintain currency as new technology emerges.
- **Training:** With the emergence of BESS in large-scale applications such as the VBB, as well as smaller domestic and commercial applications, the importance of providing relevant training opportunities for CFA members is recognised. That approach may range from broad awareness to site-specific training and exercising for brigades with larger-scale BESS in their area.

## Conclusion

The growth of renewable energy projects presents some new challenges for emergency responders as new technology is introduced and CFA brigades and members adapt response strategies to deal with the changing risks.

This incident highlights the importance of having knowledge of and plans for complex sites within a brigade's response area, and the need for effective communication and information sharing, including local knowledge, to ensure early suppression and successful incident management. The crews involved should be commended for their hard work in managing this incident, especially as they had never attended an event like this. The ability of the crews to work together to achieve a common goal despite the novel situation is a testament to the teamwork and collaboration that CFA members displayed.

## Questions for your brigade

- Do you know of any complex battery energy storage systems in your area that may require a pre-incident plan?
- Do you have any farms or homes in your area that have battery energy storage systems installed?
- Does everyone in your brigade understand the hazards of battery energy storage system fires, including the white smoke?

# Swan Hill solar panel fire

## Summary

Swan Hill Brigade recently attended a solar panel fire on the roof of a commercial premises, where they were required to disconnect power to the roof and consider whether and how a low voltage fuse removal kit could be used. The brigade asked for FRV Bendigo's ladder platform to assist with making the roof safe.

## Incident overview

In early May 2022, Swan Hill Brigade was paged to a roof top fire at a commercial factory site occupied by Nuplas, manufacturers of plastic beehives. An employee of the facility had noticed discoloration of roofing insulation and smoke at the apex of the roof and called Triple Zero to report the fire.

Upon receiving the page, a brigade member in the area noticed smoke coming from the roof and called the captain to let him know what he had seen. The brigade turned out with two trucks – a medium pumper and heavy tanker. The pumper had a crew of four including Captain Michael Howard, 1st Lieutenant Harold Jochs (who is an A grade electrician) and two firefighters. The tanker turned out with a crew of two with one brigade member on scene.

On arrival, the captain and 1st lieutenant were met by staff who confirmed that the structure had a 100kw solar system installed on the roof and showed the firefighters inside where the insulation had been discoloured by fire. The staff on site had already isolated AC supply from the solar inverters at the solar switchboard and CFA members isolated the DC supply isolators at the inverters as well as the AC isolators at the inverters.

Having completed the Safe Work at Heights course, the 1st lieutenant then accessed the roof and carried out a visual inspection to determine the best course of action. The decision was made to use a 4.5kg dry chemical extinguisher to put out the smouldering solar panel.



After the 1st lieutenant exited the roof, the incident controller was advised that a ladder platform would be necessary to make the situation safe. The brigade received advice from CFA and the installers of the system to isolate the DC supplies on the roof and to cut the solar cables where they left the panel. Being an electrician and having completed the Low Voltage Fuse Removal course, the 1st lieutenant knew that cutting the wires was not a safe or viable course of action, and it was not possible to isolate the DC supply on the roof because the isolator had burnt out.

Instead, with the approval of Nuplas the brigade contacted a local solar electrician to provide assistance. After the electrician looked at the photos taken of the roof, it was determined that access needed to be made to the roof to make the scene safe and disconnect the panel, and he then left the scene. It was clear from the photos that several cables had been damaged by fire and members were concerned that if a positive and negative wire touched there was a high possibility of arcing.

After consulting with the incident controller and commander, it was agreed that it was necessary to deploy the ladder platform from Bendigo to assist with making the scene safe. The Swan Hill heavy tanker was released but the pumper stayed on scene to assist with organising the solar electrician to return to the scene.

The ladder platform arrived in late afternoon and the FRV crew worked with the electrician to make the disconnections and make the roof safe.

After the solar electrician had made to situation safe, CFA crews asked FRV whether there were any alternative courses of action they could have taken to make the scene safe. FRV firefighters stated that considering the damage, working in the evening from the ladder platform was the safest and best option.

## What worked well

- **Interoperability:** CFA and FRV crews worked well together to make the scene safe and share expertise and knowledge. The FRV crew was extremely helpful in providing assistance and advice.
- **Additional resources:** The decision to draw upon additional local resources such as the solar electrician was highly beneficial as our members could draw on his expertise. Brigades are encouraged to do so in similar situations where CFA or FRV do not have the necessary resources or knowledge.
- **Utilisation of training:** Having completed the Low Voltage Fuse Removal and Safe Working at Heights courses, members knew that the FR30 Modiewark AC detector would not detect DC voltages, and that if it isn't safe on the roof your only option is a ladder platform. Members drew upon what they had learned in their training and used this to make sure the incident operated smoothly and safely.
- **Patience:** Despite this incident being protracted over many hours, members were prepared to wait to ensure the best result. Members did not rush into decisions and waited for the ladder platform to ensure the safety of everyone in making the scene safe.
- **Reflection:** Members displayed great initiative in reflecting among crews after the incident to identify if there was any other way they could have dealt with the incident. Drawing on the expertise and different opinions of the FRV crew was beneficial to capture a different outlook from people who may have had different training and exposure to similar incidents.

## Lessons identified

- **Hazard identification:** The brigade didn't have extensive awareness of the hazards posed by solar systems. It is important that brigades undertake training to improve their hazard identification with respect to solar systems as they become more commonly used. To improve hazard identification, it's important to complete the Electrical Safety Awareness training package which can be carried out online. This will improve your knowledge of alternative power supplies and other electrical hazards that you may be exposed to.
- **Equipment and knowledge:** The brigade didn't have all the necessary tools, equipment and knowledge to deal with this type of incident. However, the brigade made effective use of external resources such as the FRV ladder platform and the local solar electrician to obtain specialised knowledge.



## Questions for your brigade

- How would you use a low voltage fuse removal kit in a similar incident?
- What specialist resources do you have available in your area that you could draw on if necessary?
- How would you undertake a size-up and risk assessment in a similar fire?
- What do you know about Safe Work at Heights and the training CFA offers?

## Conclusion

This incident is a strong example of the importance of teamwork, using the knowledge that members of your brigade may have from their work and reflecting on what could have been improved after an incident. Swan Hill members are commended for their efforts and patience during this incident, as well as their strong demonstration of how to implement training in a practical scenario.

*Thank you to the Swan Hill 1st lieutenant and the brigade for their contribution to this case study. If you have any lessons to share, email [lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au)*



# Invaluable experience for CFA members in NSW

**CFA members who were deployed to New South Wales to help with devastating floods have shared their experiences.**

Tammy Garrett, North East Region's Manager Community Safety, was deployed as a public information officer in early March 2022. She said it was important to be able to adapt quickly to the environment and requirements of the job.

"We didn't know where we were going at first, but when we arrived in Sydney we were told we were heading to an incident control centre with a focus on the Hawkesbury Nepean River," Tammy said.

"There were some differences between the Victorian and New South Wales processes and systems for things like issuing warnings and alerts. While we had solid fundamentals to begin with, we needed to quickly adapt to those differences.

"There was plenty of external attention on Lismore at the time because of how quickly the flooding occurred, but that same situation happened 12 months earlier in the Hawkesbury. That meant the community was already mindful of what they needed to do when alerts or evacuations were issued."

Tammy was scheduled to be away for two days, but the flooding was so significant that her deployment was extended to five days.

With the deluge continuing for weeks across the state, Knox Group Officer and CFA Board Member Peter Shaw AFSM helped organise several volunteers to work as chainsaw operators. Then in early April, he headed to NSW himself as part of another deployment. Also working in an incident control centre, Peter said his focus was on the Goulburn area as a planning officer.

"It was a different circumstance to what I'm used to as we were dealing with floods rather than fire, but we were welcomed at the ICC and the situation was explained quite well," Peter said.

"We went to work like a normal ICC. While there are some documents that are a little different and we had some IT issues to begin with, it was really quite similar.

"The home of one of the members in the ICC was within the flood zone. While it wasn't likely he would be fully flooded it was interesting to have that direct feedback about how people were dealing with the situation on the ground."

Peter and Tammy both said their requirements rapidly changed towards the end of their deployment as floodwater subsided and the focus turned to impact assessment and recovery.

"By the time we were leaving we had started making plans for moving to a recovery mode," Tammy said. "When we returned to Victoria we could see our suggestions being carried out so it was good to see that work continuing.

"If anyone has the opportunity to go on deployment, either interstate or intrastate, I'd highly recommend it as it's extremely rewarding."

**STORY MARK BLACKMAN**



**Above:** (left) Knox Group Officer and CFA Board Member Peter Shaw AFSM

**Below:** (sixth from right) Manager Community Safety North East Region Tammy Garrett





# Rescue in Victoria's high country



**A multi-agency rescue team worked in treacherous terrain to rescue two people after their vehicle came off a popular 4WD track in Victoria's high country in April.**

Emergency services were called at 10.38am on Friday 22 April to a vehicle accident at Blue Rag Range Track on Mt Selwyn, between Mt Hotham and Dargo.

CFA members from Porepunkah brigade were first on scene, arriving at 11.22am to find the dual-cabin vehicle on its side about 15 metres down a 45 degree drop off the side of the track.

After attempting to climb a steep hill on a notorious part of the track, the vehicle had lost traction and rolled backwards. When the driver's back wheel hit the loose gravel edge of the track it became unstable and the momentum caused the vehicle to roll several times before it came to rest against a large tree.

Fellow 4WD drivers who were travelling with the pair rendered assistance soon after the crash, and the driver of the vehicle was pulled free of the wreckage despite his injuries.

His passenger was less fortunate, trapped by the vehicle's crushed canopy and roof racks. The fellow drivers used their own high lift jacks to attempt to push the vehicle's roof back and release some pressure off the trapped passenger.

Important intelligence was sent back to rescue crews and other emergency services en route about the extent of the accident and what resources would be required.

When the rescue crews arrived just after 12.30pm, they assessed the scene to determine the extrication plan and a decision was made to set up a roping system with a stretcher to be able to get the car occupants safely from the vehicle up to the track.

The rescue was made more complex by the location, with rescue vehicles unable to travel directly to the accident site.



Instead equipment had to be taken off rescue vehicles and transported to the scene via 4WD.

With other members at the scene acting as the manual rope haul team, the driver was the first to be safely stretchered up the incline and onto the track to the waiting paramedics.

Following assessment and stabilisation he was air-lifted to hospital for further treatment.

The trapped passenger was then quickly freed from the car and transported by stretcher to the second air ambulance. The incident was under control at 1.55pm and the second occupant was air-lifted from the scene at 2.50pm. Both suffered non-life-threatening injuries in the accident and are continuing to work through their recovery.

More than 30 responders were on scene for the rescue operation including North East Tech Rescue which is made up of members from CFA's Mount Beauty brigade, Bright SES and FRV Wangaratta. Members from CFA's Bright, Porepunkah and Harrietteville brigades as well as Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police also attended the accident, with Harrietteville brigade's field command vehicle acting as the command centre for the rescue.

CFA ACFO Brett Myers was on scene and praised the work of responders who worked together to ensure the rescue was a success.

"This rescue was another great example of the various emergency agencies working as one in difficult circumstances – there aren't many incidents where you have five emergency services agencies on scene," Brett said.

"It was very complex from a management perspective and it helped that we had both a CFA and FRV commander present to help coordinate the response.



"The terrain was the biggest factor, but North East Tech Rescue practise their skills in that environment quite regularly and are adept at both road and high-angle rescue.

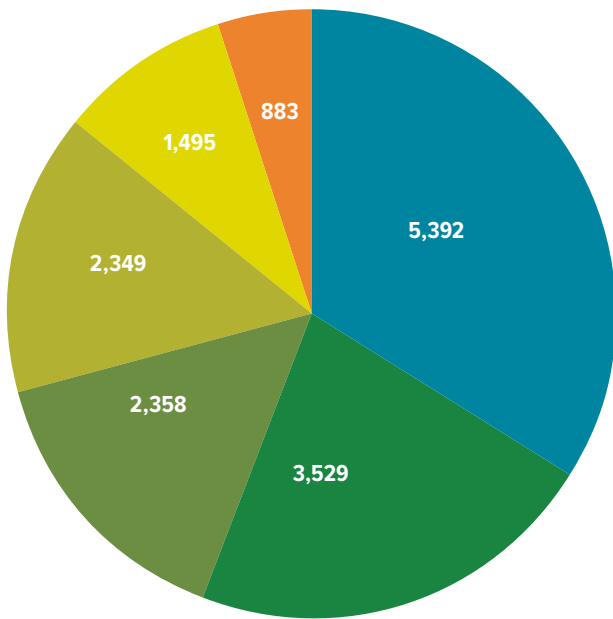
"The weather and altitude also played a part particularly as the team had to carry the second person quite a distance to get to the air ambulance due to the location."

Victoria Police, as the control agency, conducted a multi-agency debrief following the incident because of the complex nature of the response.

**STORY: SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN**



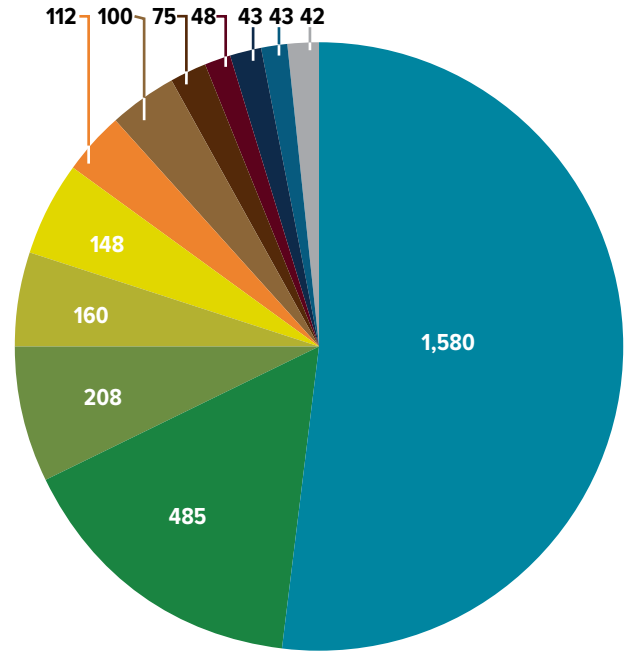
### INCIDENTS BY TYPE



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

\* Includes 4,436 callouts supporting FRV and 40 supporting other agencies

### ORIGIN OF FIRE



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

### INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT



#### SOUTH WEST

| District | Incidents |
|----------|-----------|
| 4        | 147       |
| 5        | 377       |
| 6        | 287       |
| 7        | 1,162     |

#### WEST

| District | Incidents |
|----------|-----------|
| 15       | 1,027     |
| 16       | 348       |
| 17       | 299       |

#### NORTH WEST

| District | Incidents |
|----------|-----------|
| 2        | 864       |
| 14       | 2,455     |
| 18       | 355       |
| 20       | 440       |

#### NORTH EAST

| District | Incidents |
|----------|-----------|
| 12       | 474       |
| 13       | 1,545     |
| 22       | 616       |
| 23       | 362       |
| 24       | 387       |

#### SOUTH EAST

| District | Incidents |
|----------|-----------|
| 8        | 3,700     |
| 9        | 573       |
| 10       | 226       |
| 11       | 266       |
| 27       | 377       |

Brigades are reminded to submit their incident report as soon as possible after attending an incident. Brigades on strike teams also need to submit a report to the Service Delivery Reporting Centre (SDRC). Call **1800 628 844** between 8am and 10pm or report online at [applications.cfa.vic.gov.au/firs](https://applications.cfa.vic.gov.au/firs).

# Peers carry out reaccreditation training

The Peer Support Program continues to provide vital wellbeing and mental health support to CFA members and their families. As a result of the review conducted by Phoenix Australia, Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health in 2018, recommendations were made requiring all CFA peers to be assessed every three years.

The importance of ongoing training, reflective practice, review and ongoing reaccreditation is vital to ensure peers have the necessary skills and experience to continue performing the role and to ensure that evidence-informed practice is used every time support is provided to someone.

In the past few months, we have conducted several reaccreditation courses with the final session scheduled for later this year. During the reaccreditation peers have the opportunity to refresh their knowledge about the evidence-informed practices outlined in the Peer Support Program Operations Manual, with a particular focus on individual and group-based Psychological First-Aid. They then complete a number of activities that demonstrate their skills.

These activities include a theoretical knowledge assessment, a case study discussion and a practical demonstration. The outcome of this, along with their participation in activations and training sessions, go hand-in-hand to formalise their reaccreditation.

District 14 Deputy Peer Coordinator Deb Azzopardi said she found the training to be “valuable and necessary to the ongoing development of our peers.

“The practical component of the training was a great opportunity to further develop and refine my skills,” Deb said.

The reaccreditation training has been a fantastic opportunity to bring peers together from across the state and provide a sense

of normality to our training schedule – something that’s been missing in recent times because of COVID-19.

Ben Rose, Peer in District 12, found the training day to be very rewarding.

“Although the anticipation of having to do a role play was high, it was a very life-like exercise,” Ben said. “And to go through the process with such a supportive group of fellow peers made it an enjoyable day.”

Gone are the days when peers visited a fire station and asked members to sit in a circle and share their experiences of an incident. It’s important we ensure the service being delivered by peers reflects our revised approach of a more relaxed environment where those wanting to speak about their top-of-mind issues can do so, but also members can get information on what to look out for in the days and weeks after a potentially traumatic event.

Peers can be accessed by calling the Wellbeing Support Line on **1800 959 232**, selecting option 2 and entering your district number. Alternatively for operational incidents, you can access Peer Support by requesting a Signal 2-7 via the radio.

The Peer Support Program is currently preparing for the 2023 intake of new peers. If you or someone you know might be interested in becoming a participant in the program, we encourage you to contact your local Peer Team to find out when their next meeting is. More information can also be found on Members Online: **members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/wellbeing-hub/our-services/peer-support-program**.

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

STORY TIM ROGERS





## Faces of CFA

LEE CONDON, CASTERTON FIRE BRIGADE, DISTRICT 4

### **What is your CFA role?**

I am the captain of the brigade as well as the representative for the district planning committee. I also conduct most of the training including General Firefighter, structure and road accident rescue.

### **Why did you join?**

My father was a member of the brigade for almost 15 years so I always had an interest in CFA. I have three uncles in the brigade and thought I'd give it a go. Before I knew it I was the captain of one of the largest brigades in District 4.

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

I was called out to a road accident rescue at 3am one day. I remember arriving on scene and thinking how are we going to get this person out? I remember standing on steps cutting the roof out to gain access as the vehicle was on its side, and we got the driver out in about 25 minutes. We were notified by the family that the person had made a full recovery and was very thankful for the work we did. It makes all the hard work and training worth it.

### **Who have been your mentors in CFA?**

I have had lots of mentors in my time in our brigade - we have some members with over 50 years of service. In 2019 I was enrolled in the Captains Peer Mentor Program. Garry Mallen, my mentor, helped me learn the basics of being a captain. We had many discussions about how to handle issues I was experiencing in the brigade. As part of that program I also attended the Linton Staff Ride where I walked in the shoes of those involved in the Linton fire in 1998. It was a real eye-opener.

Brian Wombwell, the brigade's 1st lieutenant and group officer, has taught me a lot about bushfire behaviour, structure fires and road accident rescue. He is someone I always bounce ideas off in the brigade and on the fireground.

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

In my time in the CFA I have been lucky enough to become captain of the brigade and in that time we have received a new heavy tanker and we have a brand new station. Recently we received more than \$100,000-worth of new rescue gear which will help keep our small community safe.

I will remember the campaign fires of 2019-20 for a long time. I was deployed on strike teams and also worked in Heywood ICC where I helped deploy personnel and heavy equipment to our crews on the ground.

During the floods in 2016 we did multiple rescues in the morning, walking in water up to our armpits to rescue people trapped in their houses. Then we returned to Casterton and did a boat rescue with the SES to help a truck driver who had run off the road into flood water.

### **How do you motivate your brigade members?**

I'm very lucky that the members of my brigade are extremely motivated. If anything they keep me motivated and they are a great group of people to be around.

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

It doesn't matter what position you hold in the brigade, if we don't all work as one then we won't be able to protect our community to the best of our ability. Also, it's never too early to think about succession planning. The BMT and I have been training two of our younger lieutenants in all areas of managing the brigade. I believe they will make great captains some day.

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

In my spare time I like to go fishing, shooting and spending time with family and friends.



## A new captain for Cashmore

**Cashmore Fire Brigade has elected its first woman captain. Regina Punton joined the brigade in 2017 and was named captain at a recent brigade election. Having her first taste of volunteering with St John Ambulance, it was her father who encouraged her to sign up with CFA.**

"Prior to being at CFA I was a volunteer with St John Ambulance. I did that for many years, so I've always been interested in volunteering," Regina said.

"The jobs at St John were few and far between, so CFA felt like something I could be more involved with. My dad had also been a member at Cashmore brigade for more than 18 years, so he was a huge inspiration for me to join."

A natural leader, Regina said her day job as a teacher provides her with skills that help her in her role as captain.

"I absolutely love to lead and support others through their goals and aspirations; I always have. As a teacher I find that really complements my role as captain as I'm leading people in both capacities."

Regina said she encourages everyone to not only get involved with CFA, but also their brigade management team (BMT).

"You never know what experience will come out of joining CFA and what you're going to learn or where it's going to take you, so I would really encourage people to take every opportunity they can," Regina said.

"This includes joining your BMT. It may be scary, but you've got a team for a reason and they're there to support you. Although having a role might feel quite overwhelming, you've got your whole brigade there to help you along. You don't have to know it all, but you've got to be willing to take it on and learn from those around you."

Regina also said that she would recommend more young women get involved with their local brigade.

"There are so many different opportunities that we have as women to expand our skills within CFA. We also bring our own skills and I think that's really special."

A highlight for Regina during her time at CFA has been the people she has met.

"I've been able to interact with and learn from so many amazing people – especially my dad. He's given me a lot of his time and support to enhance

my skills. The support from other members of the brigade has been incredible and enables me and our other younger members to feel like we are capable and can take charge."

Regina said that the significance of being Cashmore brigade's first woman captain is not lost on her, but she knows her brigade is behind her.

"I'm nervous, but I've had strong role models in the past who've shown me you don't have to know it all and you're allowed to ask for help," Regina said.

"My brigade is behind me and we're all going to get through whatever challenges and opportunities we face. My brigade is not just me as a captain; it's the brigade as a whole, together."

Regina believed that growth was her main goal as captain. "I want to grow within myself, but I also want to support my brigade, my BMT and any new members to reach their goals in CFA."

"I want to ensure it's a positive and supportive environment and we achieve success together."

STORY TIAHN WRIGHT



1926



1940



1942



1947



1955



1957



1962



1967



1971

Tankers through the ages

- 1926 Ford T Model tanker with 44 gallon drum as water supply
- 1940 Chevrolet 1.5 ton tanker
- 1942 Fordson Blitz
- 1947 Austin Series 1 tanker
- 1955 Austin Series 3 tanker
- 1957 Willys Jeep Hurricane tanker
- 1962 Bedford RLHC 4.4 tanker
- 1967 International C1300 tanker
- 1971 Bedford M series tanker

# Ararat brigade's community celebrations

**Ararat Fire Brigade members held events across the entire Mother's Day weekend to commemorate the long-anticipated official opening of their new multi-million-dollar station, .**

The celebrations started with the brigade's annual dinner where CFA Board Member Beth Davidson joined ACFO Bernie Fradd to present a number of life memberships and service awards ranging from five-year service certificates through to an impressive 60-year life membership, along with some well-deserved National Medals and clasps.

Saturday saw the brigade host a community open day featuring displays from West Region Community Safety, demonstrations from Junior brigade members and the ever-popular FLAIM Trainer and FLAIM Extinguisher virtual reality technology.

Danielle Green MP and Deputy Chief Officer West Region Peter O'Keefe joined brigade members and community members to officially open the station. This new \$2.62 million state-of-the-art facility replaced the former station which stood on the same site in Tuson Street for almost 50 years.

The new station was jointly funded by the brigade and the Victorian Government.

Ararat Captain Daniel Ramsdell said the new station was welcomed by the brigade's 70-strong membership because it will help them better support the community.

"The additional space means we have room for all our trucks and we're able to safely get in and out when responding to call-outs," Daniel said.

"The new station comfortably houses the local command facility and the increased office size will allow us to run two lots of training at the same time.

"I would like to thank our brigade members and the community who've worked very hard over a number of years to raise funds for the station."

The new facility features a four-bay drive through motor room, dedicated turnout room, storage areas, workshop and modern amenities and meeting rooms.

The brigade also contributed more than \$145,000 to construction costs obtained through community fundraising. This contribution was used to increase the size of communal areas, an upgraded security system and the installation of automatic gates.

The brigade took the opportunity to commemorate three of its former members during the community open

day by naming brigade vehicles in their honour. With combined service of more than 180 years between them, these members were instrumental in shaping the brigade: Wayne 'Wilbur' Wilde (1995-2019), Kingsley Walker (1945-2020) and Alan Butt (1955-2019).

As part of the weekend's celebrations, Fire Services Museum of Victoria made the long trek from Port Melbourne for the community open day, allowing two of the brigade's original fire trucks to be displayed – a Shand Mason fire pump and a front-mounted Austin pumper.

A Shand Mason hand drawn fire pump was used by the brigade from 1865 to 1919 when the brigade received its first mechanised truck. The original Austin pumper used in the 1960s by the brigade proudly led the torchlight parade through the streets of Ararat later that evening. Members of Ararat Fire Brigade were joined by Beaufort, Hamilton, Horsham, St Arnaud, Stawell and Sebastopol brigades much to the delight of locals lining the streets.

To honour the brigade's humble beginnings, the torchlight parade began at the Ararat Post Office, the site of the original fire station built in 1875, and finished at the new site in Tuson Street.

STORY NAOMI GALVIN





**2022 Good Friday Appeal**

- 1** Moe Fire Brigade  
PHOTO: EDDIE SEAH
- 2** Bayswater Fire Brigade  
PHOTO: COURTNEY WALKER
- 3** Good Friday Appeal launch event  
PHOTO: EDDIE SEAH
- 4** Sebastopol Fire Brigade  
PHOTO: EDDIE SEAH
- 5** Kids Day Out at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre  
PHOTO: MEL LIM
- 6** CFA cheque presentation at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre  
PHOTO: EDDIE SEAH





# CFA supports community events

## AFL Emergency Services Match

**7** Vehicle display at the MCG  
PHOTO: HAWTHORN FOOTBALL CLUB

**8** CFA Hoses and Ladders game at the MCG  
PHOTO: LERNA AVAKIAN

**9** CFA smoke house at the MCG  
PHOTO: LERNA AVAKIAN

**10/ 11** CFA on the ground before the game  
PHOTOS: HAWTHORN FOOTBALL CLUB



# Field exercise tests the water

**A multi-brigade field training exercise has tested response procedures for a significant chemical leak at the Tarago Water Treatment Plant in Drouin West.**

More than 40 CFA volunteers from four brigades joined Melbourne Water and Ambulance Victoria at the facility in April to participate in the exercise, which simulated a chlorine leak at the facility with people trapped.

Tarago Treatment Plant is a critical piece of infrastructure in Drouin West providing about 15 billion litres per year of clean water to the Mornington Peninsula and Westernport regions from Tarago Reservoir.

While chlorine is important in the treatment of water it can cause serious injuries, loss of life and damage to property and the environment if not managed correctly.

Developed by a team led by Drouin West's Training Officer Bruce Jewell, the training exercise was designed to test and review response and coordination procedures in accordance with the plant's pre-plan, as well as test the facility's boost system. It was also designed to assess the effectiveness of response arrangements including those of specialist support roles such as hazmat response.

The exercise began with Melbourne Water being alerted to a chlorine link through the facility's monitoring systems, which was soon escalated to emergency services. The page included the report that facility staff were trapped because of the leak.

Crews and vehicles from Drouin West, Drouin, Warragul and Nilma North brigades responded to the call, with rehab provided by Yallourn North brigade.

Bruce said it was important for those who may be impacted by an emergency at the plant to know that local fire brigades could manage the incident.

"It was a complex exercise that was a great test of our capability," Bruce said. "A lot of pre-planning went into it and the support we had from our neighbouring brigades, especially Warragul who have a hazmat pod, was fantastic."

"There were some great takeaways, including the need for specialist support such as a big-fill to boost water to the plant's ring main."

"I walked away knowing that Drouin West, with the support of neighbouring brigades, is more than capable of effectively responding to an event of this nature."

Drouin West's Junior members were also involved in the exercise, providing catering on the day.

Melbourne Water's Water Supply Safety Coordinator Wayne Packham said the exercise gave all agencies involved valuable lessons and experience working together in an emergency with several complexities.

He expressed Melbourne Water's gratitude, in particular to the local CFA volunteers who dedicate their time and energy protecting the community.

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM AFMS



# Volunteer Recruitment Hub is live

After almost two years of design and development, countless information sessions, engagement with volunteers and staff across the state, development of training tools and support resources and more, the Volunteer Recruitment Hub (VRH) is now live.

The VRH (<https://applications.cfa.vic.gov.au/eoi>) is a purpose-built online platform designed to create an end-to-end onboarding process for new and transferring volunteers. Introduced in a staged approach since December 2020, release three of the VRH, launched earlier this year, saw the addition of an online member registration process.

Some of the additional functionality provided through release three includes:

- consistent and streamlined platform for registering new and transferring volunteers statewide
- integration of existing member registration processes including working with children check, police checks and medical referrals
- brigade visibility of the status of their applications using the VRH dashboard
- reduction in manual processing and data entry of applications
- buffer period introduced for junior members transitioning to senior membership
- member-initiated approach to transfer to another brigade
- email notifications at different stages of the registration process
- reduced risk around managing private and personal information, missing paperwork and child safety compliance.

Since its launch, the VRH team has helped many applicants from brigades, districts and support staff as they navigate the new system. This ensured that questions were answered and potential teething problems and pressure points could be identified and rectified.

There's a range of supporting tools and resources available on Members Online ([members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-](https://members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-)

[operational/volunteer-recruitment-and-retention-project/volunteer-recruitment-hub](#)), including demonstration PowerPoint presentations, user manual, quick reference guide and frequently asked questions. We encourage brigade management teams, catchment teams, support staff and other volunteers supporting the recruitment process to familiarise themselves with these resources to ensure they have the capability to navigate the system.

Since launching in March 2022, more than 1,130 expressions of interest have been received via the VRH, with more than 180 progressing through to registration. Several applicants have given feedback to the VRH team about using the hub.

"Most of the registration is very straightforward. There are a few sections that require a bit of digging around to get all the information required, but I was impressed with the ease to complete," one applicant said.

"I'm not the greatest at using a computer but I found the system easy enough to use. But I needed to carefully read the instructions for each section," said another.

"So much better than paper-based methods," said a third.

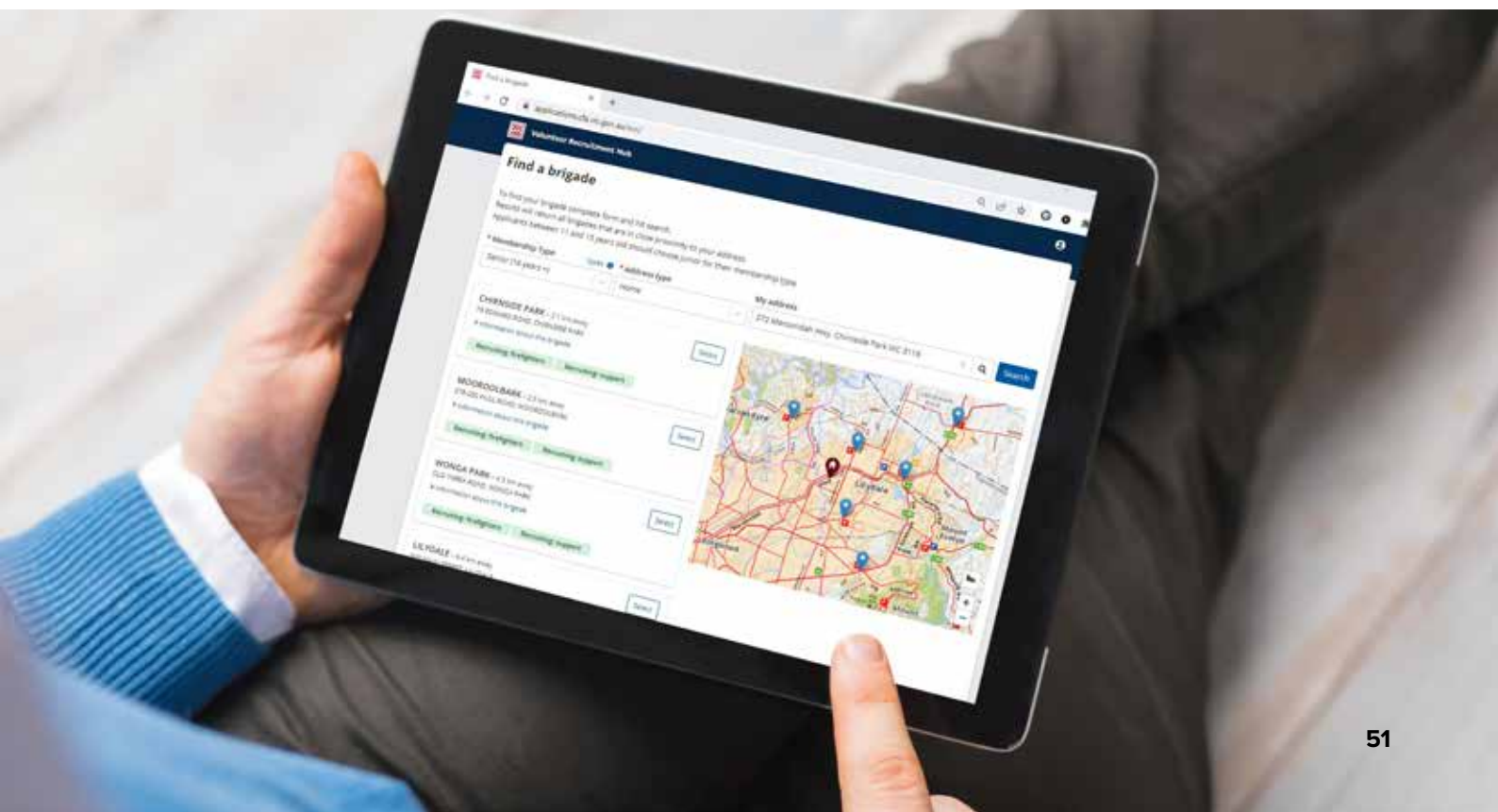
A brigade secretary was complimentary about the new system.

"From my perspective, the now enhanced VRH is excellent. Paperwork for the secretary has now gone, and the system has proven that if an applicant already has the required documents in place, the complete process can occur very quickly.

"All the chasing of documents and follow-up meetings with an applicant no longer exist."

Ongoing support to brigades, new and transferring applicants and support staff is now the responsibility of district staff. VRH champions have been identified in each district and they will be the first point of contact for any questions about the VRH.

STORY NIKI HABIBIS



# Emergency Memberlink

The Emergency Memberlink program is a way for us to recognise your commitment and contribution to emergency services and Victorian communities.

By using Emergency Memberlink, you can receive discounts and benefits on a wide range of products and services in Victoria and interstate.

Details of the offers and full terms and conditions are at [emergencymemberlink.com.au](http://emergencymemberlink.com.au).

To join Memberlink phone 1800 820 037 or register online at [emergencymemberlink.com.au](http://emergencymemberlink.com.au). You can also access your Memberlink card on the website.

The Memberlink team welcomes feedback about the program and your suggestions about new benefits you think would be of value to you, your family and your colleagues. Phone the team or leave a message on the Emergency Memberlink Facebook page.



- Up to 15% off the best daily car rental rate with **Europcar**.
- Save up to 40% off the Hewlett-Packard public store price across HP laptops, desktops, monitors, printers and accessories through the **HP Corporate Store**.
- The **Bridgestone Business Associates Program** offers members 15% off Bridgestone's website price on the full range of car, SUV and light van tyres.
- Members and their families have access to discounts throughout the year at **Specsavers Optometrists**.
- **SPC -The Good Meal** Co has a 20% discount on home delivered meals.
- Save 10% to 40% off the best available rates at over 140 **Wyndham Hotels & Resorts** locations in Australia.
- **Sixt Australia** has up to 15% off the best rate of the day on passenger and commercial vehicles.
- Save 3% to 7% on pre-purchased **Gift Cards** including Woolworths, Coles, Myer, Kmart, Target, Rebel Sport, JB Hi-Fi, Supercheap Auto and BCF.
- Special hotel rates through **Hotel Planner** throughout Australia and overseas.
- **Experience Oz** offers 10% off (and even more on hot deals) on a range of experiences such as attractions, zoos and aquariums, theme parks and extreme activities.
- Exclusive discounts on home entertainment, audio, televisions, mobile phones, IT hardware, fitness trackers, whitegoods and much more through the **JB Hi-Fi Corporate Benefits Programme**.
- 4% discount on the Emergency Memberlink Health Plan through Bupa.
- Members have access to commercial pricing on a great range of household appliances and electronics through **The Good Guys Commercial Division**.
- Free small soft drink, small orange juice or small McCafé coffee with any purchase over \$4 at **McDonald's** restaurants in Victoria.
- Discounted cinema tickets, attraction tickets and e-gift cards through the **Memberlink Box Office**.
- 25% off revitalise Bath House bathing and Moonlit bathing during off-peak periods (Mon-Fri outside of public and school holidays) at **Peninsula Hot Springs** on the Mornington Peninsula.
- **mycar Tyre & Auto** has 10% off servicing, mechanical repairs and TCP tyres.
- 20% off flowers from **Petals Network**.
- Up to 20% discount on standard rates at the **Radisson on Flagstaff Gardens Melbourne**.
- 15% off prescription glasses and prescription sunglasses at **OPSM**.
- **RSEA Safety** offers members 15% off full-priced items online and instore.
- New and existing customers have access to special offers on **Elgas** LPG bottled gas.
- Travel with **Spirit of Tasmania** and save 5% on adult Spirit and Flexi passenger fares.
- Up to 20% discount on the public web price of **Lenovo** notebooks, desktop PCs, monitors and accessories.
- Members have access to **Nissan Fleet** pricing across a select range of Nissan vehicles.
- 5% to 10% off the best unrestricted rate of the day at Accor Hotels.
- **PetsOnMe Insurance** offers two months free for pets aged six to 52 weeks, one month free for pets aged one year and older, plus 6% off annual premiums.
- Plants, trees and garden products at wholesale prices at **Plantmark**.
- **Searoad Ferries** offers 10% discount on ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff.
- Exclusive pricing on whitegoods, kitchen appliances, audio visual, computers and mobile phones, home appliances and furniture through **Harvey Norman Groups & Associations Division**. Contact your Emergency Memberlink team for a quote.
- 20% off day admission tickets for members and their immediate family at **Moonlit Sanctuary Wildlife Conservation Park**.
- Corporate leisure rates and reduced insurance excess on car hire with **Avis**.
- **Westfund Health Insurance** offers a 5% discount plus two-month waiting periods waived on your Extras cover.



# Brigade

If undeliverable return to:  
D&D Mailing Services  
6/400 Princes Hwy  
NOBLE PARK NORTH VIC 3174

PRINT  
POST  
100010934

POSTAGE  
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