

Brigade

winter 2014

Protecting lives
and property

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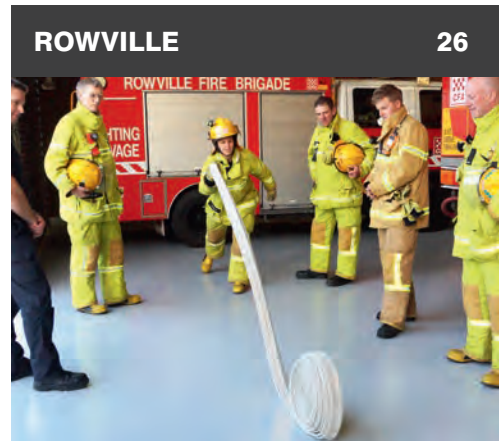


▼ **FEATURE:** Our newest integrated brigade



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COVER PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM



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Working towards a joint volunteer strategy

CFA welcomed the external scrutiny of the Jones Inquiry and, in 2011, developed the Jones Inquiry Implementation Action Plan in collaboration with VFBV. Last year we welcomed the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) investigation and its *Managing Emergency Services Volunteers* report was tabled in State Parliament in February 2014. The VAGO report assessed whether CFA and SES effectively and efficiently manage volunteers. It looked at whether strategic and operational planning is adequate to identify and address volunteer resourcing requirements, including the capacity and capability of the volunteer workforce. The particular focus areas were attraction, recruitment, retention and support as well as the adequacy and effectiveness of training and education and the allocation and use of volunteers including surge capacity.

The report acknowledged that CFA has an overarching support service strategy but we lack a sound understanding of the total number of volunteers we need. We also have limited knowledge of how effective our recruitment methods are because of a lack of performance frameworks.

To quote from the report, "Neither agency can be assured that it has the capacity to respond to incidents when they occur because assessments of current workforce capacity overestimate their emergency response capabilities."

"CFA and SES's decentralised approaches to the recruitment, training and deployment of volunteers mean neither agency can assure itself that these activities are effectively addressing workforce needs. CFA is in the process of implementing programs that aim to address these concerns, however SES's attempts to resolve these issues are presently inadequate."

Furthermore, VAGO recognised that, while CFA volunteers are supported, the reasons members choose to leave are not well understood because we don't currently conduct exit interviews.

A new program management team will focus on implementing recommendations from both the Jones and VAGO reports.

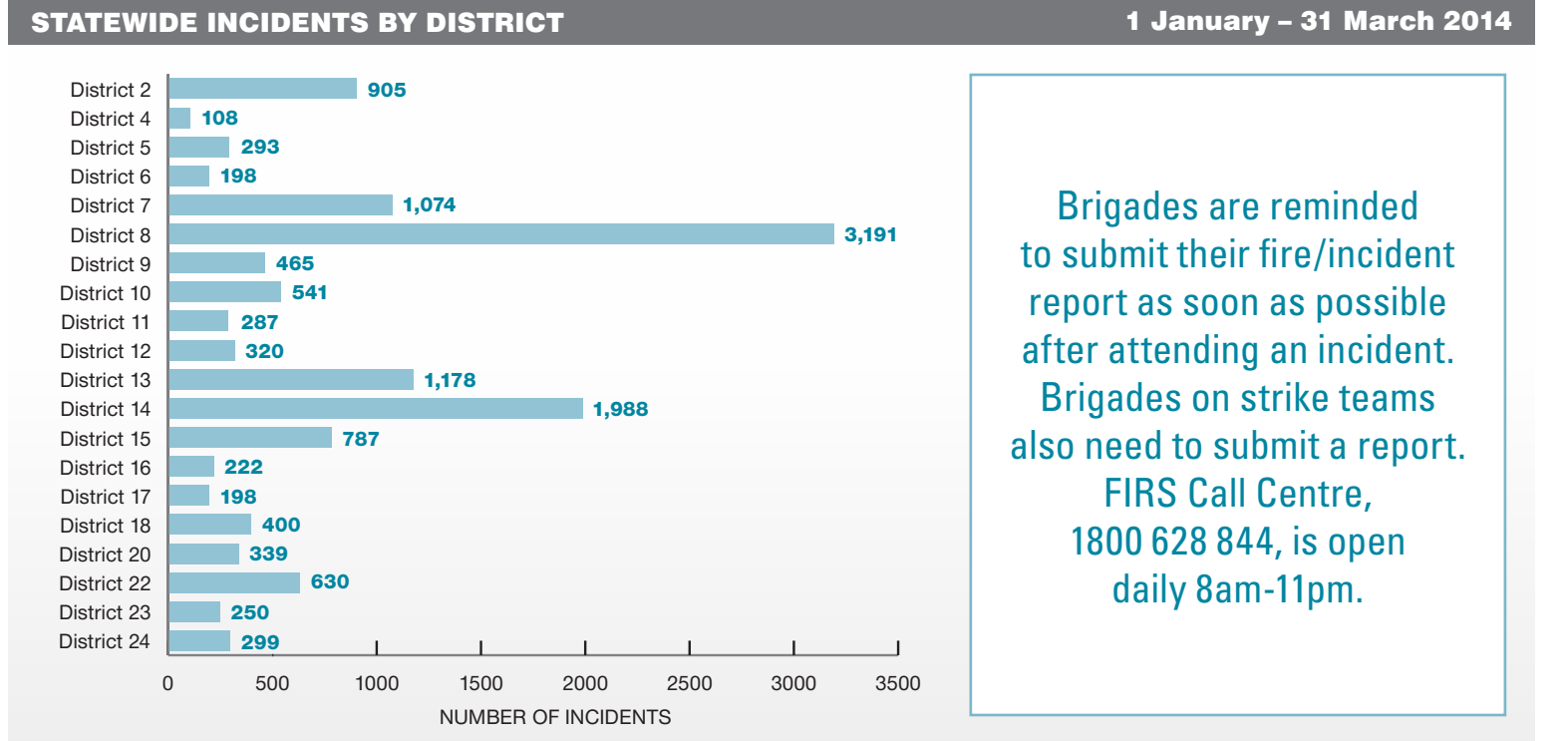
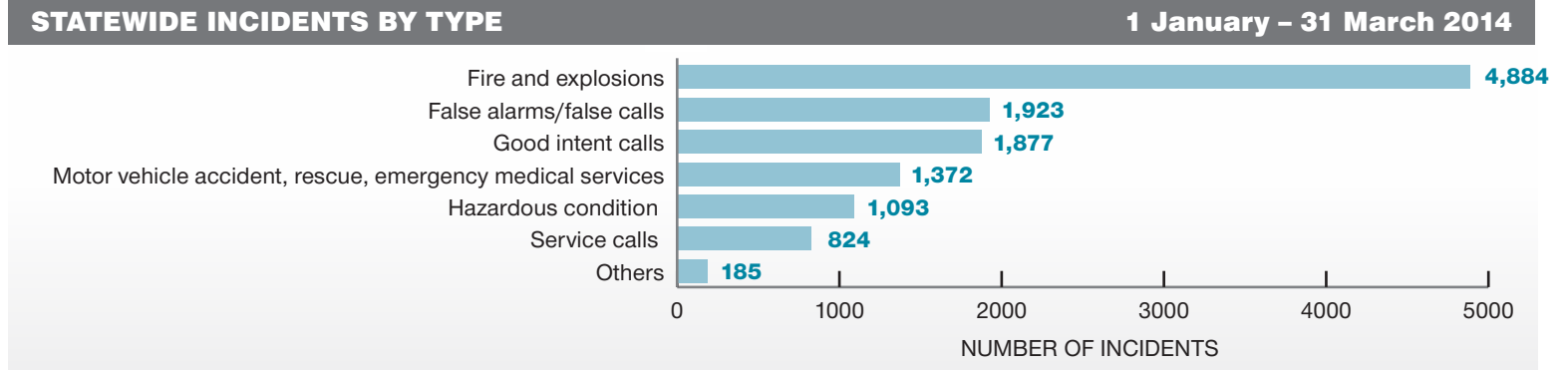
This team will receive strategic advice and direction from a steering committee made up of members from CFA, VFBV and the Department of Justice. The committee will be independently chaired by Dr Heather Wellington who has extensive experience in public administration and community services. Dr Wellington has served as chair of the board of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. She is currently a Surf Coast Shire councillor where she is a strong advocate for efficient service delivery and robust planning for a sustainable future.

Her concerns mesh well with CFA's impetus to continuously improve our services for and support of volunteers.

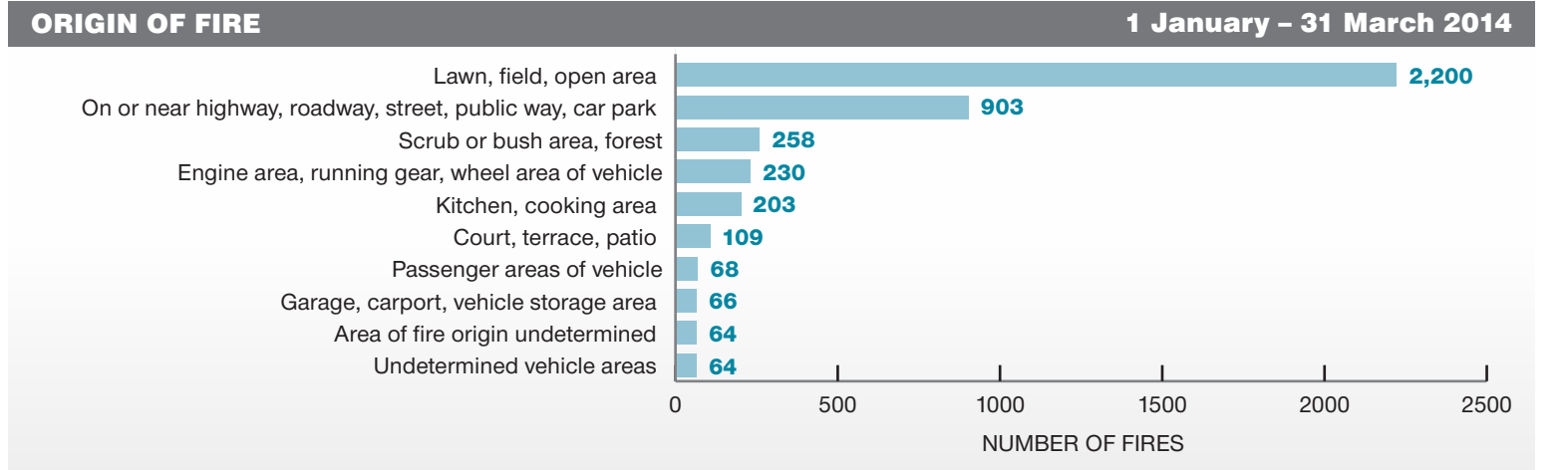
Against this background, CFA and SES have begun work on a joint volunteer strategy which will incorporate the key themes of the Jones Inquiry and VAGO. A workshop will be convened in the next few weeks involving key stakeholders. Over the next six months there will be extensive consultation with the field to ensure we are thoroughly addressing the recommendations.

This work is vital. Tackling the issues raised in both reports is critical to our long-term sustainability and the safety and protection of Victorian communities.

Incident summary



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



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For any social media queries, contact: c.ford@cfa.vic.gov.au; 9262 8317

MORWELL ROUND-UP



Right:

CFA's Gill Heisey talks to residents at Morwell's Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre

PHOTO: ASHLEY WINCER

After 45 days of round-the-clock firefighting, the Morwell open cut mine fire was officially declared safe, and management of the mine was handed back to operators GDF Suez

IN THE THICK OF IT

"I'd never seen it so bad – I pulled up at 5.30am and all the batters were glowing through the wind and movement. My life was on hold after that. We were working 13-hour days, six days a week," said Morwell brigade First Lieutenant Pat Quinn.

For six weeks, Pat alternated between his job as the Earthworks Superintendent for RTL Mining and Earthworks, based at the Morwell mine, and as a leader of Morwell brigade.

"My focus was to support my staff at the mine as well as the CFA personnel – excavating and bulldozing tracks for firefighters to access the firefight. It was challenging on every aspect. We were fighting a fire and a flood at the same time. We had guys up to their knees in the mud pulling hose.

"There are a few CFA volunteers from different brigades working in my [work] team, so I grabbed them as sector commanders. Having their firefighting experience helped, as we all spoke the same language and knew what had to happen with strike teams, zones and sectors. We could all talk 'CFA talk'.

"We had a few days where we were very lucky – things could have turned out different if it wasn't for the teamwork between CFA, MFB and the mine. We had one day where the fire came out of the mine and came within 20 metres of the power stations, if not closer at times. I believe we saved the power station that day."

Community support kept Pat and the whole Morwell station inspired.

"On the first Monday we were driving back through the town for a lunch break with our windows down. People were yelling out 'thank you' and 'we love the CFA'. That was very special.

"For me it's more about the friendship than the firefighting. There's a great mateship in hard times and I've seen career staff and volunteers help each other out. It's a real team at Morwell."

THE SUCCESS OF COMPRESSED AIR FOAM

Morwell Fire Station hosted rotating crews from Fire and Rescue NSW and their Baulkham Hills pumper for weeks as the incident ran on.

A station officer or senior station officer operated on every shift with the NSW fireys who didn't have jurisdiction under the CFA Act. This freed up the majority of Morwell firefighters to attend the open cut fire.

"They've been absolutely awesome," said Senior Station Officer Paul Fixter as he played host to the NSW crews. "It's really hectic on station because a lot of our gear got used in the first couple of days at the open cut fire as well as the Hernes Oak and Maryvale paper mill fires. We didn't have time to clean up so that's left us with a lot to do now.

"We do a lot of comparing of areas and responsibilities and talking about how different it is from Bondi Beach!"

Morwell brigade responds to Morwell and Yallourn open cut mines and Yallourn, Hazelwood and Energy Brix power stations. They turn out an average of 700 times a year within a community of about 15,000 residents. Paul worked as a career firefighter in the ACT until 2009 and spent his last five years there as a compressed air foam (CAF) project manager.

"The ACT CAFs trucks were the first in Australia and, as firefighters, we had a big hand in the design of the trucks," said Paul. "They have a Volvo cab chassis based on Papua New Guinean mine specifications. They carry 8,000 litres of water plus CFA-approved Class A foam concentrate and an air compressor."

In the ACT, CAFs is used for grass and bushfires, tip and waste fires, woodchip and industrial fires. It can be used for both control lines and direct attack.

The Morwell mine fire was the first time CAFs was used in Australia on a brown coal fire where it slowed down smoke production.

"In all my years in the fire services, I've never seen so many crews respond together outside

bushfire," continued Paul of the Morwell incident. "It doesn't matter where you come from; we're all firefighters. It's been a great experience of camaraderie."

INTEROPERABILITY AT THE MINE

Officer-in-Charge at Traralgon Fire Station Peter Lockwood was working in the incident management team (IMT) from day one of the incident.

He's long been an important liaison point between the fire services and the Latrobe Valley power industry through the Central Gippsland Essential Industries Group.

"We maintain a very strong relationship," said Peter. "As a fire brigade we might make a run every few weeks to a call from either a mine or one of the power stations but it's just part of our operating environment."

He agrees that this long-duration incident was eye opening for many firefighters who had never trained or worked in such an environment.

"They were all worth their weight in gold," he continued. "It's a unique firefighting experience but everyone had a job to do and we worked as one."

"The highlight was the interoperability at the mine and in the IMT. The AIIMS structure made it seamless. People from interstate walked into roles and knew what to do. There was no them and us."

"It sounds like a cliché to just say, 'Thanks for your effort,' but what more can I say? We appreciated the support."

THE COMMUNITY LIAISON EFFORT

By bus, train or foot, Peter Bullen didn't stop at public transport to help keep the community informed about the Morwell open cut mine fire.

Peter was one of 25 community liaison officers (CLOs) who spent 12 hours many days of the long-duration incident visiting local shopping centres, RSLs, bowls clubs and primary schools, and patrolling trains to help answer questions and listen to the concerns of the public.

"My role is to get out among the community and find out how they're coping with the smoke and ask if they have any issues," Peter said at the time. "By giving people information and finding solutions to their problems, it empowers them to take responsibility and enables them to look after themselves."

During the incident, CLOs had more than 21,000 conversations with members of the public through more than 250 organised activities including door-knocking and working out of the mobile information buses.

Teams pounded the pavement in Morwell, Hazelwood North, Moe, Traralgon, Boolarra and Churchill. The teams typically included about six staff members from agencies such as CFA, MFB, and EPA.

Peter estimated he talked to between 150-200 people on an average shift.

TRUCKS WASHED AND SERVICED

Prezioso Transport, about five kilometres from the Morwell mine, was a hub of activity as all fire agency vehicles were given a thorough clean, mechanical check and equipment service before heading home ready for further operations.

All vehicles were washed inside and out before leaving the mine site, and district mechanical officers (DMOs) ensured they were roadworthy for the quick trip to Prezioso. The facility's full-factory-length service pits were even large enough for the Aviation Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) tenders.

Recommissioning was a joint operation with business units such as communications, IT and protective equipment with up to 30 people on site at a time. Scott Hamilton, John Bell and Bruce Taberner were the recommissioning managers while Glen Mumford led the team of dedicated DMOs alongside a corresponding MFB crew as well as health and safety officers. They were joined by career firefighters from outer metropolitan districts helping with small gear servicing, general equipment maintenance and inventories.

"We asked each agency for their requirements and worked on the vehicles accordingly," said Deputy Chief Officer Joe Buffone, acting as regional controller.

The work undertaken included:

- mechanical assessment and repair (within limits)
- pump assessments and repairs





CFA THANKS NSW FIREYS

As the complex response to the mine fire rolled on, members from Fire and Rescue New South Wales continued to backfill integrated CFA stations.

Frankston Fire Station welcomed rotating crews of four and one truck from MFB before NSW stepped up. After that a Bondi pumper was operated by a rotating crew of three comprising the NSW equivalent of a station officer, leading firefighter and firefighter.

Senior Station Officer Doug Broom was kept knee-deep in the complex rostering required by the Morwell response.

“The day-to-day running of the brigade has been a big disjointed,” he said at the time, “but the NSW crews have gone out of their way to be approachable and amenable. They’ve adapted their procedures to fit ours.”

Shepparton Senior Station Officer Pete Dedman also spoke to *Brigade* magazine when the incident was still underway.

“We’ve had a mix of very experienced officers through to people who’ve been in the job for just six months. They have different systems and structures so it’s been a learning curve for us and them. They’re also hopping in to perform duties around the station without hesitation.”

NSW supported Corio Fire Station while the Corio teleboom was at Morwell with a crew of two rotating through every two hours.

“The NSW crews have been good fun to work with and their willingness to help and work ethic have been excellent,” said Senior Station Officer Brad McRobb. “This has been a chance to learn from each other quite separate to all the lessons learned at Morwell.”

Dandenong Fire Station appreciated the work on station of MFB followed by NSW crews along with the Mt Druitt pumper.

“They wear different shirts but we all do the same job,” said Senior Station Officer Paul Caligari.

“We’ve had some people from NSW who went home and put their names back in the ballot to come down a second time. It’s always a good thing to work away from home and see a different patch and these guys seem to have really enjoyed it.”

STORY LEITH HILLARD, JASON LEIGH AND HOLLY LITTLE

- water and foam tank flushing and cleaning
- communications equipment assessment and repair
- protective equipment including hazardous materials detection equipment assessed and repaired
- firefighting equipment assessed, tested and repaired
- hose servicing/replacement
- branch and monitor servicing and repair
- vehicle inventories completed and equipment faults identified and repaired
- borrowed firefighting equipment assessed and returned
- specialist equipment such as thermal imaging cameras assessed and repaired.

“We prioritised what could be done on site and what needed to be sent away to Scania or Bronto, for example, for follow-up repairs,” continued Joe. “Priority was given to vehicles from interstate agencies to ensure that capability could be returned at the earliest opportunity.”

Approximately 80 vehicles went through the process with a minimum of two days to complete the clean and check. Some vehicles took up to a week depending on faults found.

Above:

Recommissioning Centre Manager Scott Hamilton at the facility used to valet vehicles including ARFF Rosenbauer trucks

PHOTO: PAUL MOORE

Below:

New South Wales fireys manned Morwell Fire Station so that CFA firefighters could work on the mine fire

PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY PAUL FIXTER



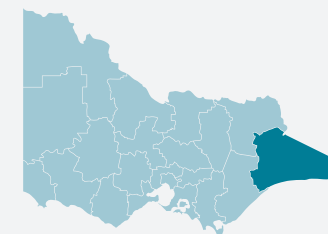
Buchan Hotel gutted

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 11

DATE: 8 April 2014

BRIGADES: Buchan, Bruthen, Gelantipy, Lakes Entrance, Wairewa, Newmerella, Johnsonville, Traralgon, Bairnsdale



Buchan Captain Peter White was woken by a late night call to respond to the pub on fire. He saw the glow in the sky as he pulled out of his driveway.

“I did the size up from there and saw there was no hope of saving the premises,” said Peter who is, unfortunately, also the pub’s co-owner. “We did what we could with what we had but it was all about asset protection.”

“The pub was the town hub and it was also full of local memorabilia. It was built in 1896 and there were display cabinets with footy and cricket trophies and photos going back a long way. It’s all gone.”

As first responder, Peter was the initial incident controller, sectorising the fire before passing the southern end and communications via VicFire to Lakes Entrance Captain Geof Bassett. Peter concentrated on the northern end of the fire where three large gas bottles were a risk.

“Communications to and from the fireground were a challenge,” said Rostered Duty Officer Kevin Mann, who drove 75 kilometres from Bairnsdale to attend.

“The pub shut at 8.30pm so there was no one there when the call came in. The fire had already taken hold and it was mostly timber construction with

numerous modifications. There was no internal firefight done – it was an external, defensive attack only.”

Four members of Buchan brigade did great work protecting the buildings on either side of the pub – the town’s public hall and a café. Johnsonville brigade was called for lighting, while Bairnsdale brigade provided breathing apparatus (BA) cylinders and Traralgon offered further BA support.

“With such a large damages bill, local detectives understandably wanted Forensics to come from Melbourne,” continued Kevin. “Crews stayed on scene putting out hot spots and flare ups and a joint fire investigation with CFA took place that afternoon. They weren’t able to determine the exact cause.”

“We will rebuild,” said Peter. “The adrenaline kept going and going and I’ve already been to see the town planner, the building surveyor and the council’s emergency management person. The mayor came out to the site and said that any planning and building permits will be looked at quickly by council.”

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: CARLA PALMER

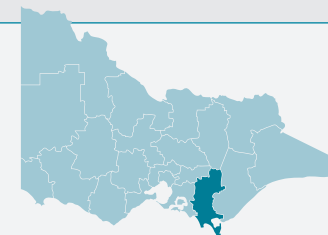
HOT ACT AT MUSIC FESTIVAL

INCIDENT: Grassfire

DISTRICT: 9

DATE: 9 March 2014

BRIGADES: Neerim South, Noojee, Drouin, Drouin West, Yarragon, Nilma North, Upper Beaconsfield, Bunyip, Trida, Darnum and Ellinbank, Hallora and District, Longwarry and District, Tynong, Westbury, Little Yarra, Trafalgar, Warragul, Willowgrove, Yarra Junction



Neerim South and Noojee brigades were the first to respond to a grassfire in McKenzie Rd, Neerim East. It was only 1.6 kilometres from the Forest Edge Christian Youth Camp, where around 800 people were attending the Forest Edge Music Festival.

En route, Neerim South Lieutenant Ian MacKay could see a significant amount of smoke, so he called for five tankers. But when the brigades arrived at the scene, they saw a paddock fire heading uphill fast towards Forest Edge, so they requested 15 tankers and aerial support.

It was a major concern that the only escape route for the people at the music festival was McKenzie Rd, which was blocked by fire. Crews stopped the fire 750 metres from the camp.

Due to the limited access to the fire in the paddocks, brigades worked from the roadside to stop the spread of the fire. Two fixed-wing water bombers worked on the inaccessible fire edge, guided by a reconnaissance plane, and later a Helitak helped out.

After stopping the fire reaching the camp, a spot fire ignited in the blue gum plantation to the north of the main fire in an area with limited accessibility. The Department of Environment and Primary Industries helped fight this fire with four slip-ons.

Festival goers had to remain at Forest Edge for around four hours until the road was reopened.

STORY DANIEL ESHUIS



PHOTO: TROY LONGSON

CHIEF OFFICER

Euan Ferguson www.cfa.vic.gov.au/chiefblog

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR DEDICATION

We've had a busy fire season, starting in October with support to New South Wales, encompassing a multitude of lightning fires in early January, and responding to a number of significant fires after extreme fire weather across the whole state on Sunday 9 February.

In amongst these major incidents, with below average rainfall and periodic belts of lightning, there have been scores of fires on a daily basis that have been responded to in a timely and professional manner. As usual, CFA members have worked magnificently with our counterparts from MFB, DEPI, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, SES, VicPol, Coast Guard and Ambulance Victoria.

At the Morwell mine fire, we've seen fire agencies from Queensland, New South Wales, ACT, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Defence Force and the Aviation Rescue and Firefighting Service. In Gippsland, we have seen interstate and New Zealand crews working shoulder to shoulder. I've met many of you on the fireground, at air bases, staging areas, divisional command and operations points, incident control centres, regional control centres and at the State Control Centre.

Sadly, I have spoken to and met some who have lost their homes, their property and their stock. Some have been injured during operations. To those facing recovery, we wish you better fortune. I have seen the purposeful dedication in the eyes of men and women working together in conditions of stress, challenge and uncertainty. I have seen the satisfaction of success and achievement. I have seen the despair when goals haven't been met and when ground, hard won, has been lost in a capricious turn of weather. I have seen you, time and time again, head out the door to do your best, even when the odds have been stacked against you. I have seen the gritty optimism you have maintained when some around you may have been expressing doubt about our efforts. I have seen the hope that you have inspired in communities that have been threatened by fire and uncertainty.

Never once did I detect a loss of resolve. Never once did I see any wavering from our mission to protect lives and property. Never once did I see any sign of a loss of compassion for our fellow team members and for the community we serve. Never once did I see anyone talking about giving up.

To each and every one of you, no matter how large or how small your involvement, I extend my sincere thanks.

The summer of 2014 will go down in history as one of great risk, significant activity, and great achievement. Job well done!

On 11 March, the Premier and Deputy Premier announced an independent inquiry into the Morwell mine fire. The inquiry will be headed by the Hon Bernard Teague AO. The Board of Inquiry has been asked to submit its report to Government by the end of August 2014. Broadly, it will examine the regulatory regime which applied to Morwell mine; the adequacy and effectiveness of the emergency response; how the fire started and spread into the mine; and the adequacy of information to and support for the affected communities. CFA has established a small team to support the inquiry.



The transition to digital dispatch

On 2 April 2014, District 12 transitioned to Talkgroup 512, making it the first regional CFA district to transition to the digital radio dispatch service.

District 12's transition was followed by District 15's successful transition to Talkgroup 515 on 13 April. District 15's transition also marked the realignment of the Bacchus Marsh Group boundary as part of District 15. District 2 followed three days later, where the quote of the night was from District 2 Elphinstone Fire Station, "VicFire, Elphinstone Station reading you loud and clear and I now believe in the Easter Bunny."

The digital radio dispatch service delivers significant improvements in audio quality and coverage. District 12 put this claim to the test at a structure fire at Eildon two hours after the district's transition. Incident Controller and Second Lieutenant Len Timmins said, "The audio was

really perfect. Previously, we've had a lot of areas with dead spots but now with digital dispatch, it's not a problem. It's perfect."

All remaining districts are scheduled to transition progressively over the coming months. The hard work of all those involved (including operational staff, brigade management teams, CFA members, VicFire and the Regional Radio Dispatch Service project team) continues to pave the way for a smooth and successful transition to the digital radio dispatch service.

For more information, contact your district office or go to cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au > Fire & Emergencies > Communications > Regional Radio Dispatch Service Project. You can also contact the project team with any questions or feedback by emailing rrds@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY AMY CHEMAY

Fiskville update



Major civil engineering works at Fiskville have moved a step closer to completion. Since January, a fleet of earth movers, trucks and other heavy construction equipment has been digging, scraping, and back filling around the perimeter of Lake Fiskville and the four dams linked to the lake.

The program of engineering works includes the construction of a channel to divert the Beremboke Creek around Lake Fiskville, and the installation of improved drainage systems on the hot fire training practical area drill (PAD) to divert stormwater from the dams and Lake Fiskville.

New embankments (bunds) have also been built to increase the capacity of the dams and Lake Fiskville for storing training water.

The four dams were installed by CFA many years ago to treat the water from CFA's hot fire training activities. The dams and Lake Fiskville are all hydraulically connected by a series of overland swales and underground pipes.

Other works include the creation of a new wetland to filter and clean stormwater before it enters Beremboke Creek, which currently runs through Lake Fiskville. When the new works are commissioned, the creek will no longer enter Lake Fiskville. Instead, it will enter the diversion channel at the northern end of the lake then run through the channel to the east of the lake. In effect, the engineering works will reduce the discharge of water from the water management system at the site, including from Lake Fiskville, into the surface waters downstream.

The new wetlands area is now being filled with more than 10,000 indigenous plant species recommended by a local botanist based at nearby Ballan. In addition, hundreds of native trees and shrubs are being planted along the newly-created channel. These upgrades will not only improve the ecology of Fiskville, but also beautify this previously barren part of the training site, creating habitats for local birds, frogs and other aquatic species.

CEO Mick Bourke said the engineering works address key recommendations made by environmental consultants Cardno Lane Piper in its assessment reports and are an important component of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) clean-up plan.

"Once again, the management and staff of Fiskville have done an outstanding job in the supervision of this construction phase," Mick said. "It's a credit to them and the highly-professional team provided by the local earth works and landscaping contractors that this major engineering project has been essentially completed inside four months.

"These latest improvements at Fiskville will give our members confidence that they have access to one of the best training facilities in Australia which has appropriate risk controls in place for a safe training environment. These upgrades to the site have been reviewed by an independent EPA statutory auditor, as well as being monitored by the independent Fiskville Monitor, former Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner Kieran Walshe.

"This oversight provides assurance to our members and the public that CFA is effectively implementing the recommendations and initiatives to which it committed in its response to Professor Joy's report, *Understanding the Past to Inform the Future*.

"In the near future, we will begin to assess solution options for the next stage of works at Fiskville, which will include the remediation of the surface waters and sediments in the dams and Lake Fiskville," Mick added.

STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES



Background:
Part of the water channel diversion works

Above:
Putting native plants in the wetlands area

PHOTOS: MARTYN BONA



PROTOTYPE MEDIUM PUMPER TAKES SHAPE

Above:

Leading Firefighter Col Chapman is project managing the new design

PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

leadership

Collaborate and communicate effectively: be focused on your team and building strong relationships

CFA has awarded SEM Fire and Rescue in Ballarat a contract to build a prototype medium pumper, following a design process aimed at creating a more user-friendly vehicle with improved water and foam capacity.

It's expected that the first prototype will be completed by December 2014. From January next year it will go through initial shakedown trials before being taken around the state for firefighter feedback.

Operations Manager Ross Sullivan said that a focus of the design process was to find simple, evidence-based solutions that maximised effectiveness.

"One great example of the practical improvements we've looked at is a light panel on the side of the truck that lets you see from as far as 90 metres away how much water you've got left," Ross said.

"The ease of use inherent in the pump panel design means that you can walk back to this truck after being away for a period of time, and have no hesitation about what to do. The aim is to reduce the time needed for training and refreshers.

"The body and cab chassis are based on years of research and consultation with VFBV as well as CFA volunteer and staff members."

VFBV Executive Officer Adam Barnett spoke very highly about the design and consultation process, which involved a major review into the cab chassis and locker configurations, as well as the small gear to be supplied as minimum stowage.



"The medium pumper working party has set a new standard for collaboration and consultation and is an excellent model for the future," Adam said. "We're really testing new ground with some of the innovations and design concepts which have been based on practical member feedback."

Leading Firefighter Col Chapman, who's worked with medium pumpers across the state as a volunteer and career firefighter since 1985, is project managing the new design and has played a crucial role in getting the prototype off the ground. He talked us through the design.

CAB CHASSIS

One feature that the proposed medium pumper borrows from the heavy pumper is a larger cab chassis. This incorporates seating designed to accommodate firefighters wearing breathing apparatus (BA), so they can get out of the pumper with BA on their backs and get straight to work.

PUMP AND PUMP PANEL

The pump is a Godiva P1 rated at 4,000 litres a minute at 1000 KPA and is a single-stage centrifugal-type pump filled with automatic priming. Using this pump means CFA can interchange pump parts between heavy pumpers and the new medium pumper, with obvious benefits to district mechanical officers.

A lot of thought has gone into creating a highly-functional pump panel. The panel incorporates a foam screen, pump governor screen, and a pump display screen that shows various operating pressures and flows, while monitoring the engine performance of the vehicle.

WATER AND FOAM

Water capacity on the prototype will be 2,500 litres – an increase of 500 litres compared with the current model. Capacity for B-class foam will be increased to 300 litres from the current 200 litres. To ensure that foam is dosed more accurately, the prototype design incorporates a post-pump injection foam system, a change from the current system of round-the-pump foam proportioning. An inbuilt training function (operated from the pump panel) will also allow water to be used in place of foam for training purposes.

HOSE REEL SYSTEM

The prototype uses a dead hose reel system as opposed to the live hose reel system currently in use. Rigorous testing has shown that over 45 metres, the dead reel system is four times quicker to deploy and has a better flow rate. There are also proven benefits for firefighters' health. CFA Health and Safety Officer Peter Langridge carried out trials comparing the impact of the two systems on core body temperature, heart rate and shoulder muscle activity – the results favoured the dead reel system.

EQUIPMENT

Equipment supplied with the medium pumper will be the most up-to-date available. Standard on this truck will be all-LED torches and remote area light panels, hand-operated combi tools, five-bar nozzles and positive pressure ventilation (PPV) fan.

If you have any questions about the new prototype or would like to find out more, email mediumpumper@cfa.vic.gov.au or use the search function on Brigades Online to find detailed specifications.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS – AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO

As part of the 2013-14 Annual Plan and the upcoming 2014-15 Plan, CFA is focusing on supporting and growing volunteerism.

One way CFA is doing this is by introducing a structured way for volunteerism projects to get off the ground and reach the people they are meant to benefit most. A program team has been set up to focus on implementing recommendations from the 2011 *Report of Inquiry into the Effect of Arrangements Made by CFA on its Volunteers* by His Honour David Jones, and the 2014 Victorian Auditor-General's Office report *Managing Emergency Services Volunteers*.

This team will receive strategic advice and direction from a steering committee, which includes members of CFA, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria and the Department of Justice.

Together with SES, CFA has also started to develop a volunteer strategy focused on the key themes flowing from the reports, which include culture and leadership to empower and support volunteerism, recruitment, retention, recognition and utilisation of volunteers; strengthening the volunteer base and integrated service delivery; improved support for brigades and communities; and training development and assessment.

This work will have a significant impact on CFA's volunteer support capability and so will lead to a better outcome for Victorian communities.

This is just the beginning, as we roll out many more initiatives focused on supporting our volunteers.

STORY CHRIS RIVIERE

Help for wildlife injured in fires

Bushfire has devastating effects on wildlife. Anyone who lives close to a fireground will have seen wildlife trying to escape the flames.

Every year, untold numbers of native animals perish during fires, and many more succumb after the incident to injuries caused by fire, smoke inhalation, dehydration and starvation. Sadly, firefighters are often firsthand witnesses to the impacts fire has on paws, tails, feathers and fur.

Whenever firefighting crews report injured animals on the fireground, a process is activated to help search for and rescue the wildlife. These procedures also kick in if local knowledge suggests that wildlife may be impacted by fire. Under the *Protocols for Volunteers Involved in Wildlife Rescue Operations*, wildlife rescue teams are deployed to the fireground to find, treat and release or relocate injured animals to shelters.

These protocols operate within the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIIMS) and ensure that fire agencies, wildlife organisations and wildlife rescuers work together in a safe and coordinated way during incidents. When activated by the incident controller, the protocols give fire agency staff access to a statewide network of 150 accredited wildlife rescuers and 1,500 wildlife carers.

Many CFA members support the work of wildlife organisations or are registered wildlife rescuers and carers. During and after the recent fires around Gisborne, District 14 staff raised money to supply much-needed antibiotics and other medicines to Macedon Ranges Wildlife Network carers. They also provided and delivered feed to the fireground for several months following the incident.

CFA member Fiona Mallia helps deliver feed to animals on the fireground. "Those who volunteer to rescue and care for our native wildlife are in effect their guardians," she said. "This work empowers me to ensure they are looked after."

After fires, injured wildlife often move on to farms, properties and along roadsides looking for food, water or shelter. If you come across injured or orphaned wildlife, call Wildlife Victoria on 1300 094 535 for emergency response and care.

STORY DARLENE PENTLAND



Sharon Bonnici from Macedon Ranges Wildlife Network holding a dented kangaroo with burnt feet following the Wallan fire in February 2014

PHOTO: SUE ANDERSON

PHOTO: JOSH DAVIS



BOMBEROS FOR CFA

Operational Training and Volunteerism is excited to be working closely with the Consulate-General of Chile in Melbourne to develop the 'Bomberos for CFA' project.

This project aims to promote diversity in CFA by harnessing the opportunities Victoria's multiculturalism provides for emergency services agencies. We've already received around 80 expressions of interest from community members from 27 countries who speak 25 different languages, who would like to volunteer with CFA in both operational and non-operational roles.

Bomberos for CFA was initiated to commemorate Chile's bicentenary and the Chilean Bomberos' (firefighters) countrywide volunteer culture. Chile has a proud and distinguished history of volunteer firefighting dating back to the 1850s. The Bomberos are all volunteers and are the most respected institution in Chile.

As with CFA, Chilean firefighters are highly trained, experienced and have very stringent demands placed on them. For example, Bomberos volunteers live at the station during their rostered period, their performance is carefully assessed, and their training programs and manuals are very similar to CFA's. Also, Chile and Victoria share similarities of geography, weather and fire conditions.

In mid-April, Chile suffered its worst fire in the beautiful port city of Valparaiso. It destroyed around 3,000 homes, killed at least 15 people and injured hundreds.

The Bomberos for CFA project has already received significant support from the public, the Victorian Multicultural Commission, SBS and senior Victorian Government officials. If you'd like more information, contact josh.davis@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY JOSH DAVIS

Thanks CFA

Every year, there are many individuals, groups, businesses and organisations who support CFA through generous donations and various fundraising activities.

But during the 2013-14 fire season, we noticed a huge increase in offers of help for CFA throughout Victoria.

Whether at a local or state level, the funds raised have totalled an enormous amount, which will go a long way to help our people continue their work to protect lives and property.

From caravan sales to the donation of supermarket vouchers to brigades, the support for CFA has come in all shapes and sizes, and shows the community's appreciation for the thousands of CFA members who play a crucial role in keeping Victorians safe – whether fighting fires on the front-line or taking on the many important support roles.

National Red Balloon Day Event Director Jody Hardiman fronted one of the many groups that held a fundraising event for CFA. Over five weeks, Jody and her team sold balloons, with proceeds from each state going to local fire services. This was ahead of National Red Balloon Day held on 28 February where people could display their red balloons in a show of support for fireys. The Victorian event raised around \$14,000 for CFA and MFB and \$20,490 nationally.

Jody said the idea had stemmed from a similar locally-led fundraiser in Geelong and had exceeded their expectations. "The support was overwhelming," she said. "It started off as an idea where I was inviting my own friends to take part and it just snowballed – everyone wanted to help and say thanks to their local firefighters."

Woolworths/Safeway Caltex was one of many businesses on board the fundraising effort, with 150 stores across Victoria and Tasmania taking part. In total, they raised more than \$86,660 for CFA in a month.

Shepparton Safeway Caltex petrol station joined forces with Shepparton and Shepparton East brigades to raise around \$450. The Shepparton tanker parked at the petrol station and CFA members rattled tins while Safeway staff served snacks and drinks and offered to clean windscreens and put fuel in cars.

An Aussie Day Community barbecue held by Bunnings raised more than \$71,900 for various brigades and a Dominos 'Doughraiser' held in December saw more than \$11,000 donated to CFA.

But the support wasn't just about monetary donations. Dimboola CFA members received a letter of thanks from their local Ambulance Victoria members following a road accident they attended in Antwerp in February this year. Part of the letter said, "We are extremely grateful for your team's professional approach to the incident and their active involvement went a long way to ensuring [the patient] survived. We are immensely appreciative of the involvement of all Dimboola CFA team members."

These fundraising events, donations and letters of thanks are just a sample of the amazing support CFA received this fire season. There were many more activities held at a local level in partnership with brigades and there are many events which are held on an ongoing basis to support brigades.

STORY KAYLA MASKELL

leadership

Be self-aware: understand your strengths, challenges and motivations

Below left: Shepparton brigade members Brian O'Mahony, Anthony Deith and Ben Linnet and Shepparton East member Emily Marsland with Safeway Caltex petrol station manager Lii Caine

PHOTO: TANYA DEITH

Below: Red Balloon Day was the communities' opportunity to thank CFA volunteers



Research to drive change



The Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) is taking an important step to make sure research findings from the past three years are accessible to a range of audiences.

It is producing a number of documentary-style videos and conducting online forums for CFA members and other agencies around Australia and New Zealand, to stimulate discussion and raise awareness of the various projects and their outcomes. The forums began in May and will continue until September. In the forums, researchers will present their findings, and participants can ask questions by typing in a chat box.

To see the forum schedule, go to bushfirecrc.com. You can also replay previous forums on this website, view the new videos and access other useful information.

Topics covered include community safety, next-generation fire modelling, extreme fire behaviour, firefighter health and safety, ecology, incident management and economics to help decision-making.

The online forums are a practical approach that will enable as many agency staff, volunteers and researchers to participate as possible. Importantly, each video and forum will be accessible in the future, along with Bushfire CRC's *Fire Notes* newsletter and more in-depth research reports, leaving a strong legacy.

The Bushfire CRC is excited to communicate this important body of work, and believes it's an important step in achieving the recognition the science deserves. See bushfirecrc.com for more information.

STORY NATHAN MADDOCK

Wear your honours with pride

The Operational Training and Volunteerism team is pleased to announce the new *Wearing Honours and Awards* booklet, which is included with this issue of *Brigade* magazine.

The booklet gives members up-to-date and consistent information about wearing honours and awards.

Honours and awards help define, encourage and reinforce aspirations, ideals and standards by identifying role models. CFA recommends and gives honours and awards to recognise, celebrate and say thank you to those who have given their time to serve others and those who achieve their best for CFA and the community.

Honours and awards fall into two broad categories – those that form part of the Australian System of Honours and Awards or their predecessors (the Imperial Honours system) and those issued by organisations and other countries.

Recipients of awards are granted insignia as a visual expression of the honour conferred on them. For those members who've received more than one award, there's an established order of precedence for wearing them. All medals and other insignia must be worn according to the schedules contained in the new *Wearing Honours and Awards* booklet. The schedules include all relevant CFA honours and awards and those awards within the Australian System of Honours and Awards that are most likely to have been awarded to CFA members.

To access an online version of *Wearing Honours and Awards*, go to Brigades Online (cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au). For information about the criteria, how to apply and nomination process, please read the *CFA Honours and Awards Manual* (Brigades Online > Brigade > Service History & Awards > About the Awards) or email cfa-awards@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY BELINDA GILLESPIE



PHOTO: WARREN AND JULIE MITCHELSON

IDENTIFYING SUSPICIOUS FIRES

CFA's Fire Investigation team has two representatives working as liaison officers with Victoria Police's Arson and Explosives Squad. The strong connection between the two organisations has led to good progress in identifying suspicious fire trends and arson-related fires in structures, vehicles and bushfires.

The Fire Investigation team's work to identify suspicious fire trends and hotspots was updated in 2013 so that hotspots could be displayed in map form based on local government areas. These maps have been distributed to district fire investigation coordinators across the state to help develop the working relationship between CFA and local Victoria Police criminal investigation units and Victoria Police Bushfire, Arson and Explosives liaison officers. This will ensure that new or developing hotspots are investigated further.

For more information email State Fire Investigation Coordinator Nicole Harvey at fireinvestigation@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY LISA MARIE JACKSON



Above: The newly-established Wellbeing Pilot team

PHOTO: TANYA DI MICHELE

Keep in touch online

This winter, we'd love you to tell us what you're up to with your brigade. Do you have a great fundraising initiative? Have you recently done some interesting training? Have you celebrated a special milestone? Have you been involved in community education, or received the keys to a new tanker or fire station?

There are very many CFA members around the state who'd like to read your stories, and the fastest way to share your news is by posting on our News & Media website (news.cfa.vic.gov.au). Make sure you take photos and upload them too, as they'll bring your story to life.

You can also join the conversation online with our dedicated CFA members' social media channels. The CFA members' Facebook page is your place to hear from your fellow members and share your thoughts about the latest CFA news and initiatives. You can also keep updated with @CFA_Members on twitter, which tweets all stories posted to News & Media and other timely member information. Join now at [facebook.com/cfamembers](https://www.facebook.com/cfamembers) and twitter.com/CFA_members

Last year, we were excited to launch an electronic version of *Brigade* magazine. You can view this interactive emag at cfa.vic.gov.au/brigademag. The emag is a great way to read *Brigade* magazine because it draws you into the stories with videos of incidents and events, image libraries and pop-up images. It also has useful search and navigation functions.

We encourage you to cancel your paper copy of *Brigade* and read only the online version. To do this, go to Update your details > Manage Subscriptions at cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL



WELLBEING PILOT LAUNCHES

Brigades will be better supported to manage the impacts of mental health and relationship issues through a new wellbeing pilot which started in April.

The pilot team consists of 10 professionals with experience in mental health and relationship management who will be working across the state.

The team will offer CFA members education and support in relation to mental health and safety and relationship issues which include bullying, harassment and victimisation. They will be available to address immediate wellbeing issues, including informal and formal complaints, as well as providing

targeted assistance such as early intervention and education to ensure longer-term positive outcomes in brigades. The Wellbeing Pilot team will work closely with existing welfare services, such as the peer network, in addition to catchment teams, so brigades can maintain a safe and supportive environment.

CFA members will continue to hear about the pilot and available services now that the team is established. For more information or to access the service contact the wellbeing intake officer on 9262 8409.

STORY MICHELLE TAYLOR



WHAT WILL YOUR BRIGADE LOOK LIKE IN 2025?

Above: BMT members of Maryborough brigade, along with Operations Officer Chris Jacobsen, going through the process of electing the new membership classification roles
PHOTO: RAELENE WILLIAMS

Imagine your brigade in 10, 20 or 30 years from now. Will it look like it does today? Will people still volunteer in the same way as they do today? Will we fight fires in the same way?

Communities are changing; the structure of our brigades is changing and the way people want to volunteer is changing. To ensure our brigades remain sustainable and volunteering continues to grow, many brigades are opening their minds to new and innovative ways of doing things.

The Brigade Sustainability Pilot

With the launch of the new Brigade Sustainability Pilot, there has been much discussion about the key areas that impact brigade viability and how the planning we do today affects a brigade's viability in the future. We tend to look at brigade viability through an operational lens using tools such as the Section 29, but we know it's a lot more than that.

Over the years, many tools have been developed by regions, districts and brigades, such as brigade health checks, to help us look deeper to identify the key areas that affect a brigade's viability. The diagram (right) outlines one way of thinking about the different elements that affect a brigade's viability.

FACTORS AFFECTING BRIGADE VIABILITY

In a basic sense, each of the elements in the diagram needs to be strong and present in every brigade, to different degrees, for a brigade to be viable. However, our brigades are very diverse and the external societal trends impacting on them (such as community growth or decline, economic or community risks) can be vastly different. This means that the focus to strengthen brigade sustainability will vary from brigade to brigade.

Recently, a brigade recognised it had an issue with daytime response – a common problem for many brigades – and the popular solution is to recruit new members. However, a closer look at this issue revealed that there were more than 80 current brigade members and the best solution

was to launch a campaign to re-engage existing members. The elements in the diagram (below) allow brigades to drill down to examine the real issues that affect their viability, and explore new and creative solutions with the support of staff. "Predicting where we'll be and what our communities will look like in the next decade is a complex challenge," said Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington. "This is why we see the Brigade Sustainability Pilot as an important and exciting project. It's all about working together to seek solutions to help us plan and prepare to face these challenges head on."



Leadership

Build capacity: support and develop your team, create opportunities for learning and build capacity for the future

YOUR TEAM, YOUR CHOICE, YOUR FUTURE

"We certainly don't have all the answers, but there are some innovative ideas and approaches taking shape in brigades and groups who just need support to develop their initiatives," continued Steve. "This pilot intends to give brigades the flexibility to organise and set up their membership structures and approaches to meet both brigade needs and their community needs in the future."

The pilot, led by the Fire and Emergency Management (F&EM) team, will work collaboratively with catchment teams, districts and regions to directly support brigades to identify any immediate viability issues they may have, and/or possible viability issues in the near future. Together with catchment teams and districts, priorities will be set to develop local initiatives, strategies and possible solutions to improve brigade viability.

This pilot will help brigades effectively meet the needs of the communities they serve, as well as provide a volunteer membership structure that caters to the varied and changing nature of our communities and modern volunteerism. To do this, a new team of 21 staff members is beginning to work with regional leadership teams and district teams to identify gaps, find solutions, build networks and start some scoping for the tasks that lie ahead. The team started in late April with a seven-day induction to prepare them for the next 12 months.

Areas of support, prioritised by districts and catchment teams, include:

- supporting brigades that want help with the new membership classification
- giving brigade members the skills and approaches needed to engage with diverse communities
- support tools and approaches to brigades dealing with membership decline
- support for brigades dealing with transient populations and rapid growth
- support to establish retention approaches such as mentoring or leadership programs.

HOW MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION FITS IN

The decision was made earlier this year to make membership classification a sub-project of the Brigade Sustainability Pilot, because member classification is seen as one of the key tools to help brigades strengthen their viability. Many brigades are keen to move to the new structure, which is a positive step considering it's only optional for brigades up for election in 2014.

There is a lot of support available to help brigades including:

- thirty-two new brigade role descriptions available on Brigades Online and CFA Online.
- brigade management team (BMT) structure booklets displaying a range of real-life BMT structures available on Brigades Online and CFA Online.
- regular updates provided through Brigades Online, *The Fireman* and *Brigade* magazine
- information sessions outlining the key changes and the mandated roles.
- dedicated email to respond to members' enquiries: memberclassification@cfa.vic.gov.au
- access to support teams who can help brigades make the changes.

For more information about the Brigade Sustainability Pilot, contact Ali Martin, Brigade Sustainability Project Manager: a.martin@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY ALI MARTIN

How brigade hub models help small communities

Some brigades and communities are getting smaller and their population is ageing. This means the pool of people available to volunteer is getting smaller. To mitigate the impact of these changes, Warracknabeal Group in District 17 came up with the idea of an administrative hub for the group which was initially set up as a trial.

The aim of the trial was to demonstrate the benefits of administrative resource sharing in rural communities, where volunteer numbers and demographics are presenting challenges for brigade viability. In other words, several brigades would have the same treasurer, for example. This is called a hub model. The main changes were:

- a single secretary
- a single treasurer
- one bank account with each entity having sole access to balances and monies
- consolidated term deposit investments
- debit card purchasing facility
- the use of Combiz Business Banking facility through the Commonwealth Bank
- online accounting software (Xero)
- implementation of contemporary business practices.

Thirteen brigades and four associated entities (group, auxiliary, social club and juniors) are a part of this trial. At a meeting held at Warracknabeal Fire Station in March attended by representatives from all participating brigades, the feedback confirmed that the trial had been successful and brigades have implemented the model on an ongoing basis.

"We certainly don't have all the answers sorted out yet, but there have been a lot of benefits within the Warracknabeal hub model, such as relieving the load on brigade members across the group," said Warracknabeal Group Officer Colin Newell.

"Each brigade retains its own identity and equipment and this is a very important element of the hub model because often the only thing remaining in small communities is the fire brigade."

The Warracknabeal hub model is one variation of a hub model that may very much become the way of the future. Many brigades and groups are already developing creative initiatives, such as a training hub and training cluster models. The aim of the Brigade Sustainability Pilot is to work collaboratively with brigades, groups and catchment teams to further develop and share hub model solutions across the state in the coming 12 months.

For more information about the Warracknabeal hub model, phone Warracknabeal Group Officer Colin Newell on 0417 505 799.

Best practice local command and control

Several fires last summer in the Eppalock Group area in District 2 started on bad days and had terrible potential, but were pulled up quickly. Effective command and control in the group played a significant role, with a bit of good fortune thrown in. So how did they do it?

Eppalock Group covers 1,300 square kilometres and was formed from the remnants of three groups and three radio channels following boundary realignment. The group has six deputy group officers (DGOs) strategically placed around the group area to exercise effective command and control at intermediate and developing fires.

"We said at the start that we'd put everything aside and reinvent ourselves," said Group Officer David Cleator. "I got out with the

operational leadership team of captains, lieutenants, crew leaders and DGOs and we met everybody so we wouldn't meet for the first time on the fireground. We wanted the group to not be a faceless entity, so we tried to make people feel a part of something; a sense of belonging. I think it's given us strength and solidarity. The group is here for the brigades and it's all based on relationships."

With strong bonds cemented in the group foundations and the lines of communication open, the group is always raring to hit it hard, hit it fast. Bad weather on the horizon always prompts a teleconference for the operational group and brigade teams to pre-plan. The DGOs' locations are locked in with each one ready to go forward from a different location.

Roles are assigned from drivers and scribes to strike team leaders and members to staff at least one of the group's three local command facilities. The group also has two big fills and field command vehicles (FCVs) which are located strategically.

"There's a lot of anticipation of issues and events," said David. "Captains are paged as a group to spread information about things like road closures or changes in the weather. We might tactically move vehicles up to fill service gaps so we make sure captains have an overall picture of group circumstances." When the Sedgwick fire was called in at 6.17pm, Deputy Group Officer Heath Martin was at group headquarters in Bendigo ready to go forward with a scribe and driver.



PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

Sedgwick fire

INCIDENT: Grass and scrub fire, 28 December 2013

BRIGADES: Elphinstone, Heathcote, Bendigo, Kangaroo Flat, Golden Square, Junortoun, Axe Creek, Mandurang, Sedgwick, Maiden Gully, Strathfieldsaye, Metcalfe, Redesdale, Eaglehawk, Lockwood, Maldon, Axedale, Huntly, Mosquito Creek, Costerfield, plus strike teams

"The assigned DGO is automatically activated when more than five trucks are called," said Heath, "and, with the amount of smoke showing, I called for 20 tankers while en route before there was even a unit on scene. I knew that VicFire was getting lots of calls and we got to 35 tankers within 20 minutes. We don't muck around.

"Operations Officer Craig Houlahan was the first incident controller and he let me and DGO Graham Etherton run the show out of the FCV. We used whiteboard markers and drew a mud map on the bonnet of the vehicle to sectorise the fire very early on. As further FCVs arrived with qualified people, they became sector commanders.

"Radio comms were a challenge because of the terrain, so the divisional command vehicle was dispatched to the top of the hill where it could talk to all five radio channels across four sectors and give sitreps [situation reports] back to the mobile communications vehicle at the operations point.

"The DGOs are sent forward to assist the captain and the brigade whose area the fire is in. We're a second set of eyes for the incident controller and help put support, resources and structures in place which makes it easier for a possible transition to Level 3."

The fire was passed to Epsom Level 3 incident control centre at about 7pm. The main challenges were the difficulty communicating across the fireground, hilly terrain and a knockdown wind following an earlier wind change.

All aircraft were initially committed elsewhere which meant a hiccup in their automatic dispatch.

Within the 2012-13 Fire Danger Period, District 2 automatically dispatched aircraft to any grass and scrub or undefined fire at the same time brigades were paged. In the 2013-14 Fire Danger Period, this was extended to include areas of District 20 within roughly 80 kilometres of Bendigo airfield.

The principle is, of course, that aircraft use is most effective where it can reduce the size of the fire prior to the arrival or in support of ground crews. A side benefit is the intelligence that can be relayed to the ground troops to help determine the best use of resources.

But back to the Sedgwick fireground.

The freezing wind laying the smoke flat meant poor visibility and that made it hard to determine where the head of the fire was. With houses under threat and the fire moving in a dead-end direction – one road in and one road out – Heath called for an emergency warning to be issued and repeatedly asked for air support.

"The wind was pushing the fire in a north-easterly direction but we also had a crosswind so there were effectively two fronts across four sectors," continued Heath. "It was running through grassland and into [the opportunistic weed] phalaris with flames 15 feet high. The scrub had a high potential for spotting kilometres ahead. We didn't want it to cross the road, run up the adjacent steep hill and get over the range where it would have doubled in size with a lot of houses in its path."

It didn't get over that range. "The single thing that stopped it crossing the North Harcourt Road and into inaccessible country was the Erickson skycrane," said Heath, but Graham also calls it "a great ground attack too.

"Brigades sat at the corners of properties then dropped back to asset protection and this was exactly one of the seven scenarios we'd done in group training. Remember that crews were having trouble with radio comms so this is when training came to the fore. Be strategic; be smart."

The cause of the 230-hectare fire was a person on a ride-on mower leading a goat and the mower striking a rock. Or was it the goat whodunnit?

Redesdale fire

INCIDENT: Grass and scrub fire, 4 February 2014

BRIGADES: Redesdale, Bendigo, Harcourt, Mosquito Creek, Mia Mia, Castlemaine, Knowsley, Axe Creek, Woodvale, Sutton Grange & Myrtle Creek, Kyneton, Glenaroua, Benloch, Broadford, Whiteheads Creek, Malmsbury, Dunolly, Chewton, Langley-Barfold, Maldon, Costerfield, Spring Hill, Wandong, Carisbrook, Elphinstone, Golden Square, Heathcote, Metcalfe, Carlsruhe, Tylden, Pastoria, Mandurang, Kilmore, Eaglehawk, Junortoun, Maryborough, Sedgwick, plus strike teams

This Redesdale fire was the reignition of an earlier fire that started on a steep rocky hill littered with redgums and yellow box. Mia Mia Captain Anthony Ryan knew there was one small area from that earlier fire not covered by bulldozer firebreaks. That's precisely where fire still burning in tree roots was fanned in the early evening by a howling wind and took off.

Incident control moved from Redesdale Captain Glenn Brown to DGO Graham Etherton at midnight to Group Officer David Cleator at 7am then on to Captain Anthony Ryan.

"The country was undulating and littered with granite so it was a double whammy," said Graham. "The danger was trucks becoming unserviceable so we had to go extremely slowly. This time we were lucky to have a brilliant chopper pilot early on for an hour just on dusk. If the fire started an hour later it would have been a very different story. There was no air attack supervisor so Heath was talking to the pilot directly.

"The pre-determined dispatch of aircraft out of Bendigo once the Fire Danger Index reaches 12 is going well. Aircrews save us countless hours on the ground and save our employers many hours of absentee employees."

Crews on the ground watched with satisfaction as firelines were extinguished through expert aim.

It remained a Level 2 incident and the fire was kept to 56 hectares. Strike teams stayed for most of the second day, proving that locals in need can't get by without excellent support from further afield. The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) automatically turns out to Eppalock Group incidents and their slips-on crews also played a crucial role.

"Two of our captains with very good group leadership potential had never been sector commanders before but were both assigned overnight," said David. "It's an incredibly challenging role with responsibility for up to 125 personnel and their vehicles not to mention the fireline and any breakaways, but they enjoyed it and carried it out very well. It helped them see the bigger picture."

Graham said the group's philosophy is "if you're inside your comfort zone, you're outside your enhancement zone. We want to build the aspirations of brigade members so they are motivated and stay engaged."

Members once again had a sense of preparation paying off. Every two months, the group's operational leadership team runs a forum and invites guest speakers. This had included an air attack supervisor talking about coordination with ground crews; a warnings and advice officer talking about warning triggers; a presentation on thermal imaging cameras, and a tactical exercise without troops (TEWT) on grassfires.

"We maintain a high level of activity and a communication loop of consultation and feedback," said David. "Another success for us is the cross crewing where we share resources between brigades. Members will go direct to the nearest station in the group area. This all helps us maintain flexibility – we keep a reserve up our sleeve so we can respond to anything else that comes up."

"We've got the preparation right. We've got the structure right," said Graham firmly. "We're also very particular about welfare and fatigue management. After working night shift, we make arrangements for people to be picked up, sometimes in their own cars, and driven home. It's logistically complicated but we have a strong focus on safety and recuperation so it's a priority."

REPORT INTO LOCAL COMMAND AND CONTROL



Deputy Chief Officer Alan Ellis steered the project

PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

The report commonly referred to as *The Role of the Group* has been through a comprehensive consultation process and has now been signed off by the Chief Officer. Actually titled *Local Command and Control in CFA*, the report focuses on how we will manage intermediate and developing incidents.

Deputy Chief Officer Alan Ellis shepherded the project from start to finish.

"We identified a need to both re-establish and modernise our doctrine that defined the principles of operations for fires and incidents in between routine Level 1 brigade operations and the State Command and Control arrangements," explained Alan. "Traditionally, that role has fallen to groups and we still believe that's where it should lie."

"The report aims to update the way we do business so the titles, roles and structure of local command and control aligns with, and can be readily integrated into, today's all-hazards, all-agencies environment."

Additionally, rigorous systems put in place at local command facilities will provide good support to brigades while also providing the foundations for effective division command in support of Level 3 operations.

"In reality very little will change," continued Alan. "We have, however, identified the need for people to be allocated roles based not on their group role but on functions under AIMS [Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System]. It means roles will be performed by the most appropriate person, not according to rank. A deputy group officer

(DGO) may now go forward as a sector or divisional commander, for example."

To ensure that all groups can perform all functions within a divisional command point, operations managers will support each group management team to develop a group operational skills profile as part of the Section 29 process.

"Functional roles such as community safety and training have traditionally been attached to an operational rank but they need not be in the future," said Alan.

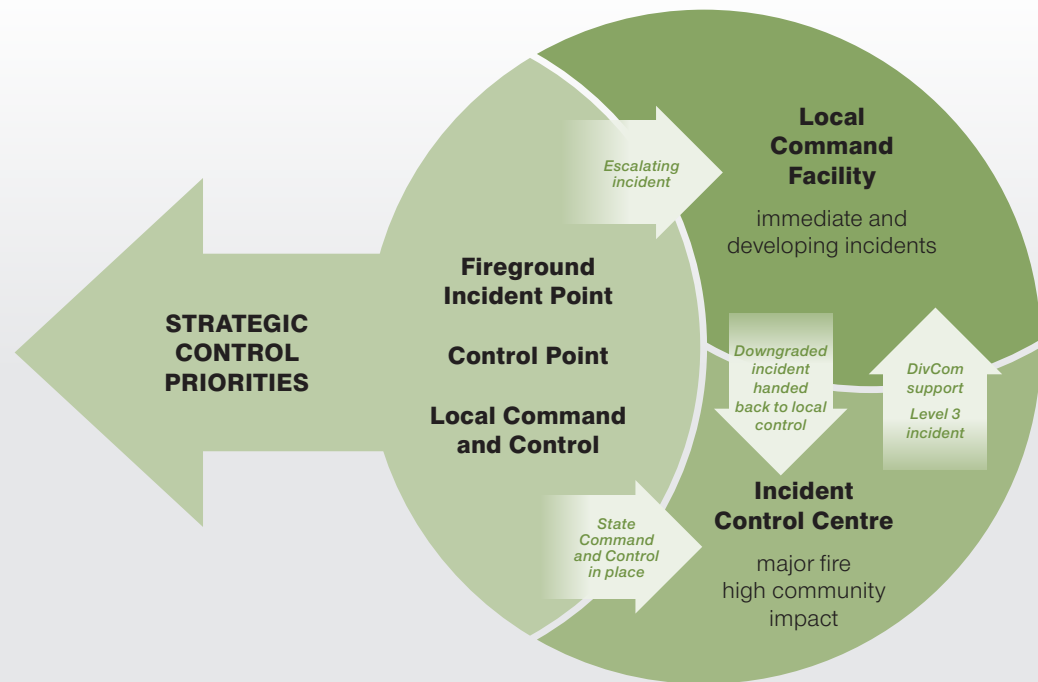
"There are three potential operating models: all DGOs have functional roles; operational and functional roles are separated; and a hybrid where some operational roles also have a functional role, while others have a functional but not operational role."

"Some groups have already gone down that pathway and our report is an endorsement of their good idea."

"The report is aspirational with no requirement for immediate changeover. This is as much about reinforcing current practices as an encouragement to evolve into this new structure with the support of Ops. We're working towards consistent and common doctrine which is readily adaptable to local requirements and capability so our groups are supported in their emerging role in Emergency Management Victoria."

Groups due to conduct elections this year will stay the same, but those due for elections in 2015 will have the option to transition across to the new structure, classifications and roles then.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



CFA and DEPI join forces at Warrandyte burn

PHOTO: ROGER STRICKLAND

The last big bushfire at Warrandyte that anyone can remember was in the 1960s. The population has increased significantly since then, with more and more houses nestling into the forested gullies and ridge tops. Reducing the fuel load through planned burning is often the only practical way to lessen the impact of a potential fire in that area of the Yarra Valley.

Putting in a burn control line along a property boundary in this terrain can be all but impossible, and when it is possible it can destroy the delicate bushland that's a feature of the area.

Recently, a six-hectare planned burn comprising both private and public land was conducted south of Warrandyte's main shopping strip. It was agreed by CFA and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) that the most practical solution was to ignore the tenure of the land and conduct the burn jointly in a single operation. This meant the boundary between private property and public land was ignored and, instead, the teams used existing tracks and cleared boundaries as controls.

In the broken and sloping terrain of varying aspect including a damp gully, home to some powerful owls, the burn was always going to be complicated. But the early autumn rain and the dual objectives of regeneration of flora on the private property and fuel reduction on the public land made it even more so. DEPI Burn Officer-in-Charge David Van Bockel mixed DEPI personnel with CFA and, with careful sequencing, timing, and placement of ignitions, managed to achieve most of the objectives of the burn.

CFA MEMBERS VOICE THEIR ENTHUSIASM

Members involved in the cross-tenure burn at Warrandyte were unanimous in appreciating the opportunity.

Ray Vanderstaak, a new member at Seville brigade, said, "It was a brilliant opportunity to get some experience at burning. It was well worthwhile and I'd do it again. I learned about different styles of lighting, and how the fuel moisture differs on different topographic aspects."

Rod Stebbing from Monbulk brigade said it was valuable briefing everyone about the dual objectives of the burn in the presence of the landowner, and he learned how much the fuel moisture on the different aspects of slopes affected the fire behaviour.

Eliza Sawyer from Macclesfield brigade was most impressed by "the quality of the mentoring and communication from the DEPI members, which was outstanding in keeping me informed with regular updates".

Anthony Reed, also from Macclesfield brigade, thought it was great to be able to quietly observe the fire behaviour in the conditions, which you can't easily do in a bushfire situation. "I'd simply say to my fellow members, 'get out and do it!'"

CFA Operations Manager David Renkin was impressed by the response from District 13 members. "I've seen a lot of positive feedback from brigades around the district," he said. "It will now be about building on this for next year with a clear outline of the process and the benefits of participation for members."

The benefits of working alongside DEPI include the opportunity for cross-cultural exchange and improved familiarity of operations between

the two agencies, and the opportunity for CFA members to broaden their experience in planned burning in forest fuels. It also solves the difficulty of impractical control lines on boundaries and avoids duplication of effort.

THE CHALLENGE OF MID-WEEK BURNS

As well as careful use of ignition patterns and sequencing, another important aspect of planned burning is choosing the most suitable weather and fuel conditions. But if the best conditions to burn are mid-week, it can be a problem for CFA volunteers to attend because of other commitments.

To help solve this issue, a pilot project that used a planned burn resource coordinator was trialled in District 13 with the support of Deputy Chief Officer Alen Slijepcevic, DEPI East Metro District Manager Dan White, Operations Manager Dave Renkin and the Vegetation Management team. Seville brigade volunteer Ross Johnson helped District 13 Vegetation Management Officer Sharon Merritt find available CFA volunteers who were interested in helping with burns. Through Ross's enthusiasm and hard work, the project resulted in more CFA members participating in burns, improved communication to members about each burn, and valuable feedback from members to the burn organisers.

Dan White thought the pilot was a great success. "In spite of the unusually short burn season which didn't allow us to fully test the concept, it's clear it has great potential. I would definitely support another trial next burn season," he said.

STORY ROGER STRICKLAND

Extra local support and resources for volunteers

Additional people are coming onboard at CFA to continue enhancing support to volunteers as part of the Volunteer Support Program. The first phase of the program wraps up at the end of June 2014, but there will be a total of 60 people by July to continue supporting volunteers.

The following positions were created in April:

- Twenty-one people as part of the Brigade Sustainability Pilot (see page 16).
- Ten people as part of the new Wellbeing Pilot (see page 15).

Other new positions are:

- Twenty field-based project people to develop and deliver work plans that enhance existing volunteer support and address district volunteerism priorities. They will report centrally and collaborate with operations managers and key stakeholders.
- Nine people in the Statewide Volunteerism team to provide statewide volunteer strategy and planning on volunteer recruitment, retention, recognition and program development to support field-based teams.

CFA has also funded Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria to employ four field-based positions.

The following helpful tools and resources are also now available to members.

HeadsUP is an online hub containing information for members to manage their own mental health and learn about topics such as bullying and interpersonal conflict.

The Leadership Hub is an online one-stop-shop for all things management and leadership. It contains a leadership library, tools and templates, and a place to share good leadership ideas with other members.

A series of two-hour interactive face-to-face training sessions has been developed as part of a Brigade Management Team Induction available to brigades that would like new and existing BMT members to learn the fundamentals of running a brigade. Topics include coaching and mentoring, communication, conflict management, workplace relationships and meeting skills.

Volunteers will now have a better understanding of the roles available to them so they can plan their volunteer career pathway using the online Fire and Emergency Management Skills Pathway Map.

The *Brigade Operational Skills Profile (Volunteer) Report* has been improved to include member turn-out data and more accurate and current information to ensure brigades can make good decisions about training priorities.

A range of recruitment information guides has been developed to help brigades target the right people for the right roles. Topics include; partnering with employers, recruiting in small communities and mentoring. These replace the previous 'Recruitment and Retention Guide'.

The *Celebrating CFA Women* booklet and animation were launched at the CFA women's luncheon to coincide with International Women's Day 2014.

A self-help diversity guide and tools to assist brigades have been developed to help CFA members customise their own community profiles and encourage participation from people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Over 70 diverse community profiles have been developed to assist brigades' to understand their local community and improve engagement within diverse communities.

The *Welcome to CFA Guide* has been updated with current information and a new look and feel targeted specifically at volunteers.

Thank you to the many volunteers who contributed great ideas and participated in focus groups to ensure these tools and initiatives are useful and relevant for brigades.

For more information please contact volunteerism@cfa.vic.gov.au or 1800 232 636.

STORY KATE HARRAP

Left:

There are resources to help brigades forge links with diverse communities

Below:

The online Leadership Hub includes tools and templates and can be used to share leadership ideas



VOLUNTEERS TELL IT LIKE IT IS

Register now for this year's Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) volunteer survey. It will be closely analysed for trends after last year's survey showed significant gaps between volunteer expectations and their actual experiences.

While most indicated they were happy with their roles and intended to continue, the volunteers pulled no punches on where change was needed. VFBV and CFA will look at this survey's results to see what volunteers think about changes in CFA and the emergency management sector generally.

In last year's survey, volunteers rated CFA's performance best in the areas of accepting women and volunteers of all backgrounds; how worthwhile the volunteers' contribution was found to be; morale within brigades and the welcome new volunteers received; and consultation within brigades.

The areas where volunteers felt CFA has the most work to do included consultation at the corporate level; the availability of training at convenient times and places for volunteers; consultation at the district/regional level; arrangements needed to allow staff and volunteers to work cooperatively as an integrated team; and leadership training for volunteers in people skills and brigade management.

The VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey was designed by volunteers, and includes 33 questions which take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Each question asks how important the issue is to you and how well you feel it is being handled by CFA.

To continue building its value to volunteers and decision-makers, the survey needs as many as possible volunteers to take part. Visit the VFBV website, vfbv.com.au, to register your email address. You will receive the survey automatically when it opens and a report on the final results.

STORY PETER BEATON

Alpine resorts vehicle trial

leadership

Over the next two years, the Fire and Emergency Management – Service Delivery Strategy team in partnership with District 23 and Mount Buller brigade, will develop a trial to test and evaluate the building and use of an alpine first-attack vehicle.

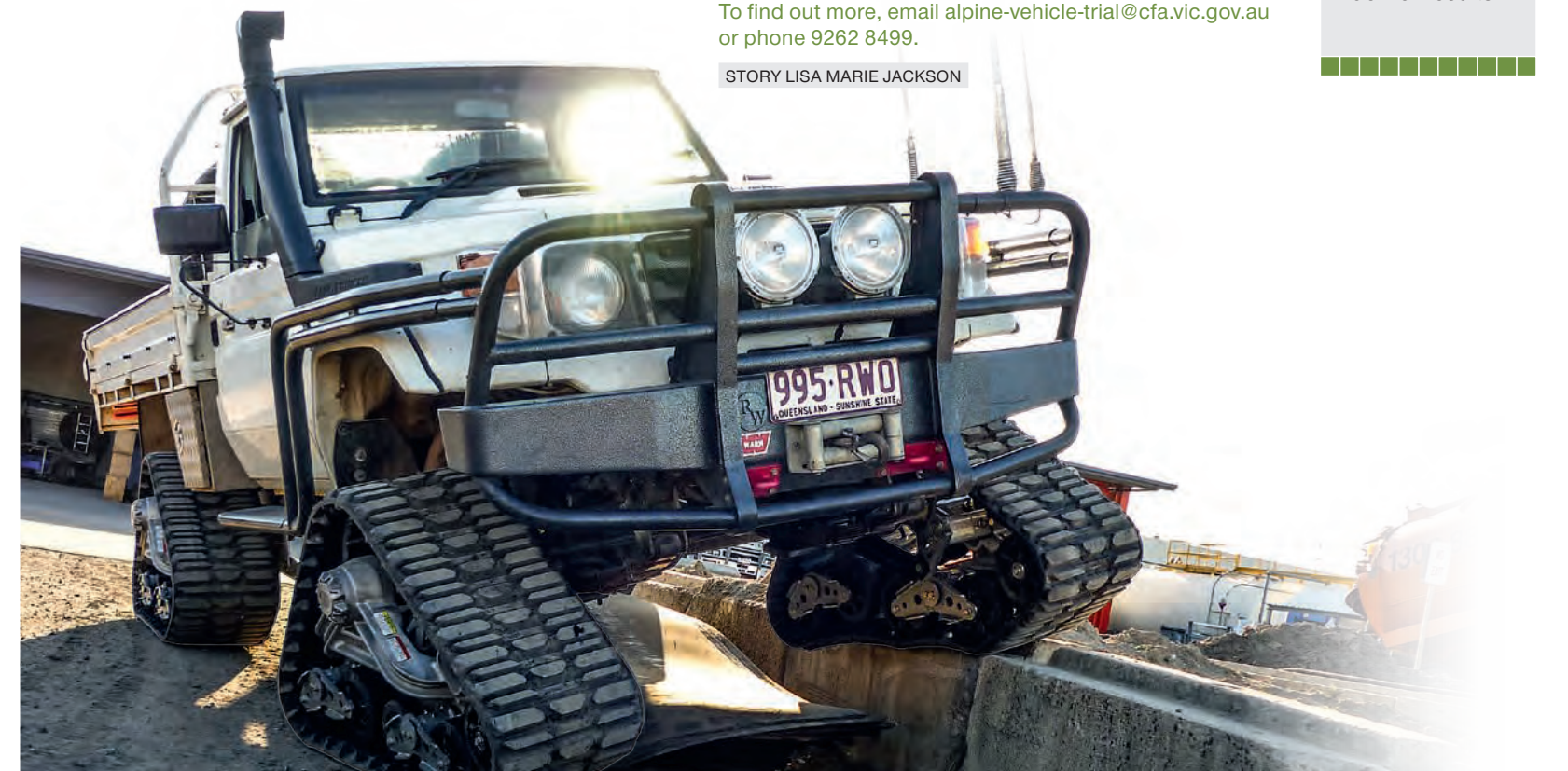
The trial will make sure the new vehicle is appropriate and meets the service delivery needs of the alpine environment.

It's envisaged that the vehicle will increase the capacity of the brigade in winter and summer.

It will consist of a Toyota LandCruiser ute with first attack capabilities, fitted with tracks in the winter and wheels in the summer. If the vehicle performs successfully, the next step will be to get approval from the Chief Officer so that it can be added to our fleet of vehicles.

To find out more, email alpine-vehicle-trial@cfa.vic.gov.au or phone 9262 8499.

STORY LISA MARIE JACKSON



Get the right things done: take initiative, set priorities, focus on outcomes and deliver results

Learning from incidents

Learning through case studies

A case study is an explanatory story based on a real-life incident that looks at what happened and why it happened. The aim is for people to learn from the case study so they improve their decision making in time-critical situations.

WICKLIFFE FIRE

SUMMARY

At around 1pm on Saturday 27 April 2013, Chatsworth Fire Brigade responded to help fight a grassfire in the Williamsons Road/Christies Lane area at Wickliffe. The grassfire was 21 kilometres north of Chatsworth station, in the Westmere Group area.

The fire was burning in stubble paddocks and eventually burned 70 hectares and four properties. The fire was burning under the influence of a north-west wind of around 38 kilometres an hour, gusting to 60 kilometres an hour, in relatively flat paddocks. Fireground visibility was very poor because of smoke and heavy dust. Fourteen CFA tankers and a number of private units were eventually required to bring the fire under control. The fire is recorded as being contained at 3.39pm.

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

The Chatsworth tanker left its station at 1.13pm and arrived at the scene at 1.54pm. The crew consisted of two Chatsworth members. The second vehicle at Chatsworth is a community-owned tanker which also responded with a crew of two members. Crew numbers were low and only four members responded to the station for this fire.

A decision was made by senior members present to respond both vehicles from Chatsworth station because they could see the smoke and the fire looked a lot closer to Chatsworth than it actually turned out to be.

On arrival at the fire, the Chatsworth CFA tanker was directed to a section of the fire south-east of the Williamsons Rd/Christies Lane corner. Firefighter A got on to the vehicle deck and was stationed behind the door on the driver's side, using a short length of hose from the valve at the front of the tank. Conditions were very bad with no visibility at times and, after using the first tank of water, the tanker went to a fill point in Christies Lane. After filling with water, the Chatsworth CFA tanker was redirected by the fire commanders to the western flank. They did one short run along the flank and Firefighter A was still standing behind the deck door operating the hose line at this point.

About 30 metres inside the gates, Driver A noticed in his rear view mirror that the hose line was "going ballistic" on the rear of the truck. He immediately stopped and climbed from the cabin, then on to the deck. Driver A then shut down the hose line and noticed that Firefighter A was missing from the deck.

He looked around but couldn't see Firefighter A, so he got back in the cabin, radioed to the Woorndoo truck that he had lost a man, and did a U-turn to look for him. The yellow dot on the map above shows where the incident occurred.

When Firefighter A was found, the two crews involved and the fire commanders quickly called for medical assistance and gave treatment to Firefighter A while moving him from the fireground to a safe location.



A report was carried out to document the circumstances surrounding this incident and to make recommendations to improve safety on the fireground. The report concluded that determining the cause of this incident is difficult because there were no witnesses and Firefighter A has no memory of what occurred leading up to the incident. However, the evidence indicated that the most likely scenario was Firefighter A suffered from a medical episode that led to him falling.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Where community-owned tankers are housed in CFA fire stations, priority should be given to manning CFA vehicles with a full crew before members are allocated to community trucks, unless operational requirements dictate otherwise.
- Crew leaders, sector commanders and incident controllers need to consider the safety of crew members when allocating tasks when vehicles are short-crewed (Chief Officer's Standing Order 11.00).
- Further risk assessments are to be carried out on the door height/set-up to identify and minimise any risk of a person falling over this area, because it is the main site where fire attack is undertaken by volunteers. Any recommendations would be used in future truck design.

Learning from risk intelligence

Risk intelligence is the combination of knowledge, experience, data and information. It's important that the emergency sector uses risk information to support decision making, because it's evidence based and captured through a process aligned to the international standard.

Risk intelligence can help prioritise CFA's work in the areas of community engagement and education, fuel management, evacuation, fire management planning and other programs and operations across the emergency sector.

CFA's Risk Intelligence team is part of Fire and Emergency Management – Service Delivery Strategy team at headquarters. The team manages the Victorian Fire Risk Register for the state and supplies risk information to CFA and a wide variety of agencies to support and inform bushfire planning.

VICTORIAN FIRE RISK REGISTER – BUSHFIRE (VFRR-B)

VFRR-B is a systematic approach that identifies assets in communities that are at risk from bushfire, assesses levels of risk to assets, and highlights the risk mitigation treatments that are in place, along with the responsible agencies for implementing these strategies.

It was adapted by CFA from the New South Wales Rural Fire Service Bushfire Risk Register (BFRR) in order to improve risk management processes at the local government level. Since development, it has evolved into an innovative way to use stakeholder engagement to encourage community resilience. The VFRR-B helps to develop municipal fire management plans, and can also be used to help brigade response plans, district and regional operational planning and multi-agency planning.

THE VFRR-B PROCESS

There are three key elements to the VFRR-B process:

- a facilitated multi-agency process to identify and assess risk and highlight current mitigation treatments
- a model that collects data in a uniform way
- information that gives agencies and communities a view of risk at the local government area in comprehensive formats.

When working with local government areas (LGAs), the VFRR-B process consists of workshops including setting the context; asset identification and risk analysis; treatment allocation; and post-workshop feedback.

The VFRR-B process has been delivered across the state to 74 LGAs, including French Island and six alpine resorts. More than 2,000 people have participated in the VFRR-B process, across 160 agencies and organisations including fire agencies, other emergency services, local councils and alpine resorts, government departments, transport agencies (road, rail, freight), utility agencies (power, water, communications), air services, Heritage Victoria and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

USING THE VFRR-B IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION

VFRR-B has led to a dramatic change in how information and process is used, particularly during an incident in the Donnybrook-Kalkallo area during the 2012-13 fire season. A fire was contained within 12 hours, but within this time it managed to burn 2,000 hectares, several sheds and one house. Due to the speed and potential impacts of the fire igniting close to the urban fringe, the Mapping Unit used the VFRR-B

information in the eMap software for the first time to analyse which assets were potentially going to be impacted.

Lessons identified from the 2012-13 Fire Danger Period were used to improve the process in 2013-14. Those people who used eMap in the 2013-14 fire season were trained in strategic risk and consequence, which involved training in using the VFRR-B data.

SUPPORTING CFA AND THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SECTOR

The Risk Intelligence team has worked closely with CFA's Home Bushfire Advice Service (HBAS) fire safety officers. The VFRR-B has been used to determine which properties are most at risk in Victoria. The team is also working with CFA Fire Ecology to update environmental assessment criteria, because at the moment it's difficult to assess flora and fauna.

The Risk Intelligence team also provides current risk-based information to support the direction of service delivery, operational planning and response to the emergency management sector. For example, working with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development staff, VFRR-B data was used to identify which early learning facilities were most at risk. Inclusion on this register is a trigger for the school, kindergarten or childcare facility to pre-emptively close on days declared Code Red in their district.

Heritage Victoria and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria have also been working with CFA to review and update the Cultural Heritage chapter of the *Victorian Fire Risk Register – Bushfire Reference Guide*, which is used to complete the assessment of those assets with cultural importance. In addition, CFA has begun to determine which types of cultural heritage assets (both indigenous and non-indigenous) should be included in the risk register.

For more information about risk intelligence and the VFRR-B tool, email the Risk Intelligence team at vfrr-support-team@cfa.vic.gov.au or phone 9262 8666.



FEATURE

ROWVILLE: NEW PEOPLE, NEW STATION, SAME COMMITMENT



Rowville Fire Brigade took up residence in its new fire station in April this year after making the significant step of becoming CFA's newest integrated brigade, where staff firefighters – known as career firefighters – work alongside volunteer members. The new station was officially opened in late May.

Following a period where Rowville brigade initially operated with day shifts only, it switched to 24-hour manning with 15 career firefighters on the books supporting 40 active volunteer members.

The new station, which took about a year to build, has a four-bay drive-through motor room, a meeting room, training yard, brigade offices and car park, and – because it's integrated – dormitories and a staff day room. Most importantly, its size and location, and better access to the main thoroughfare, will cut down on response times.

Bricks and mortar aside, the introduction of staff has meant some degree of change and transition. For the most part this has happened successfully, through committed and principled leadership from Captain John Farrer and Officer-in-Charge (OIC) Mark Kennedy. Their careful guidance has seen Rowville getting on with the job with minimal disruption to its normal operations.

John recalls the feeling of scepticism around the brigade when it was announced that staff would be appointed. "Members were concerned that integration would split the brigade into an 'us and them' environment," said the 20-year member and (then) 10-year captain. "There was a degree of nervousness. But I'm pleased to say that from then on I was committed to moving forward as a brigade, starting with the search for suitable land for the new station."

His mantra all along was that the brigade's focus should not be about individuals, but about what was best for the community of Rowville. "My philosophy is that individuals, whether volunteer or staff, need to be here for

the right reason. It's all about having an open mind and being inclusive of everyone," he said.

According to Mark, communication and clarity were critical to dispel myths and make sure questions were answered, though it took six months to "sort through all the rumours and innuendo going around".

MAKING THE CHANGE

Mark's first step was to focus on the brigade. Members held an open forum where the positives and negatives were openly discussed. "We tried to sort out quickly what the expectations of the brigade were and build the process from there," he said. At a second open forum, the brigade put together work groups to sort out how the integrated brigade would operate and how the fire station would be run. One of the first matters that had to be resolved was the structure of the brigade management team. "It needed to be a brigade decision and needed to be worked out early on," said Mark. One of the changes the brigade arrived at was introducing volunteer manager roles to work alongside staff equivalents on portfolios such as brigade training, financial administration and community safety.

The local community was another critical piece of the puzzle, and CFA made the call that local residents had to hear about plans right from the start. Mark knocked on doors around the neighbourhood to make sure nearby residents had the chance to look at the architectural drawings and hear about plans and changes. The end result was positive. No one put in an objection during the process, which meant construction was able to get underway at the earliest possible opportunity.

In the months following on from the introduction of career firefighters, the focus turned to making things work not just in theory but in practice. That meant an effort from the brigade as a whole to eliminate barriers. Volunteers use the

day room if required and a duty shift operates for not only functional duties but response. If operational volunteers are at the station when the brigade gets dispatched to a job, they go out on the same pumper.

ONE BRIGADE

While the volunteer captain role was closed with the introduction of an OIC as official leader of the brigade, John Farrer remained as an officer and still serves on the brigade management team. He said that the primary advantages for brigades were better equipment and more training.

Tim Van Den Driest, a station officer at Rowville, uses a sporting analogy to press home the importance of working as a team. "If only 20 per cent of the team are doing all the heavy lifting, then the other 80 per cent need to lift," he said.

"From the start we've developed a 'one brigade' concept that's inclusive of everyone whether they be volunteers or staff. So I would hope that Rowville would be one of the best examples of an integrated fire station transition."

Regional Director Dave Baker echoed those thoughts – adding that while career firefighters are important to improving response times, volunteers would always be at the core of the brigade.

"This is a 70-year-old brigade with a long and successful history and strong volunteer culture. Integration is not about fixing failures – it's about building on strength," he said.

A VETERAN'S VIEW

John Egbers is a 23-year veteran with the brigade. He's currently the first lieutenant and, like John Farrer, was a principal player in the move to integration. In his words, he has spent years caring about his brigade, and confesses to a degree of nervousness that the integration was going to be a takeover.

"Will staff train with volunteers' and 'can volunteers turn out on the same truck with career firefighters' were two of the most common thoughts of the brigade members," he said, adding that the answer to both is a categorical 'yes'.

Another concern at the time was volunteer access around the current new fire station. Will the staff day room be off-limits to volunteers was a common question.

"Well as it turns out, our career colleagues are happy for us to come into their area and them into ours. It's about courtesy and trust. The really good thing is that the current staff members have clearly indicated that they want to be part of the distinctive Rowville Fire Brigade culture.

"We've looked at the best of what other brigades have done with integration, taken that and applied it to our model," said John.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN AND DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

As it happened: Rowville in transition

November 2011: Announcement that Rowville would become integrated

February 2012: Land purchase and new site is settled

March 2013: First sod turned. Brigade officially becomes integrated

April 2014: Brigade moves into its new station and goes to 24-hour manning

May 2014: Station officially opened



Eaglehawk's youth revolution



Above:

Youthful BMT: Dan Miles, Brett MacCallum, Krystal Widdows, Kylie Davis, Hayden Allen and Duncan Murley

PHOTO: ERIC SMITH

There's a youth revolution underway at Eaglehawk brigade, where all but one member of the brigade management team is under 30 years of age.

"I was pretty stoked the brigade had the trust in me to elect me captain and felt ready to go for it," said Hayden Allen, a 26-year-old who joined at 12 as a Junior. He estimates he has turned out to between 700 and 800 incidents including strike team deployments.

Hayden is proud to be following in the footsteps of two great uncles including the late Kevin Murley, Eaglehawk captain for 32 years.

"There are so many issues that I'd like to keep talking to him about," continued Hayden. "I can run things by ex-captain Eric Smith and all the captains in our group have told me to call if I need anything. The same goes for the operations staff at Bendigo headquarters.

"The culture at Eaglehawk has always been to give everybody a go. The challenge now is for this younger generation of leaders to continue to build that positive culture.

"We're future planning. We cover 40 kilometres north of Eaglehawk and we have new estates going up so we need to be on the front foot."

Brigade Secretary Krystal Widdows, 29, also joined the Juniors at 12 with her father a mad keen volunteer.

"We're a close brigade," said Krystal, "and that closeness means you get out on the fireground and know how to pull together.

"I think a positive with the new management team is that young people accept change. We've come in with fresh, new ideas. I run our Facebook page which has been going for six months and we're looking into Twitter."

The brigade turns out to an average 180-200 incidents a year and has about 80 members.

STORY LEITH HILLARD

NEW STATION FOR IRREWILLIPE

On a lovely sunny day in early April, CFA members and the community of Irrewillipe celebrated the official opening of their new fire station.

The station was officially opened by Simon Ramsay, Member of Parliament for Western Victoria. Also attending the celebration were Barwon South West Regional Director Bob Barry, CFA Board Member Michael Tudball, Colac Otway Shire Mayor Lyn Russell and, of course, brigade volunteers.

The day started with a tour of the new facility, which includes a two-bay motor room, two storage rooms, a bathroom, meeting room, office and kitchen.

Michael Tudball thanked not only the volunteers but their families for supporting them. Simon Ramsay then gave a brief history of the brigade and unveiled the new plaque.

"The new station is a fantastic acquisition for Irrewillipe brigade and the community," said Captain Greg Harrington. "We now have a state-of-the-art station.

"We're now able to conduct meetings and training sessions in our own facility. The Corangamite Group has already held pod training sessions at our station which involved neighbouring brigades.



"We no longer have to try to squeeze vehicles and trailers into the old shed. Equipment is ready and at hand when needed.

In addition to the station opening, service awards were issued to brigade members followed by a barbecue lunch.

STORY ANNIE HERITAGE

PHOTO: ANNIE HERITAGE

INAUGURAL CFA CUP ON ANZAC DAY

The Anzac Day Wallan versus Romsey football matches have long been a local institution. From this year, however, the seniors match will be called the CFA Cup.

The Mickleham-Kilmore fire threatened both Romsey and Wallan and really brought the work of the emergency services to the attention of locals. Local service and sporting clubs in affected towns also rallied round. The Romsey recreational reserve was fully operational as a staging area by the second day of the incident, and it was mostly run by local volunteers who made around 1,000 meals a day.

When the fire threat passed, president of Romsey Football and Netball Club Wayne Milburn contacted local brigades to find out if they would like to be recognised by the renaming of the annual match. They were delighted.

The inaugural CFA Cup was played under lights following an Anzac service. The match was won decisively by Romsey Football Club 124 to 48. Romsey brigade Captain Trevor Wilson and Wallan brigade Captain Ken Castle presented the CFA Cup to the winning team. Trevor was also pleased to present the CFA medal to the best on ground, Romsey player Matt Davidson, for his nine goals.

"It was a huge honour to be recognised by our local community in this way," said Trevor. "All our members were made to feel very welcome on the day and I know they all thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The support of Romsey community for CFA, both during and after the February fires, has been amazing and is very much appreciated by all the firefighters from the Romsey Group."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Below:

Wallan brigade Captain Ken Castle, Romsey Football Netball Club President Wayne Milburn and Romsey brigade Captain Trevor Wilson and members of Romsey Group with the cup

PHOTO: SHANTELE GRANT



CFA supports Koonwarra speedster

Jumping on a fire truck as part of a strike team gives Koonwarra brigade's Fourth Lieutenant Richard Ellis a huge buzz. But that's nothing compared to the excitement and fear he feels belting around a racing circuit on his 1000cc BMW superbike.



Even when it's travelling at eye-watering speeds, Richard's bike stands out from the crowd thanks to its unique CFA paint job. Richard paid for the logos and graphics himself as a show of support for CFA.

"A lot of people watch bike races and I wanted the CFA logos on my bike to act as a thank you to any volunteers watching the race," said Richard.

But he hopes his bike acts as more than just a thank you. "We're not getting many volunteers for strike teams or new recruits, so I thought it would be a good way to advertise CFA."

Richard's bike has several CFA logos, the volunteering phone number (1800 232 636) and the phrase 'CFA do more than fight fires'.

Richard first raced his CFA-adorned bike at the Phillip Island Championship in February 2014, which was the support class for the World Superbike Championship.

The Volunteer Support Program team heard about Richard's bike and contacted him to find out how CFA could help out further. "After chatting to CFA head office, I'm being given a CFA-branded, custom-made race suit and helmet, boots, t-shirt and cap. It's fantastic," he said.

Richard aims to compete in three Australian Superbike Championship events this year plus several other races. He may also bring his special bike along to major events, such as The Rural and Urban Champs and National Volunteer Week.

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

Evan Bouchier Strathmerton brigade District 22

faces of
CFA



PHOTO: JOHN BOURCHIER

How long have you been with this brigade?

I started as a Junior in about 2000, then after a bit of a break rejoined as a Senior at the age of 20. That was the year I moved back to the family farm. I've been captain for four years now.

Why did you join CFA?

The brigade had a junior running team, so to begin with I joined for that. Then as things progressed, it became much more about serving the community.

I'm the first member of my family to be in the fire brigade, but my parents have always been involved in other community service organisations, so volunteering is a way of life for us. And 14 years later, I'm still competing in the running team.

You became captain at 23 – any advice for other young people considering the role?

Of course it's not for everyone, but I'd say if you're keen to

have a go, and have the brigade behind you (especially a good secretary – ours is brilliant) it doesn't have to be difficult. There's always someone willing to help you if you're not sure about something. As captain, you meet a lot of interesting people and it definitely makes you a better communicator.

What was the first incident you attended?

It was a washaway at the intersection of two highways. Being my first job, I remember being relatively excited, but at the same time I knew roughly what to do – just grabbed a hose and started hosing oil off the road. There have been a lot of those since but I think you always remember the first one.

Which incident has had the greatest impact on you?

The first one that springs to mind is Black Saturday. I was 22 and left late in the afternoon on the first strike team out at Buxton/Taggerty. It was the first really significant bushfire I'd seen.

The incident which probably had the biggest impact personally was a serious car accident involving my grandmother and my wife. It was only three weeks after our wedding. When the police officer told me who was in the car, it took a long time to register. Luckily, things turned out okay in the end.

What have you done around your farm to protect it against fire?

We try to keep all the paddocks around the house nice and short and eaten down, and the lawns watered to keep them green. The recent fire at Wunghnu burnt up to my sister's back fence, which was a reminder for all of us.

What do you do when you're not firefighting?

I run the family dairy farm – we have 450 cows, plus cereal cropping and haymaking. That plus the fire brigade pretty much keeps me busy full time.

After a long stint of firefighting, what meal do you crave?

Anything home cooked – a roast would be the best. Beef is my favourite but I'll eat anything – you're not fussy when you're hungry.

What do you like to listen to on the drive home from a job?

I don't usually listen to anything, I tend more to think back to the job and how we could do it better next time.

INTERVIEW BY SONIA MACLEAN

Tawonga goes direct

Resources and mentoring are now available to support brigades interested in talking direct to householders about their bushfire risk.

While a lot of brigades have carried out doorknocks in the past, this is the first time a resource pack and training have been put together to support brigades who wish to use this method to reach residents. The pack, which is explained during a one-hour training session and on-the-job mentoring, includes printed copies of a short questionnaire and information sheets for householders who live near forested areas or bushland.

Tawonga brigade members in District 24 recently carried out advice visits to 27 properties in some of the highest-risk streets in the area.

Captain Steve Rigoni said they'd had a positive response from the local community. "The public were genuinely pleased to receive advice at their home and get to know their local brigade," Steve said.

"The training and mentoring process gave the lads the confidence to know the right things to say, and to cover off



on what residents most need to know. The materials made the whole process easy to work with.

"It only took about 15 minutes per house, and the brigade found out plenty of useful information – water supplies we could use, residents who have CFA couplings, plus who plans to stay and defend locally."

Brigade members who are interested in conducting property advice visits can contact their community education coordinator at their CFA regional office for more information.

STORY NEIL MUNRO

Above:

Tawonga brigade members Cliff Morrison and Noel Russell helping community members with Community Liaison Officer Maureen Piera

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NORTH EAST NEWSPAPERS

CHIMNEY FIRES ON THE RISE

Winter is here and people across the state are lighting their fires. For a lot of Victorians, this means literally putting a match to fireplaces and wood heaters.

Over the past two years, there has been a seven per cent increase in house fires as a result of wood-fuelled heating. CFA and MFB are about to launch the 2014 Home Fire Safety Campaign and brigade members can do their part to spread the word. Think about what you can do in your local area to raise awareness of the dangers of wood-fuelled heating.

Most of these fires originate in chimneys and flues. Last year, CFA was called out to 154 chimney fires. Most of these could have been prevented if residents had taken the time before lighting up to check the soundness of their chimneys and had their chimneys swept to clear out birds' nests and the build-up of soot and creosote.

Logs rolling out of fires when the fire isn't being watched also cause house fires and, perhaps unexpectedly, fires can be started by people not realising there are hot embers in the ash when they clean out the wood heater and put hot ashes just outside the back door.

It's the little mistakes we don't expect that often have the greatest consequences. Keep an eye out for the Home Fire Safety Campaign and do your bit in your town.

STORY CHRIS BARBER



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

HUME (ACTING)



Peter
O'Keefe

As we've now concluded what has been a long and busy bushfire season in the Hume Region, it's critical we take time to rest and rebuild our capacity and catch up with family and friends before we reflect and consider the lessons learned from season 2013-14.

The season started back on 25 November 2013 with our initial support for the Blue Mountains, and concluded with a huge contribution to the firefighting and emergency management arrangements at Morwell mine, which concluded on 25 March 2014. In between, the region was challenged by numerous fires including the Mickleham-Kilmore fire and many others with the same potential. These incidents were quickly and effectively contained by good leadership, effective command and control arrangements and a huge amount of hard work on the front-line. Congratulations on a job well done by all.

Now that the intensity of operational activity has reduced, it's critical that all Hume members take the time to be involved and contribute to the range of reviews, after-action reviews, debriefs and surveys that are relevant to the role or roles they undertook over the last season.

To ensure that we continue to grow and develop, it's important that the process of continual improvement becomes embedded in our activities. The simple process of covering 'what was planned, what happened, what worked well and what can we do better next time', allows us to stay focused and capture the important issues. Remembering that this is about our continual improvement helps us to carry out reviews in a blame-free environment.

One of the challenges of any review process is turning the words and good intentions into actions. I am committed to ensuring that issues identified are resolved at the most appropriate level. That means putting the ownership of those issues in the hands of the right people at their level – with support and leadership to back them up.

If you, your crew or your team have not yet participated in a post-season activity, it's not too late and I encourage you to contribute and participate so that we can all improve the way in which we conduct our business.

Over the past five months, Hume Region has hosted five National Emergency Medal presentations with two yet to be held. I would like to take this opportunity to personally congratulate every one of you who received this award. It was great to see you and your families attend. The process for awarding future recipients will continue. For further details, please contact your local district headquarters.

Our strength is our people. Remember to look after yourself, your family and your team. Together we can continue to grow and improve the ways in which we support our communities in times of need.

GRAMPIANS (ACTING)



Michael
Boatman

After a long, and at times arduous, fire season across Grampians Region, the Fire Danger Period terminated towards the end of April for Districts 15 and 16 and the remainder of District 17.

Debriefs of major fires and other incidents have been held across the region over the last three months. This has included a number of community debriefs by Horsham Rural City Council about the Northern Grampians Complex fire. Communities around this fire area are continuing with recovery efforts, with significant support provided by BlazeAid which helped to replace about 300 kilometres of fencing in fire-affected areas over a two-month period. Communities around the Northern Grampians Complex fire area were buoyed during a visit from newly-appointed Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove in early April. The Governor-General toured local communities at the invitation of Horsham Rural City Council.

There have been a number of significant lessons learned from these fire debriefs, with both positive and negative issues coming up. On a positive note, it's pleasing to see the continuation of our excellent working relationship with DEPI and Parks Victoria on the fireground and in incident control centres. Rapid response of aircraft to incidents under pre-determined dispatch has also been seen as beneficial, along with the continued use of private vehicles on the fireground.

Some of the issues identified that didn't go well are not new. Those to be further considered include how to better manage provision of food and water on the fireground in the first 12 to 24 hours of a major incident; the need to ensure accurate and timely communication between fireground, division command and incident control centres; the critical part that effective mobile telephone coverage plays in alerting communities to incidents and providing timely warnings and advice; and the need to review traffic management point protocols to ensure communities can return to assess property impact in a safe and timely manner if a fire or incident caused relocation.

As we enter winter, we should all remember that we provide our services to the community 24/7, 365 days of the year. CFA's winter fire safety campaign is in full swing to remind Victorians they need to take action to protect themselves from house fires. The most significant action we can all take to protect lives and property is to check that we have working smoke alarms with new batteries. Most house fires are preventable, but we have already seen a number of families made homeless across the region due to these fires.

We should all check our own fireplaces, chimneys, heaters and electrical appliances to ensure we don't join this unfortunate group.

In closing may I again thank you for your efforts to ensure our communities are kept safe.

EASTERN METROPOLITAN



David
Baker

As the rains fall and the summer bushfire threat dissipates until the next season comes around, we can rightly take a collective bow when we reflect on our efforts.

As the season progressed and we seemed to be continuously battling threats and incidents across the state, we were prepared but waited with trepidation for Sunday 9 February to dawn. We were truly tested locally on that day and were never once found wanting in our response.

Fires at Gladysdale and Warrandyte had every potential to wreak havoc in high bushfire risk areas. The formula of targeted community education, operational preparedness, sound command and control and the focused dedication of responding crews resulted in minimal losses and both fires were brought under control successfully. The machinery of the regional response, supported by other regions and agencies, worked as it should and we soundly and calmly demonstrated we can get it right.

All serious incidents should naturally be dissected and reviewed after the event, so we can analyse our effectiveness and implement changes to improve where necessary. We should always conduct this with an appreciative enquiry focus and even more so when we have a win along the way.

In addition to the usual post-incident reviews, it's important we capture our local successes on 9 February through a narrative that will serve as a positive testament and a history to inspire future generations. Watch this space as we develop that concept further in the next few months.

The mine fire in the Latrobe Valley tested our systems, capability, resolve and options for the 45 days it burnt, and it put various elements of our state response under strain. Again, our region supplied vast resources to the firefight and once again our people acquitted themselves with a humble professionalism.

As autumn gives way to the cold of a Victorian winter, it's a timely reminder that we are a 24/7, year-round emergency service as we continue to meet our community education, preparedness and response service requirements in townships and cities. All this will be happening while the organisation continues to evolve through the Creating our Future Together efforts.

Local changes in the next few months will see us continue to transition from Eastern Metropolitan Region to District 13 in a larger and new North East Region. Our mission will be to effect a seamless transition that sees our members supported while they achieve CFA's primary mission – to protect lives and property.

LODDON MALLEE (ACTING)



Mark
Gilmore

As I write this column, tractors are warming up and soon the food producers will be planting crops, tending fruit trees and vines and turning their stock on to lush, green grass.

This has been their busiest year I've seen in over 30 years working on bushfires in the north-west of the state. We are now reviewing our lessons learned during October while deployed to NSW, and analysing and discussing the hundreds of hard-running grassfires in our region from November to the end of February to find the gems of wisdom we learned. The effect of over 28,000 lightning strikes across Victoria in a 48-hour period on our firefighting resources and an IMT that was active for 31 days is being looked at. We are also debriefing about the support we provided to Gippsland during February and March.

These reviews will improve us. We want to make sure we're pulling our weight during the main game and providing safety for the citizens of Victoria.

'Plan, do, check, adjust' is a cycle that has always served us well. I'd like to share some lessons I have learned this year during my checking.

1. There are some exceptional CFA members in Loddon Mallee Region and other parts of the state, and exceptional people in other agencies. Time and time again I was amazed by the efforts and ability shown.
2. Community meetings are essential business for us. The trepidation felt by our representatives vanished when a hall full of people thanked us and even cheered. When a community has been impacted, everyone listens and genuinely tries to learn.
3. Social media and smartphones are important. Lots of comments about an advice message displayed on Facebook or Twitter help to get the message to the community, and the FireReady App is very popular.
4. Our built environment is getting more fire prone. Many former agricultural areas now have many houses. People living in recently-developed areas are planting native vegetation and there are no stock eating the grass. In summer, grass fuels in Victoria are now dry, continuous and right up to people's back doors.
5. Your objective in a bushfire should be clear and aggressive and always consider wind direction now and later in the day.
6. The importance of the supportive visit or the phone call has been reinforced time and time again this year. A summer with hundreds of incidents should be a summer with hundreds of little recoveries. When someone tells you, "Thanks, but there's no need to do that," you have your level of support about right.

I'd like to finish with a recent message from Mike Wassing. "Well done, keep up the great work and continue to build upon our relationships with other agencies and with our communities."

BARWON SOUTH WEST



Bob
Barry

As I sit down to write this article, it's pouring with rain – a signal that another Fire Danger Period has come to a close. It allows me to reflect on the extremely busy season we have had across the region and state. It seems that now the season never ends when you observe the commitment of our people with the preparedness, and pre- and post-Fire Danger Period activities.

Barwon South West (BSW) has once again responded to numerous significant structure fires and bushfires with well-prepared teams at all levels. The region and districts should be proud of their performance, particularly protecting communities across Victoria – the Stoneyford, Grampians, Mickleham-Kilmore, Mount Clay and Gippsland fires to name a few.

The Morwell mine fire was a great opportunity for the BSW incident management team to demonstrate its skills and outstanding teamwork over the five tours of duty or the 26-plus days we were there. As the incident controller, it was an absolute privilege to lead a high-performing team of individuals that worked so hard to achieve our goal of systematically extinguishing more than 15 kilometres of individual batters on fire in the mine. Our team tested suppression systems and then introduced a strategy to combat one of the most challenging fires in CFA's history.

The fire was complex, from the highest level in government to the firefighters at the coal face. Our team introduced initiatives with aircraft, compressed air foam, thermal imaging cameras, infrared equipment, aerial appliances and the new concept heavy tankers with lances/spikes. Overall, our strategies worked and our team was instrumental in paving the way in unknown territory. I must also thank the regional control team, district teams and headquarters brigades which managed crews and transport to the Latrobe Valley.

The Morwell fire has seen interoperability across emergency service organisations, government agencies and interstate fire services reach new heights. Whether you were on the fireground or in the incident control centre, the camaraderie, hard work and professionalism paid off. The Fire Services Commissioner's theme – we work as one – really rang true.

Let us take the time to reflect on the season and, where appropriate, look at continuous improvement. We also need to look to the future as our region and organisation is about to see significant change through the Creating Our Future Together initiative. Above all, let us respect our past and look forward to our future.

To all the volunteers and staff in BSW, thank you so much for all the dedicated hard work in supporting your communities, your state, and – with interstate deployments – your nation through this period of high activity. In the words commonly used by our Chief Officer when referring to our people, "A job well done!"

GIPPSLAND



Mark
Potter

As I write this article, CFA members in Gippsland are still working on post-fire activities including debriefing, invoice management and returning hired materials. This work will take place for a while yet. The challenge we have is that if we don't do these things now, the need to start preparing for the next fire season will be on us quickly. Along with this activity is the ongoing task of protecting the Gippsland communities from emergencies which occur on a daily basis.

I must take this opportunity to thank all Gippsland members who either responded to the fires or stayed behind and supported in other ways. When faced with long-duration events such as these, the benefit of every CFA member being involved is significant. I also wish to extend a very sincere thank you to all families of CFA members. Without the support you provide your loved ones, we wouldn't be able to achieve great things.

We have a lot to do. With these types of events, it's critical we take the time to review our work and implement changes that will ensure we improve next time. To ensure that the debrief process is effective, it must be from the bottom up. This means we need to encourage brigades to undertake debriefs that feed into the group debrief process and so on. We won't be undertaking district or region debriefs until we've been able to analyse and discuss the outcomes from debriefs at brigade and group level.

When conducting debriefs, the best method is to use the 'things that went well' and 'opportunities for improvement' process. By using this process, you will first identify the activities or things that we don't want to change. The natural response to debriefs is to think negatively first. There are strong arguments in emergency management that say if we do more of the good stuff, we will have less time to do the bad stuff. In addition, there are no excuses for walking away from a debrief without a list of suggestions for improvement. The most common reason why debriefs fail is because the group hasn't allowed time to develop suggestions that will improve how we operate in the future.

The coming months will see CFA undergo significant changes. There will be the appointment of assistant chief officers, the merging of Gippsland and Southern Metropolitan Regions and the increased focus on supporting front-line service delivery through brigades, groups and districts. This is an exciting period for CFA and one which will position the organisation for future challenges. Thank you for your support and encouragement as we move through these changes.

Twitter: @gipps_potzii

NORTHERN AND WESTERN METROPOLITAN



Greg
Esnouf

It is time to reflect on our achievements through a very busy fire season. Thank you to all who supported the bushfires in the region and elsewhere, or who supported the extended operations at Morwell mine. A job well done! We are currently focused on identifying ways we can do things better and I encourage everyone to contribute to this process so that we can do an even better job in the future.

It is gratifying to see the current level of investment in infrastructure to support brigades in the region to meet the increasing demands of service delivery posed by urban growth. Works are underway at Kangaroo Ground, Research, Bulla, and Toolern Vale and we hope to get the green light to start soon at Eltham, Eynesbury and Panton Hill.

The Chief Officer has approved the integration of South Morang brigade to provide ongoing support to brigades to meet this increased service delivery demand in response to the current and forecast rapid urban growth in the Plenty Road corridor. The population of South Morang, Doreen and Mernda is predicted to rise by 80 per cent by 2021. Alterations to the South Morang building are expected to begin soon, and day staffing may be in place by the next fire season.

As this edition of *Brigade* goes to print, the new organisational arrangements under *Creating Our Future Together* are likely to be finalised with implementation underway. We already know that we will join with Loddon Mallee Region to form North West Region, and that the role of District 14 in supporting local brigades and service delivery will be enhanced. It is therefore appropriate to reflect on the achievements of Outer Metro North West Area and more recently Northern and Western Metropolitan Region over the past years. Thank you to all those who've contributed to the great achievements, but let's also look forward to the opportunities and potential improvements the new organisational arrangements offer.

With great sadness, I would like to reflect on the sudden passing of David McGahy OAM, ex-captain of Arthurs Creek and Strathewen brigade and Whittlesea/Diamond Valley deputy group officer. David joined CFA in 1965, became an officer in 1983 and captain from 1999 until 2011. David was an experienced operational leader and a galvanising force for the brigade and the community following the Black Saturday fires which devastated his community. He showed enormous commitment to ensure the lessons from the tragedy were captured and passed on, and was a passionate advocate for community safety. He received the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2012 for services to the community, and was awarded the Chief Officer's Citation for Courage for his leadership during the Black Saturday fires. David will be greatly missed by those who knew him.

SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN



Peter
Schmidt

From 1 July 2014, District 8 will join with Districts 9, 10 and 11 to form the new South East Region. The new region will be led by a newly-appointed assistant chief officer. It is with mixed feelings that I write this article – my last – as regional director of Southern Metropolitan Region (SMR), as I've now moved into the role of joint director for the Morwell Inquiry.

I am proud to say that I have been heavily involved with Westernport Area/SMR since its inception in 1994-95 as a staff member and, prior to that, as a brigade captain and volunteer roles. To that end, I would like to reflect on the achievements and challenges of Westernport/SMR and District 8 over the past 20 years.

Without doubt our region has changed significantly over that time. Municipalities within SMR have been recognised as some of the fastest growing in the country. This has not only been reflected in residential/population growth but also in significant infrastructure, industry and transport networks expansion. This has diversified risk and increased demand on the emergency services sector, a challenge our people have managed with outstanding success through their commitment and expertise.

We remain the busiest location in CFA, with primary turnouts doubling over the period to more than 10,000 each year. This, with the related disciplines, is around 28 per cent of CFA's total field activity and workload. We are all involved in serving a rapidly-growing area that boasts around a sixth of Victoria's population. This has led to an increase in the number of integrated brigades in our region from four to nine in the past 20 years.

Some other major local achievements include:

- Successful implementation of a Region Junior Leadership and Graduate program that's recognised as a key factor in progressing our Juniors through to Seniors.
- Following the 2009 fires, we saw a paradigm shift in our approach to community engagement and information dissemination. This is being practised heavily at a local level across a broad range of emergencies.
- Alignment of our group boundaries with local government areas.
- Strong local adoption and support of a safety-first culture which included the introduction of Minimum Skills and modular training accreditation, and improved vehicles, equipment and clothing.
- An infrastructure planning and development program that is now delivering the highest-ever capital investment in our history.

I don't have the space to fully recognise the support SMR people have provided to both intra- and interstate campaigns over the past 20 years, but what I do know is that it's unsurpassed in terms of commitment.

Finally and most importantly, I thank all who have been a part of this journey, especially our families. Their great support has made it all possible. All the best and every success for the future. Stay safe and thank you.

Health monitoring on the fireground



Above:
Using the Phillips MP2 cardiac monitor at a hazmat incident
PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Right:
Monitoring carbon monoxide levels at the Morwell mine fire using the Masimo Rad-57
PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Over the past couple of editions of *Brigade* magazine, we've looked at the research carried out to help firefighters reduce their core temperature and what we do to monitor health on the fireground.

We now want to look at the equipment we use that helps us make decisions about procedures to protect firefighters against the harsh environments they face. This equipment is the latest technology in the pre-hospital environment and is designed for use in the field.

EQUVITAL PHYSIOLOGICAL MONITORING SYSTEM (EQ SEM)

This kit consists of EQ SEM monitors that attach to a chest belt and collect information about electrical activity of the heart (called electrocardiography or ECG), skin temperature, core temperature, sub-skin temperature, heart rate, breathing rate and effort. This device also collects posture and movement information.

The physiological information is transmitted using Bluetooth from the monitor to a computer, so that it can be viewed live.

Alarm software on the computer alerts the health team member when any physiological reading exceeds the pre-set levels.

The kit also comes with a core temperature capsule, which is swallowed before the work period. This transmits the core temperature to the monitor.

PHILLIPS MP2 CARDIAC MONITOR

This device is used in critical care environments in hospitals. It records and displays blood pressure, oxygen levels at the finger tip, ECG and skin temperature. The information can be downloaded, if required, for follow-up treatment by ambulance or hospital staff.

MASIMO RAD-57 CO OXIMETER

The Masimo Rad-57 is used to measure heart rate and the oxygen and carbon monoxide levels in the bloodstream. The measurements are taken at the fingertips and displayed on the device's screen. The data is stored and can be downloaded at the end of the incident.

This equipment is used in hospitals, by defence forces, and sporting and emergency environments around the world. CFA uses this equipment in research and on the fireground to monitor firefighters. The data collected is anonymous and has been used over the past two years to develop procedures for managing heat stress and task rotation guidelines.

CFA's heat stress/task rotation management guidelines have been adopted by other Victorian and interstate agencies and are being included in the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council's *Safe Work Guideline for Management of Heat Stress*.

This equipment has been used for research on location at Mount Buller, Wangaratta, Penshurst and Darwin in a joint project between CFA, Deakin University, Victoria Police and Airservices Aviation Rescue and Firefighting.

We also used this equipment during the Morwell mine fire. Over a 45-day period, 60,238 individual health checks were carried out. The data collected is being reviewed to help plan for future events of this type and develop a health response plan to ensure the safety of all agency members involved in major incidents.

STORY PETER LANGRIDGE



CFA'S GOOD FRIDAY APPEAL RECORD

Thousands of CFA members have raised a record-breaking \$1.6 million for the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal.

CFA brigades were out in force across the state over the Easter period, rattling collection tins and pounding the pavement to raise funds for the appeal.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson presented the \$1,637,305 cheque during Channel 7's telethon on Friday evening.

"It's a fantastic achievement and I thank the many CFA brigades and hard-working members who got involved to raise funds for this worthy cause," Euan said. "We're incredibly proud of our members who gave up their time to help raise money."

In addition to the \$1.6 raised by CFA tin shakers, members also teamed up with MFB firefighters to raise another \$30,000 with the annual Good Friday Appeal 14-hour relay held on Melbourne's streets.

CFA's Captain Koala was also on hand to lend his support, visiting the Royal Children's Hospital on Good Friday to bring smiles to some of Victoria's sickest children.

"CFA brigades have been raising money for the appeal for more than 60 years, with CFA collections totalling more than \$23 million to date," Euan said.

In total, the Royal Children's Hospital 2014 Good Friday Appeal raised \$16.8 million, which will be used to buy medical equipment and to fund research projects and scholarships.

STORY HOLLY LITTLE



PHOTOS: BLAIR DELLENMIUM



Urban Seniors
Champion Brigade
Kangaroo Flat

PHOTO: COURTESY OF VFBV

THIS YEAR'S CHAMPS

Continuing a tradition that's been going for more than 140 years, this year's Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) State Championships were held at Swan Hill (Urban Juniors), Bendigo (Urban Seniors) and Geelong (Rural Seniors and Juniors).

Events at the Championships are based on practical firefighting activities. They build fitness, team skills and capabilities with hoses, hydrants, pumps, ladders and other equipment.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said the organising committees made up of local volunteers did a

great job with the enormous task of bringing together such large events involving teams and visitors from all over Victoria and interstate. "It was another great year all round across the three different Championships weekends, and I had the privilege to attend all of them," said Euan.

"The VFBV Championships are always a highlight on the CFA calendar, and an opportunity for brigades from all over Victoria to come together to build team spirit, develop individual and team skills, and promote

camaraderie among brigades, volunteers and their families."

'CFA on Display' was held at each event, to showcase new projects, offer free health checks and to provide information about recruitment, activities and fire safety. The display included: Healthwatch, member classification, brigade sustainability, volunteerism, Home Bushfire Advice Service, member engagement, training and the Captain Koala Show. CFA's mobile education buses and various other vehicles were also on display at the events.

BIG SUNDAY IN SEPTEMBER

SES, DEPI and MFB will join CFA in September to present the 2014 Emergency Services Project Expo. Showcasing vehicles, equipment and other areas of change and innovation, the event will be held from 10.30am at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre, Bell St, Preston on Sunday 14 September. Parking and entry free. For more information email projectexpo@cfa.vic.gov.au.



PHOTO: JAMES MAXWELL



PHOTO: JAMES MAXWELL



PHOTO: COURTESY OF VFBV

URBAN RESULTS

URBAN JUNIOR RESULTS

Dry Aggregate		
1st	Tatura A	33 points
2nd	Benalla A	32 points
3rd	Sale A	23 points
Wet Aggregate		
1st	Tatura A	46 points
2nd	Swan Hill A	23 points
3rd	Benalla A	18 points
Under 14 years Aggregate		
1st	Tatura A	39 points
2nd	Benalla A	23 points
3rd	Sale A	19 points
Under 17 years Aggregate		
1st	Tatura A	40 points
2nd	Benalla A	27 points
3rd	Swan Hill A	20 points
Grand Aggregate		
1st	Tatura A	79 points
2nd	Benalla A	50 points
3rd	Swan Hill A	30 points

URBAN SENIOR RESULTS

Dry Aggregate		
1st	Kangaroo Flat	24 points
2nd	Drouin/Bunyip	21 points
3rd	Maryvale	8 points
Wet Aggregate		
1st	Kangaroo Flat	58 points
2nd	Benalla	52 points
3rd	Traralgon	42 points
A Section		
1st	Kangaroo Flat	82 points
2nd	Drouin/Bunyip	42 points
3rd	Narre Warren	37 points
B Section		
1st	Koo Wee Rup	50 points
2nd	Traralgon	47 points
3rd	Cobden	40 points
C Section		
1st	Benalla	63 points
2nd	Patterson River	41 points
3rd	St Arnaud	39 points

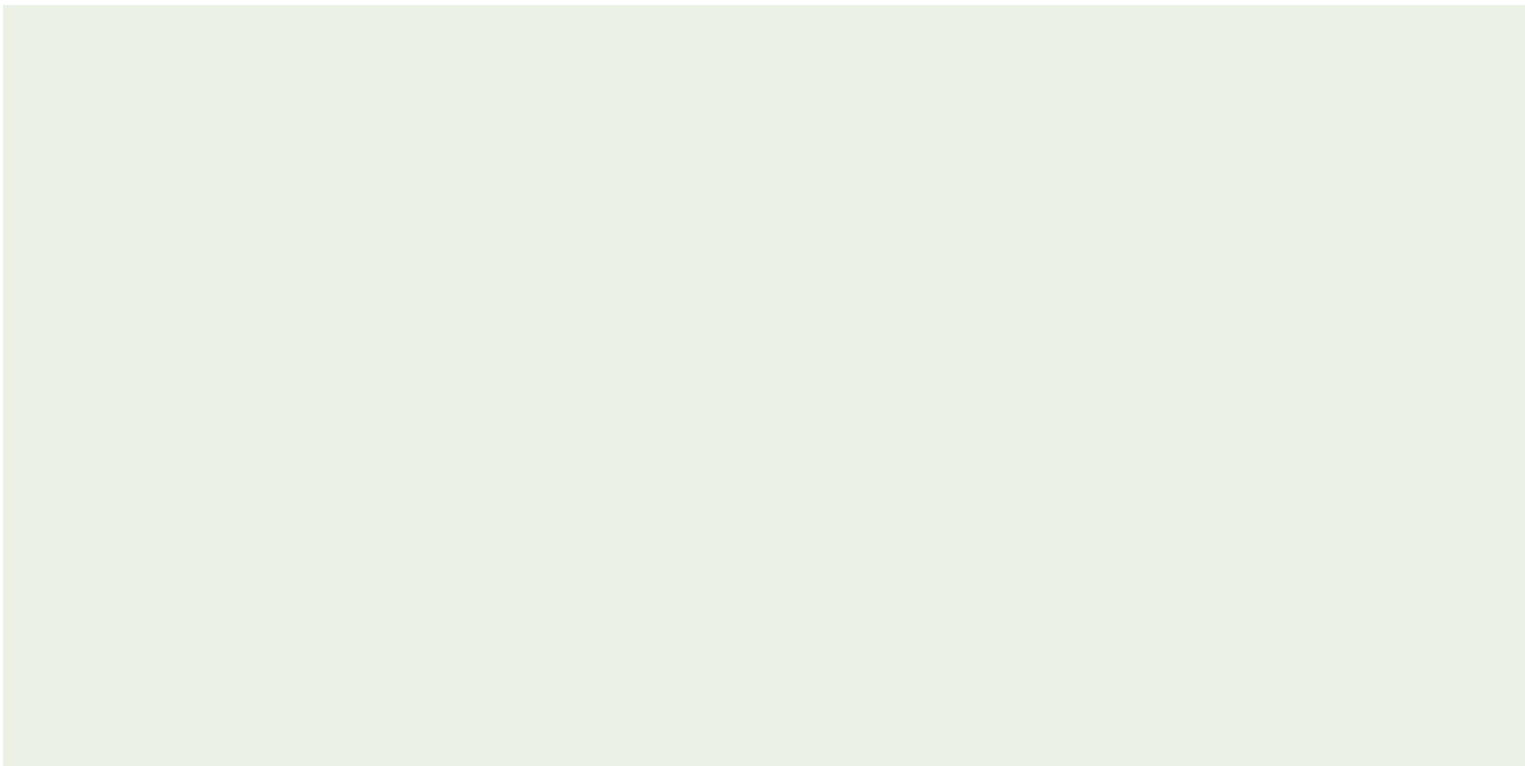
RURAL RESULTS

RURAL JUNIOR RESULTS

11-13 years Aggregate		
1st	Dunrobin & Nangeela A	52 points
2nd	Springhurst A	32 points
3rd	Eldorado A and Willaura B	17 points
11-15 years Aggregate		
1st	Mandurang A	60 points
2nd	Moyhu A	30 points
3rd	Connewarre A	26 points
Champion Team		
1st	Mandurang A	68 points
2nd	Dunrobin & Nangeela A	56 points
3rd	Eldorado A	39 points

RURAL SENIOR RESULTS

Division A Aggregate		
1st	Hurstbridge A	58 points
2nd	Greta A	52 points
3rd	Napoleons-Enfield A	36 points
Division B Aggregate		
1st	Chiltern A	48 points
2nd	Dunrobin & Nangeela B	46 points
3rd	Corio A	31 points
Division C Aggregate		
1st	Drysdale A	56 points
2nd	Leopold A	27 points
3rd	Woodford A	26 points



Police and Emergency Services Games

CFA may not have taken home the top gong, but it certainly collected plenty of medals for its pool room at the 2014 Australasian Police and Emergency Services Games recently.

The event, which was held in late April, attracted more than 3,200 competitors.

Around 155 CFA members participated in events including golf, volleyball, equestrian, a stair climb at Melbourne's Rialto Towers and various shooting disciplines.

But it was swimming, track and field and cycling where CFA members excelled, collecting a number of first, second and third places.

The Games are held as an opportunity to continue the tradition of friendly competition and promote inter-agency camaraderie.

STORY KAYLA MASKELL



Below left:

Rialto Towers stair race in turnout gear
PHOTO: PAUL BIANCO, PB IMAGING

Below right:

CFA competitors marching in the opening ceremony
PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

STATE FORUM

The fourth annual Community Engagement and Fire Awareness State Forum is at Bell City in Preston, 2-3 August.

To register, email memberengagement@cfa.vic.gov.au, phone Lee Dalglish on 9262 8851, or go to surveymonkey.com/s/cfastateforum2014.

BA TRAINING DOWN ON THE FARM

In late March, several District 8 brigades held breathing apparatus (BA) skills maintenance at Caldermeade Farm. Several scenarios, designed to test even the most experienced BA wearers, ran concurrently.

In one scenario, teams from Lang Lang, Bayles, Heath Hill, Kernot, Wonthaggi and Koo Wee Rup had to retrieve firefighting equipment from a smoke-filled room. The items were placed among butter churns, milk buckets, life-size cow statues and other dairy-related equipment. Teams were given guidance on their search technique and as the crews found the cows and other items there was a lot of laughter. Participants said it was a worthwhile exercise and they got a lot out of it.

Another BA team activity was to use a guide line to transport a bucket of water through a children's playground without spilling it. The crew had to communicate and show initiative to complete the task because their facemasks were covered.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Crews also had to take part in a rescue scenario where a person was trapped under a tractor that had chemical drums around it. The crews had to identify the chemical and using the HAG guide explain the precautions for the firefighters and tractor driver.

Lang Lang's Community Emergency Response Team was on hand to measure pulse, blood pressure and oxygen levels before and after the exercises. Frankston BA was kept busy inspecting and filling cylinders.

STORY PAUL LITTLE

Nillumbik Group at Fiskville

In early April, members from Saint Andrews, Research, Christmas Hills, and Panton Hill brigades met at Fiskville Training College to carry out hot fire skills training.

"The scenarios were chosen to closely match the brigade profiles of the members attending," explained instructor Stephen Gaunt, "so there was a focus on isolated and remote small structure fires and vehicle incidents.

"We also did some refresher training on water in and out of the tankers and transition of a tanker on to a boost. This was especially important as some brigades in Nillumbik have limited or no reticulated water in their areas."

District 14 Structural Instructor Kris Wilms carefully chose the scenarios and the order for them to be completed so that there was a transition through the day from fairly basic drills to more complex ones towards the end.

"We had three volunteer instructors per syndicate," continued Stephen. "This allowed an instructor to work closely with the incident controller in a mentor capacity and assist with key fireground decisions, but more to provide a friendly non-confrontational environment for the incident controller to work within. An instructor worked closely with the BA crews to provide support and the third instructor was in charge of general fireground observations and safety."



PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

Chris Henderson from St Andrews brigade gave his thoughts on the day. "Rural brigades generally don't get enough turnouts to large structure/non-structure fires to become quickly proficient on the job, so we're required to take a great deal of care in how we train," Chris said.

"I work for Airservices Australia as an air traffic control systems specialist and get to regularly watch the ARFF firefighters train on their hot fire gas PAD for aircraft crash landings or terminal/structure fires. Like rural brigades, they probably won't get to attend such major incidents very often, if at all, but their dedication to maintaining their skill level inspires me to do the same for our local brigades. Hot fire skills maintenance is a very valuable opportunity for us."

STORY BLAIR DELLEMIJN

Through the ages – Frankston



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