



PROTECTING LIVES AND PROPERTY | SUMMER 2012

BRIGADE



REACHING OUT

CFA MEMBERS HELP COMMUNITIES
PREPARE FOR SUMMER

THE *very*
HANDY
TEMPLATE
TOOLKIT

OUT NOW – SEE P3

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CLAIRE HIGGINS ACTING CHAIR

Following the retirement of Chair Kerry Murphy, I took up the position of Acting Chair at the October Board meeting held at CFA headquarters.

Acting CEO Euan Ferguson gave an update to the Board about Fiskville. Cardno Lane Piper has

almost finished drilling and other necessary activities in order to take samples of soil, surface water, sediments and groundwater. Similar work is currently being carried out at all CFA training grounds.

Data for the Fiskville health impact study will be gathered until the end of the November before being analysed by Monash University's Department of Epidemiology and Preventative Medicine.

Key stakeholders from the regions and Operational Training and Volunteerism (OT&V) have agreed on the transition of regional training ground personnel to OT&V on 3 December. Further work is needed to assess the cost to each region to operate and maintain the grounds. This means that budgets and assets will be handed over on 1 July 2013.

Euan also reported on the delivery of the first batch of transportable bag radios to the Radio Replacement Program. Rollout to the field began at the start of October with all units due to be installed and their operators trained by the end of November.

In turn, the bushfire helmet torch program is expected to deliver around 10,000 torches over six months. A survey was sent to every brigade in early October to determine how many helmets need a torch mounting slide.

As Acting Chief Officer, Joe Buffone informed the Board that both the draft structural personal protective clothing policy and procedures and the interim warm jacket guideline were discussed at the CFA/Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria consultative committee on PPE/C. Longer term solutions for providing warmth are being considered, including the use of an undergarment that won't compromise Australian standards for firefighter clothing.

Joe gave an overview of the pilot program that's replacing the Infostream X3 pagers with EAS Alpha Legends for 2,000 members from 144 brigades. This initial rollout will enable the technology to be fine-tuned before the new pagers are issued across the state next year as part of the \$40 million EAS network upgrade project. The Alpha Legend is more reliable in areas with irregular coverage and offers much longer battery life. Although the screen is smaller and needs more scrolling, the text is easier to read on a fully-backlit LED screen.

Joe also reported on fleet developments, with 124 new medium tankers to be built by June 2013. We've begun to deliver 10 heavy tankers and all trucks are due in the stations of assigned brigades by January 2013. Work is progressing on a foam protection spray system and curtains for the ultralight tankers with a prototype expected within weeks.

The Board expressed its appreciation to the 288 brigades that registered to take part in CFA Sunday on 25 November. Thanks for flying the flag for emergency service volunteering and passing on safety messages to your communities. ■

NEW TOOLKIT MAKES ITS DEBUT

STORY CHRISTINA BUCCI

In October, CFA's new Template Toolkit was revealed to CFA members. So what exactly is it and how can it help you?

The Toolkit is an online hub of new CFA-branded templates and materials that are readily accessible to all members for the first time through CFA's intranet and Brigades Online.

For those working on CFA-networked computers, another first is the ability to access a range of these templates through Microsoft programs. Just go to File/New/My Templates, and then select the template you want.

CFA employees are required to use the new templates, so over the next six months we'll expect to see all areas adopt this new style for consistency and long-term efficiency.

Throughout the summer, we're sending USB sticks to brigade secretaries that are packed with information, templates and other materials for brigades. Look out for it early in the new year.

In the meantime, take a look at what people have been saying about the Toolkit:

"Very useful, we are already using the snappy looking templates for correspondence and presentations."

Julie, Barwon South West Region

"It's encouraging to finally see some standardisation in the way we represent CFA on paper."

Jamie, Hoppers Crossing brigade

"I think it will get a lot of use by brigades. I can now add this to my brigade's Facebook page as a link."

Sherene, Grampians region ■



If you have any suggestions or feedback, please contact Christina Bucci, CFA Communities & Communication on 9262 8366 or c.bucci@cfa.vic.gov.au

SWITCH TO DIGITAL AND GO GREEN

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

According to the communications survey that members completed earlier this year, many of you are happy to read an online version of *Brigade* magazine instead of receiving it in the post.

CFA could save a significant amount of money and resources if more people switched to digital.

From the next issue of *Brigade*, the online version will have handy interactive functions – embedded videos, photo libraries, and features that will help you to search and navigate the magazine quickly. We'll keep building on this interactivity to make the digital magazine even more useful. Also, you'll be able to print all or just some of the magazine.

We'll continue to print the magazine for those who prefer paper or who don't access the internet, but we encourage you to join us online and help us make some savings.

You can sign up by for the electronic version of *Brigade* by visiting CFA Online or Brigades Online. On the members page click on the 'Manage subscriptions' button to update your preferences.

The link is also on the 'Change contact details' page. Please make sure your personal details on CFA Online include your current email address.

You will then automatically receive an email when new electronic *Brigade* magazines become available and a link to take you straight to them. ■

NEW PAGER ROLLOUT

STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

The Emergency Alerting System (EAS) Pager Pilot Program finished in early November after more than 2,000 emergency services personnel, including CFA members, trialled the new units.

The pagers will now be updated incorporating member feedback where possible. In particular, there will be upgrades to the software that isn't yet suitable for operational use on the EAS network.

The main changes following the pilot are: members will no longer have to scroll to the end of each message in order to stop the beeping of unopened messages; all time settings will be coordinated over the air and the manual time changing settings will be removed; and the two stickers on the back of the pager will be combined into one sticker

that also includes the EAS helpdesk number (1800 604 977) and allow space for a user identification sticker.

The rollout of the updated pagers, expected to begin in March 2013, is part of a range of improvements to the message capacity and performance issues experienced during the 2009 bushfires. ■



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

To read frequently asked questions from the pilot program, go to cfaconnect.net.au/pagerpilot

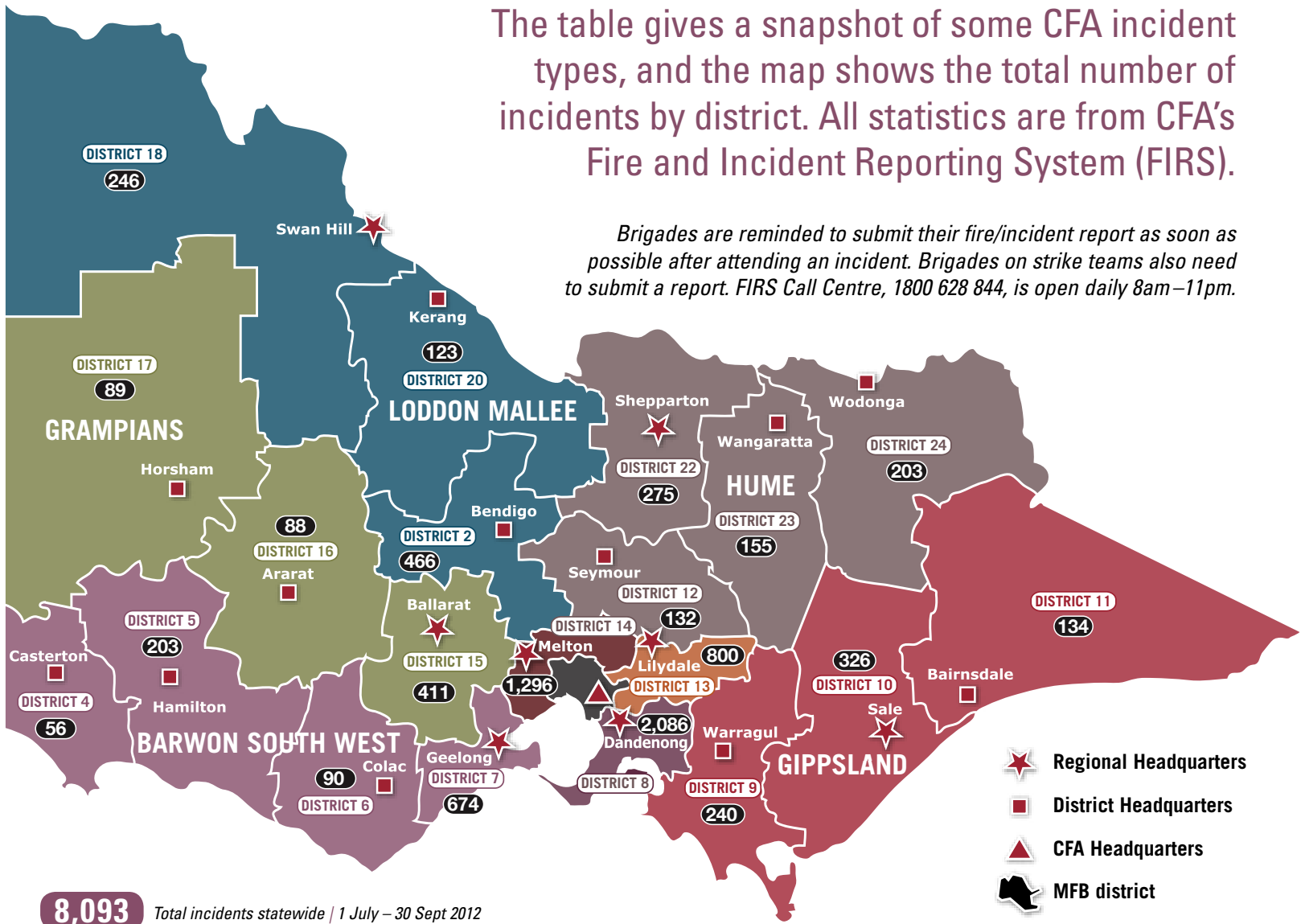
INCIDENT STATISTICS

INCIDENT TYPE	1 JULY – 30 SEPT 2012			1 APRIL – 30 JUNE 2012		
	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	No. of incidents	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	No. of incidents
Bush and forest		764	4 ^a		29	11 ^a
Car fires and motor vehicle accidents			1,107			1,282
False alarms			1,700			1,732
Grassfires		159	23 ^b		884	74 ^b
Hazardous materials			617			649
House fires	\$20,033,190		322	\$17,138,900		344
Industrial fires	\$3,943,400		70	\$10,312,800		52
	\$23,976,590	923	3,843	\$27,451,700	913	4,144

^aForest and bushfires and scrub or bush and grass mixture fires larger than one hectare; ^bLarger than one hectare

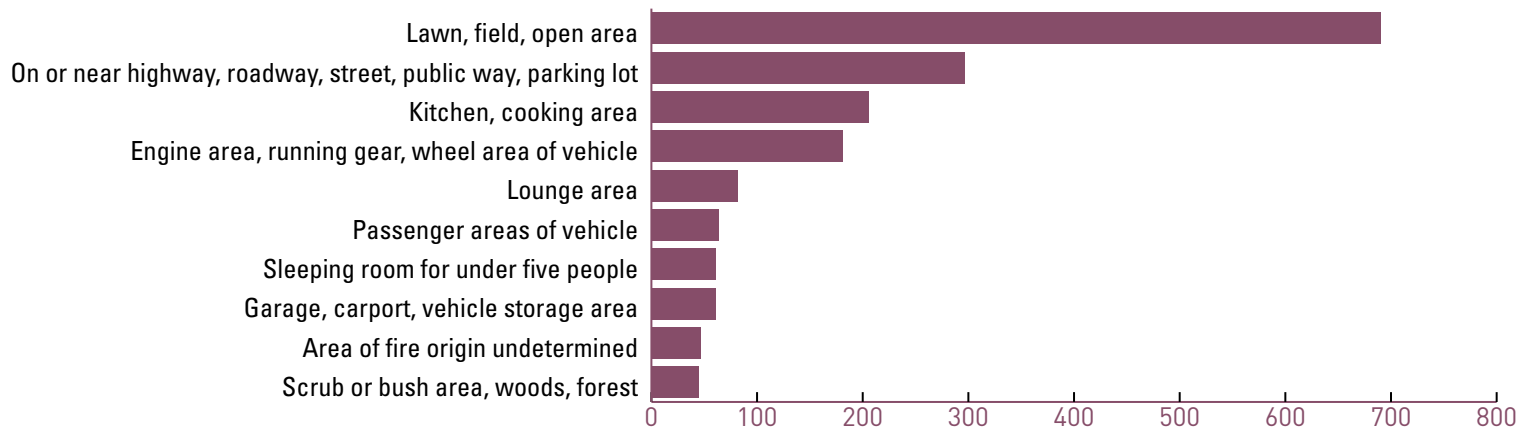
The table gives a snapshot of some CFA incident types, and the map shows the total number of incidents by district. All statistics are from CFA's Fire and Incident Reporting System (FIRS).

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



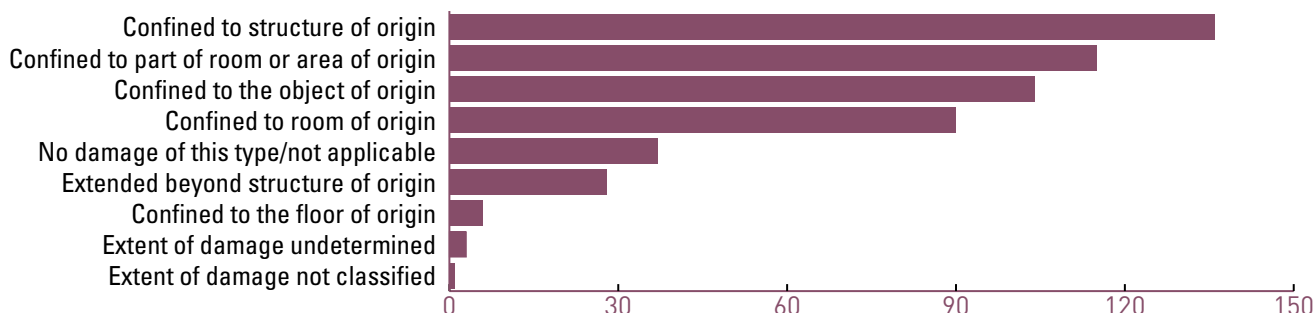
ORIGIN OF FIRE

1 JULY – 30 SEPT 2012



EXTENT OF FLAME DAMAGE

1 JULY – 30 SEPT 2012



GLIDER CRASHES AFTER ENGINE FAILURE

STORY KEITH PAKENHAM

INCIDENT: Aircraft accident

DISTRICT: 8

DATE: 14 October 2012

BRIGADES: Springvale, Keysborough, Dandenong



CFA crews and MFB firefighters from Highett were on standby at Moorabbin Airport in Bangholme as a motor glider with engine difficulties approached from the south. Unfortunately, the plane didn't make it to the airport and crashed in a paddock on Soden Road, around five kilometres from the airport. Access to the area was limited and the ground was quite soft for crews to walk through.

The plane attempted to land in the unslashed long grass, but flipped over on its nose as it came to rest. Both occupants climbed out through the side window and were met by a crew from a helicopter who had set out from Moorabbin Airport to follow them in.

The plane's occupants, a man in his 50s and a 13-year-old boy, received only minor injuries, and were treated by paramedics then taken by ambulance to Dandenong Hospital.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

The farmer who owned the property was operating his mower when he caught sight of the plane coming down and went over in his tractor to help.

Incident Controller Station Officer Matt Jones from Springvale brigade said both occupants were very lucky to have survived the impact. ■

To see more images and video go to cfaconnect.net.au/gliders

AWKWARD RESCUE

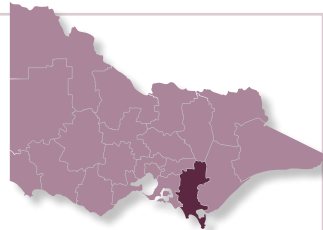
STORY **BRETT HUME**

INCIDENT: Road accident

DISTRICT: 9

DATE: 14 August 2012

BRIGADES: Loch Rescue, Korumburra, Ruby, Inverloch, Kongwak



CFA crews were confronted with a very testing rescue after a truck driver left the Jumbunna Road between Jumbunna and Korumburra and crashed into a large tree.

The driver's lower legs were trapped and the difficulty was further compounded by the steep angle of the truck on an embankment and tricky access to the floor area of the truck.

Ambulance Victoria paramedics and a medical team attended and provided high levels of care for the patient throughout the rescue.

Heavy haulage was needed to stabilise the truck before the rescue could begin. Initially, an attempt was made to release the driver's left foot by accessing the driver from the rear, but when this was unsuccessful the truck's roof was removed to reach the left leg.

A second point of entry was made to release the right leg. This was also very difficult because of the damage to the front of the truck and the steep angle. Unfortunately, it was necessary to amputate one foot.

When both legs were released the extraction of the driver commenced. Again, this was challenging because of the limited space available to lift and move the driver and the steep, slippery embankment.



PHOTO: BRETT HUME

Following a joint and extremely strenuous effort by Ambulance Victoria, CFA and State Emergency Service, crews transferred the patient to a back board, then into a Stokes basket, and finally moved hand-to-hand down the embankment to the waiting ambulance. The driver was transferred to hospital by Ambulance Victoria helicopter. ■

TRENCH COLLAPSE TRAPS WORKER

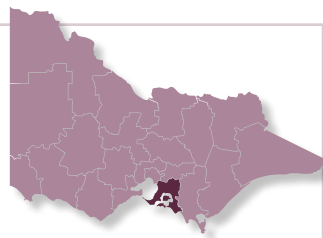
STORY **KEITH PAKENHAM**

INCIDENT: Trench rescue

DISTRICT: 8

DATE: 11 August 2012

BRIGADES: Pakenham, Dandenong, Hallam, Nar Nar Goon, Toomuc



A worker trapped waist deep in a trench had to be rescued by emergency services in boggy ground.

The man was working in the trench at a new housing estate in Stable Street, Pakenham when, due to bad weather, the trench collapsed. He was trapped from the waist down.

"SES was on scene and we called in specialist equipment from Dandenong and Hallam CFA brigades and MFB," said District 8 Operations Manager Paul Carrigg. "The victim was treated by paramedics until the equipment was set up."

The specialist equipment used to free the man included power spreaders and timbers – hydraulic equipment that allowed firefighters to dig the trench safely, ensuring it didn't collapse while the rescue was taking place.

The man was freed after about two hours and taken to hospital in a stable condition.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Paul said while this type of incident doesn't happen on a regular basis, CFA's specialist response teams are trained and ready to respond when required.

"The rescue was an effective multi-agency response that resulted in the victim being released in a timely manner in a stable condition," he said. ■

To see more images and video go to cfaconnect.net.au/trench



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

STORY KEITH PAKENHAM

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 8
DATE: 17 September 2012
BRIGADES: Springvale, Dandenong



Two men driving by saved the life of a child after dragging him out of a house engulfed in flames. CFA crews from Springvale and Dandenong brigades assisted the Metropolitan Fire Brigade with the house fire on the corner of Wanda Street and Police Road, Mulgrave.

A thick cloud of smoke was seen from the distance and the brick home was well alight when firefighters arrived at the scene. Crews undertook an external attack because sections of the roof were collapsing.

Garry Brewster and Gary Lopez were independently travelling past the scene, saw smoke and then spotted the mother screaming that one of her twins was still trapped inside the burning home. Disregarding their own safety, the two strangers smashed a window, crouched down low and, after several attempts, found the boy under a bed. They pulled him clear, despite suffering from the smoke, and passed him through a window.

Senior Station Officer Josey Sensi from Springvale brigade gave Mr Brewster oxygen while the other firefighters tackled the fire.

The mother and two children weren't injured in the fire. MFB crews remained at the house for several hours blacking out the remains of the badly damaged home. ■

To see more images and video go to cfaconnect.net.au/mulgravefire

DOG RESCUED FROM MINESHAF

STORY ALUN HUGHSON

INCIDENT: Trapped dog
DISTRICT: 2
DATE: 24 August 2012
BRIGADES: Oscar 1 Rescue (Bendigo)



At Golden Point Road near Castlemaine, a dog walking with his owner was reported missing down a disused mine in the hilly country of the old gold diggings. The dog had fallen down a shaft and could be heard in obvious distress. The Oscar 1 Mine Rescue team was despatched from Bendigo to see whether a rescue was possible. Team members entered a tunnel with breathing apparatus, ropes and gas detection equipment. Fifty metres along the tunnel they found a

vertical shaft but couldn't see the dog because there was a slight bend in the shaft and timbers partially obscured their view. Setting up lighting and ropes, they descended 15 metres to where the dog had fallen.

A second tunnel was found 10 metres down the shaft. The dog was hauled to this level by rope then carried out through an 80-metre tunnel that emerged further down the hill.

Charlie, a border collie, spent the weekend at a veterinary clinic where he had a dislocated hip fixed, and he made a full recovery.

There are many abandoned mines across central Victoria and many in the remote areas are undocumented. There are an estimated 3,000 mine shafts in the Bendigo area alone and the exact location of a third of them is unknown. Many were covered over in the past by simple timber and earth covers, and age and water regularly reveal an unknown shaft.

Oscar 1 is the only CFA group with underground mine rescue capability and one of only three underground mine rescue teams in Victoria. ■

LARGE GRASSFIRE AT LOCH SPORT

STORY **LEITH HILLARD**

INCIDENT: Grass and scrub fire
DISTRICT: 10
DATE: 26 September 2012
BRIGADES: Loch Sport, Golden Beach, Sale, Longford, Seaspray



A Watch and Act warning was issued at 3pm on Thursday 27 September, 15 hours after a 730-hectare coastal vegetation fire started in the Loch Sport area of Gippsland.

Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) crews fought the fire in Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park backed up by 10 CFA tankers. Our first crews arrived at the scene just after midnight on Wednesday and were replaced by a strike team at noon. A second strike team replaced the first in the evening. A helicopter bomber and one fixed wing aircraft also helped with the firefight.

"The fire went in spurts because of the variable coastal winds," explained Operations Officer Paul Fixter. "It began as a Level 2 but moved to Level 3 because it was a protracted event."

"Our crews worked intensely with DSE, building mineral earth control lines around the SP Ausnet and Esso valve site assets. Our crews also did some direct attack and mopping up. The main issue was the dense coastal vegetation."

No towns were threatened by the fire though there was a lot of smoke in the area.

On Friday, there were still 115 people from DSE, CFA, Victoria Police and SP Ausnet working on the fire.

DSE Incident Controller Laurie Jeremiah said as wet weather moved in crews were able to build strong control lines and black out on the edges.

"There's been a fair bit of planned burning done in this area over the past few years which has reduced the fuel load, and that has really helped the effort to contain the fire," he said.

Esso Australia's Production Operations Manager Simon Younger was full of praise for CFA's efforts in protecting one of Esso's valve stations east of Trigg Track.



PHOTO: CHRIS GALLAGHER



PHOTO: ADAM TOWNSEND

"We greatly appreciate the skill and care that was demonstrated and attribute the success of the response to the leadership, coordination and teamwork displayed by your organisation, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and our Longford Plant's pipeline crew," Mr Younger said. ■

FACTORY BLAZE AT KEYSBOROUGH

STORY **KEITH PAKENHAM**

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 8
DATE: 19 October 2012
BRIGADES: Keysborough, Hallam, Patterson River, Frankston, Dandenong, Springvale, Scoresby



Crews from seven CFA brigades were called to a chrome plating and moulding business in Kirkham Road, Keysborough just before 6am, where a fire caused significant damage to a factory.

Operations Officer Peter Lucas said crews brought the incident under control in around an hour. "Firefighters did a fantastic job to contain the fire to the one factory which is situated in a large industrial complex," he said.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Peter said that because chemicals were involved in the fire, CFA's Scientific Officer and the Environment Protection Authority were also at the scene.

At the height of the fire, smoke affected Dandenong South around Cheltenham Road and near EastLink. ■

To see more images and video go to cfaconnect.net.au/keysborough

NEW MOBILE COMMAND VEHICLES

STORY **DARREN GREVIS-JAMES**

CFA has taken delivery of two of the latest generation heavy mobile command vehicles (MCV) that will be introduced in 2013.

The MCV will be a communication link for field operations, incident control and community information.

CFA's Acting Manager Structural Planning Craig Brownlie said the new MCVs will be able to operate as a Level 2 incident control centre (ICC) for structure firefighting or as a forward operations point.

The MCV is fitted with high-end, robust satellite and communications equipment specifically tailored to emergency services. This will allow incident controllers to develop and update the dynamically changing picture of emergency incidents, support common operational planning and improve emergency management efficiency.

"The MCVs will contain technology that will put them at the forefront as being perhaps the most technically advanced mobile command vehicles in Australia's fire and emergency services sector," Craig said.

"It's about maximising situation awareness. Whether the event is a big structure fire, hazmat incident, or bushfire, it's designed to operate in an all-hazards environment.

"Critically, it will provide communication links when public infrastructure is destroyed or unavailable. One of the key benefits of the MCV is that its communications are satellite enabled which means you never run the risk of losing comms connectivity.

"This MCV will enable CFA to review and revise standard operating procedures, and develop training and skills maintenance requirements in line with world's best practice." ■



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

FIRE AWARENESS AWARD WINNERS

STORY **SHEONA URQUHART**

The 2012 Fire Awareness Awards ended on a high, with the announcement of all award winners and grant recipients during a ceremony at the RACV City Club in Melbourne on 3 December.

Finalists from across the state joined with senior members of Victoria's fire agencies and ministerial representatives in a night of celebration and acknowledgment.

This year's awards saw more entries than ever before, with a staggering 186 applications being reviewed. Congratulations to all the winners:

COMMUNITY – COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

Beechworth Neighbourhood Centre
Indigo Fireflies

COMMUNITY – VOLUNTEER

CFA Glenburn Fire Brigade
Glenburn volunteers engaging with community

COMMUNITY – RECOVERY

Slamed Creations
Black Saturday Remembrance Cruise

COMMUNITY – MULTICULTURAL

Wyndham Community and Education Centre Inc.
Fire safety presentations for refugees

COMMUNITY – YOUTH

CFA
Youth At Risk

COMMUNITY – AGED/DISABILITY

Greater Shepparton City Council
Fire safety for HACC eligible clients

COMMUNITY – OTHER

Regional Arts Victoria
Illuminated by Fire

EDUCATION

CFA Waranga Group
Rushworth P-12 Year 9 – CFA Advance Fire Crew

FIRE SERVICES

Multi Agency Capability Committee –
DSE, CFA & MFB
Cobaw Bushfire Staff Ride

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert Committee Inc.
*Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert System – Making
Noise About Fire Safety*

INDUSTRY

Ben Draffin
OneKey – multi-purpose firefighting spanner

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Geelong Grammar School
John Lewis Centre

NEW AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Alpine Shire Council
Bushfire Inspection iPad app

GOVERNMENT AND MUNICIPAL

Alpine Shire Council
Bushfire Inspection iPad app

The **RACV INSURANCE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE** is awarded to one project that stands out as making a particularly significant and innovative contribution to promoting fire awareness in the community. The winner of this award was Slamed Creations for the Black Saturday Remembrance Cruise.

In addition to the awards, several grants were presented to developing projects. The recipients were as follows:

SPECIAL INCENTIVE GRANT (\$2,000)

Slamed Creations
Black Saturday Remembrance Cruise

SPECIAL INCENTIVE GRANT (\$2,000)

Deaf Access Victoria Loddon Mallee
Deaf Smoke Alarm and Alerting Equipment Loan

SPECIAL INCENTIVE GRANT (\$2,000)

Riding for the Disabled – Oaklands
Providing Basic Fire Equipment

RACV INSURANCE FIRE INNOVATION GRANT (\$5,000)

Upper Yarra Community House –
Community College
Fire Trax

RACV INSURANCE FIRE INNOVATION GRANT (\$2,000)

Forrest and District Neighbourhood House
Forrest on Fire

More information (including lists of all finalists) can be found at www.fireawarenessawards.com.au



MICK BOURKE CEO

JONES JOINT IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

The Jones Inquiry Joint Implementation Action Plan has been developed collaboratively by CFA and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV). It demonstrates the commitment from CFA and VFBV to ensure that the individual and collective needs of volunteers are addressed; and illustrates how we continue to work together to support and empower our volunteers when issues affect them.

This Plan has been prepared as a formal commitment by CFA in response to the findings and recommendations of the *Independent Inquiry into the effect of arrangements made by CFA on its volunteers*.

Following review of His Honour David Jones AM's report arising from the Inquiry, the Minister requested that CFA develop this Plan against six key Jones Inquiry themes, and report to him on a quarterly basis on the progress made.

This Plan has been developed through extensive collaboration with VFBV over several months. A list of activities that address the six key themes was drawn up and this is now the Plan that CFA is committed to.

The six themes are:

- Culture and leadership to empower and support volunteerism
- Recruitment, retention, recognition and utilisation of volunteers
- Strengthening the volunteer-based and integrated service delivery model
- Improved support for brigades and communities
- Training development
- Training and delivery assessment.

The Plan's planning period will last for 12 months. However, CFA is aware that more time will be needed to complete the strategies and actions outlined. The Plan will be revised in approximately 12 months, and any extension or change will be widely publicised through regular CFA and VFBV communication channels.

Work has already begun on a number of strategies and actions. CFA and VFBV have both recently carried out wellbeing surveys,

with more than 800 responses to each, and CFA is in the process of analysing the results. The VFBV's survey will become an annual survey and CFA will also carry out regular wellbeing research.

Work is now underway on a number of projects to:

- develop and actively implement a clear organisational vision, mission, values and structure
- operationalise key processes that directly support the delivery of CFA obligations in 6(i) of the CFA Act
- identify successes in volunteer capacity and participation
- identify good volunteer practices and promote them across CFA, especially in the areas of training, incident management, specialist response and day-to-day service delivery
- establish the Chief Officer's Service Delivery Model
- ensure training resource allocation and decision-making is driven by training needs
- rationalise core versus non-core training needs
- develop clear documentation and communicate training doctrine/rules
- invest in field training grounds and facilities
- develop and implement a quality assurance system to support brigades to train and assess members.

You can provide feedback and check on the progress of CFA's Jones Inquiry implementation activity through regular updates online at news.cfa.vic.gov.au (formerly CFA Connect), and we'll also publish updates in *The Fireman* and *Brigade* magazine.

Regular updates will also feature on VFBV's website and will be provided at VFBV State Council meetings and Joint Consultative Committee meetings.

I'd like to acknowledge the work this committee has put into developing the Joint Implementation Action Plan and, more broadly, the implementation of actions directly related to the Jones Inquiry recommendations. The Department of Justice has also played a key role in ensuring that the Jones Inquiry and recommendations are appropriately addressed. ■

WHEN TO ISSUE WARNINGS STORY MICK HAYES

Towards the end of last fire season, operations managers requested a set of principles that could be used by incident controllers to help them decide when to publish a warning or advice message.

As there is no definitive set of rules that can be applied to determine whether or not to issue a warning, incident controllers need to make the decision based on principles, judgement and experience. The Warnings and Advice Size Up and Consideration flowchart lists a range of factors and variables that will help incident controllers make

the most effective and appropriate decision to distribute warnings.

This flowchart can be enlarged, printed and displayed at locations where incident management personnel are working – the State Control Centre, incident control centres and regional control centres, for example. This will promote a proactive and positive approach to decision-making in the context of issuing timely, relevant and tailored warnings while retaining the flexibility to make that determination based on risk, time frames and expectations. ■

NEW LOOK FOR OUR WEBSITES

STORY JESSICA DEERY



CFA's public website and news site (CFA Connect) have been integrated into a newly-designed website that aims to better meet community needs.

With a fresh, new look and feel, cfa.vic.gov.au, is now home to a 'News & Media' section for all stories, blogs, photos and videos previously found on CFA Connect.

Other changes include new navigation to help people easily find the information they're looking for, and a drop-down warnings panel on the homepage that displays the latest emergency information.

Mobile and tablet users will also find the website easier to use thanks to a responsive design.

The redesign was based on user testing and community feedback. We asked members of the public what they expected from CFA's website, how they would organise the content and what words best described the information (rather than agency terminology).

We think the result is a more user-friendly website that better informs the 1.3 million people who visit each year. Have a look for yourself: cfa.vic.gov.au ■

A BIG THANKS TO IGA

STORY NANCY THOMPSON

IGA has donated over \$208,779 to CFA brigades across Victoria through its 2010-11 Community Chest program.

More than 250 brigades have benefited from the program with funds raised by local IGA stores. This has helped brigades buy additional equipment such as GPS units, thermal imaging cameras, breathing apparatus and even additional vehicles.

Mount Evelyn brigade (pictured) has had a strong relationship with Mt Evelyn IGA for more than 10 years. This year's contribution will help the brigade replace its field command vehicle and ultralight tanker.

Boronia brigade has received a lot of support for many years from IGA stores. "The IGA Community Chest program supports a number of the Knox Group brigades and Boronia brigade recently presented certificates of appreciation to the Alchester and Ringwood East stores," said brigade Executive Manager Paul Denham.

Recent IGA Community Chest donations have been used by Boronia brigade to buy two automated external defibrillators, a CPR mannequin and a smoke generator for training.

Since the partnership began in 2000, Victorian IGA stores have donated more than \$2.95 million to CFA through the Community Chest program. ■



PHOTO: KEITH PAKEMAN

EUAN FERGUSON CHIEF OFFICER

I recently participated in a VFBV-sponsored 'mini' open forum, along with Executive Director Operational Training & Volunteerism Lex De Man, VFBV President Hans Van Hammond, VFBV CEO Andrew Ford and VFBV Executive Officer Allan Monti. We met with about 45 volunteers from the north-east at the Tawonga public hall to discuss current issues.

Lex and I gave a snapshot of the significant activity in CFA at the moment. Strategic highlights include: CFA's response to the Jones Inquiry report; working through the issues identified in Professor Rob Joy's report about Fiskville; working through the many actions flowing from our implementation of the 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission report; and working with the Fire Services Commissioner and our emergency service partners on the Fire Services Reform Program.

From the viewpoint of the firefighter on the ground, other achievements include: mobile training props; retrofitting over 650 tankers with crew protection systems; 124 new medium tankers; 10 new heavy pumpers; 10 new heavy (concept) tankers; and 10 specialist vehicles. We've recently commissioned two mobile bushfire education units that are now in action around the state.

Over the past 12 months CFA has work in progress on 92 new fire stations and three district office projects. We are also replacing more than 15,300 vehicle, portable and bag radios. Planning for the Regional Radio Dispatch System project is nearing its final stages.

We have completed – in some cases with the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) – 40 Level 3 incident control centres and 155 divisional command / local command facilities. We are enhancing the capacity and capability of the Victorian Bushfire Information Line and have further refined our system for issuing community warnings. The member Identity Card project has been wound up and is now part of normal business. CFA and DSE have recently commissioned a

new, single approach to fire and emergency incident mapping, called eMAP.

The structural personal protective clothing replacement project has been completed, including the issuing of over 7,100 pairs of bunker boots; and we have issued new station wear to career firefighters. Planning is under way to allocate over 10,000 helmet torches and to extend the station wear uniform across the remainder of CFA.

A huge amount of activity has been under way on the community safety side of our business. Both our winter fire safety and summer bushfire safety programs have been further enhanced and developed. Two important new booklets are *CFA in the Community* and *Landscaping for Bushfire*. Vegetation management officers continue to facilitate the conduct and planning of burning operations by CFA brigades. All CFA members recently received a copy of *Pre-Season Update* and *Members Quick Reference Guide* to assist them with community engagement activities.

So, there's a tremendous amount of work going on. However, I want to reinforce the importance of preparations for the fire season. I've been pleased to participate in a number of very well run group exercises. Practising staging area management, local command and control, radio procedure, tanker tactics, progressive hoselays, the turnover drill, and basic tanker hydraulics and functions is our bread and butter. Know your role and practise it – in all sorts of situations.

Finally, I want to thank you all for your ongoing commitment to CFA and to the community. You do valuable, important work and it's appreciated. I trust that Christmas brings peace, time with friends and family and a time for quiet reflection. Keep up the great work! ■



CHANGING OUR CULTURE STORY SALLY YOUNG

We're sharing the CFA culture survey results across the state and over 30 facilitators have been conducting debrief and action planning sessions with our members – both paid and volunteer.

This work is taking place at all levels of the organisation and we're involving as many members as we can so we can close the gap between our actual and preferred culture.

A number of debrief sessions have been conducted with District Planning Committee members and both the CFA and the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria Boards have been briefed. There have been some innovative ways of communicating the results – the Northern and Western Metropolitan region has even created a movie.

Our Senior Leadership Team has used these results to develop a CFA vision for our culture, including some actions and targets. We want to develop an agile and values-

based organisation where our people are working together, trusting and supportive of others, pursuing a standard of excellence, empowered, encouraged and recognised for their contribution in meeting our mission of protecting lives and property.

Our managers will be accountable for turning the results into local actions by explaining the results to members, facilitating action planning with all teams and reporting progress every three months.

Everyone needs to be involved if we want to improve the way we do things around here. If you haven't been to a session and would like to participate, contact a member of your leadership team (DPC member, operations manager, regional director, human resources manager or line manager).

This is a long-term journey for CFA and we have just started. We will measure our progress in 2013 and urge everyone to get on board to continue building our agile and values-based organisation. ■



PHOTO: KEITH PANENHAM

HEALTH STUDY NEEDS YOUR HELP STORY LEITH HILLARD

Volunteer and career firefighters are invited to sign up for a Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre-funded national health study. The Awake, Smoky and Hot (ASH) project duplicates uncomfortable fireground conditions such as heat and smoke, with firefighters required to perform common fireground tasks such as lifting and dragging.

Brad Aisbett from Deakin University and Sally Ferguson of Central Queensland University are overseeing the project along with CFA's Manager of Research and Development David Nichols. "Firefighting is often hot, dirty work carried out over consecutive days," said Brad. "The labour, discomfort and exhaustion all build on each other and it's an accumulation of stressors that have a physical and cognitive effect.

"Our aim is to study participants in conditions that replicate real-life bushfire environments so that Australian fire agencies can

develop best-practice guidelines and training based on hard data."

Participants live in a controlled environment and undertake three days of physical and decision-making tasks. These range from hand/eye coordination tasks to computer work and driving scenarios.

"We want to work with the depth and breadth of our workforce," said David, "because the ultimate aim is greater health and safety for all our firefighters. This study is in a direct line with safety measures such as the development of minimum skills training and crew protection on trucks. They all have research behind them."

Anyone interested in participating should contact Brad Aisbett on 03 9244 6474 or email brad.aisbett@deakin.edu.au. Members are encouraged to consider seeking medical advice before taking part. ■

Above: The research project aims to help firefighters cope with physical and mental stressors

IN BRIEF

AFAC HEALTH STUDY

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council is running a health study looking at current and former career and volunteer firefighters from across Australia.

Monash University researchers will be given your name, registration number, date of birth, postcode and job history including incident details from agency personnel records. Individuals' details won't be released in the findings.

You can remove your records from this study by completing an opt-out form, available at CFA Online and district offices.

FLIGHT CENTRE DONATION STORY NANCY THOMPSON

Several CFA brigades in the Grampians, south-west, north-east and north-west areas of Victoria are sharing more than \$71,000 thanks to a donation from Flight Centre Foundation. It includes:

- \$32,220 for the Grampians region for 10 automatic external defibrillators and \$6,500 for a hydration trailer to be used at all major fires in Western Victoria.
- \$4,000 for Lockington brigade and \$6,000 for Tongala brigade. Both will use the money towards station renovations.
- \$8,000 for Redesdale brigade to buy a second-hand diesel generator set and shed to support the running of the divisional command centre.

- \$6,000 for brigades in Wangaratta Group and \$3,222 for Bowman-Murrungee brigade to buy additional equipment.
- \$5,200 for Warrnambool brigade for additional breathing apparatus equipment.

Flight Centre Foundation Chairman John Whateley said, "The people of Flight Centre, especially in Victoria, are pleased to be able to provide CFA with much-needed funds to purchase vital equipment. It's truly inspiring how these fire heroes risk their lives to save the lives of others."

CFA would like to thank the Flight Centre Foundation for this generous donation. ■

NATIONAL BLOOD CHALLENGE

STORY JOHN LLOYD

Last June, CFA was approached by Red Cross Blood Service to participate in the 2012 National Emergency Services Blood Challenge – a challenge Chief Officer Euan Ferguson was happy to accept.

The 2012 Challenge recorded the number of blood and plasma donations made by emergency services' personnel between 1 July and 31 August.

On behalf of CFA, I arranged for the distribution of Red Cross publicity material and, with the support of staff from headquarters, Northern and Western Metropolitan region, Grampians region and Geelong brigades, we made an impressive 98 donations.

CFA made the most donations in Victoria, though Ambulance Victoria was the winner in Victoria based on the number of donations per employee/volunteer. Our 2012 Blood Challenge Certificate is proudly displayed in Euan Ferguson's office.

All state and territory emergency services accepted the challenge, and a total of 1,580 donations were made over the two months. This equates to saving 4,740 lives because each donation can help up to three people.

During the challenge, one long-serving CFA volunteer notched up his 500th donation and a member of the Fire and Emergency Management (F&EM) team reached his 100th donation on the last day of August.



PHOTO: LIVIA DE SANCTIS

Left: John Lloyd with Deputy Chief Officer Alen Slijepcevic

The F&EM donors have continued to donate every three months, with some plasma donors donating on a more regular basis.

If you're interested in becoming a donor, contact your local Red Cross donor centre and roll up your sleeve in preparation for next year's Blood Challenge. ■

NEW TRANSPORTABLE RADIO

STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

CFA's new transportable bag radio gives operational members much more flexibility because it doesn't need to be permanently installed in a vehicle and can be easily transferred between vehicles. Importantly, it's installed without needing to drill holes in vehicles and keeps the front seat free for passengers.

In October and November, CFA distributed around 1,700 transportable bag radios. The radio and accessories fit in a compact carry bag with a webbing system to secure the unit and seatbelt-style quick releases. It mounts behind the front seat of any car or ute and comes with a loudspeaker, control head, mains power supply and cables. It also has a GPS unit and a roof-mounted antenna with a magnetic base.

The radio was designed by the Radio Replacement Project team of engineers following extensive consultation with brigade members and CFA field staff and thorough electrical and mechanical testing.

"These radios provide tremendous flexibility in that they can be quickly installed in a car, or unstrapped and set up on a table at an operational point in the field," said Radio Replacement Project Director Doug Booth.

The transportable kit with its Tait mobile radio and hand-held control head connects to the vehicle's power supply through the cigarette lighter. It can also be powered from a standard mains wall socket or a standalone car battery. ■



PHOTO: DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

IN BRIEF

WILDFIRE HELMET TORCHES

Fire brigades are being issued with new torches that attach to wildfire helmets for use in low light conditions on the fireground. Torches will be allocated based on one torch per seat in each bushfire firefighting vehicle including tankers, field command vehicles and slip-ons.



To see a video on installing the radio, go to cfaconnect.net.au/bagradio

ESKDALE'S BIG DAY

STORY MARY O'LEARY



PHOTOS: GRAEME ALDRICH

The official opening of the new Eskdale Fire Station in mid October was enhanced by the presence of beautiful red and white assorted fire vehicles and many important people in sparkling uniforms.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and Operations Manager Paul King were greeted at the station by brigade Captain Stephen Lord and Operations Officer Adrian Gutsche. Paul then welcomed and introduced the guests and thanked all those who played a part in establishing the facility.

Euan told the gathering how pleased he was to be invited to officiate at the opening and how enjoyable it was to take a trip up our beautiful valley. He noted the importance of the work done by our volunteers, often attending fires and placing themselves at risk.

Eskdale brigade has an excellent average response time of six minutes,

has attended fires elsewhere in Victoria and interstate, and assists in other emergencies, including road accidents.

Euan drew the curtain covering the plaque to declare the building open. Visitors inspected the station and had a morning tea prepared by Eskdale Primary School. This was followed by a barbecue, when Euan took the opportunity to present (tongue in cheek) a rakehoe to the brigade.

Local Member of Parliament Bill Tilley ably represented the Victorian Government, which contributed almost \$500,000 to the building fund.

With the sun shining, everyone enjoyed the occasion and discussed what a uniform does for a bloke! ■

Mary O'Leary is a journalist and community advocate in Eskdale

AIRCRAFT IN THE MALLEE FOR HARVEST

STORY LEITH HILLARD

A firebombing helicopter and support aircraft have again begun operations from their Sea Lake airbase following last year's successful trial. This risk-based approach by fire agencies places a crew of five in the heart of the Mallee as harvest kicks off and volunteers hit their busiest time of year.

"The Bell 412 helitanker carries 1,400 litres of water and can refill in 40 seconds," explained Operations Officer Joel Davey. "It can deploy within 15 minutes and really take the steam out of a fire before our ground crews put it out. It's a great insurance policy when the grassfire risk is so high and the harvest machinery is working at all hours."

Last year the helitanker was deployed as far afield as Bendigo, while also responding to many fires closer to home base. It always responds alongside the fixed-wing aircraft which has an air attack supervisor on board overseeing the air operations and playing a vital reconnaissance role.

Both aircraft will remain at Sea Lake until harvest ends in early January, when they will move to Hamilton. ■



Left: From left, Operations Officer Joel Davey, pilot Jonathan Walsh and Operations Officer John Breaks

PHOTO: BILL JOHNSTONE

FOR COMMUNITY AND country

STORIES **DARREN GREVIS-JAMES AND LEITH HILLARD**

They've been described as double the citizens – they're the men and women who serve as reservists in the Australian Defence Force. And in CFA there are numerous staff and volunteers who wear two uniforms – serving both their local community and the nation.



PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) recently invited CFA to see first-hand the job that reservists are doing with the International Stabilisation Force (ISF) – the ADF's contribution to peace and stability in East Timor.

CFA's James Fox, Manager of the Office of the CEO, spent more than a week in East Timor earlier this year and admits it turned around his perception of ADF reservists and the role they perform in serving Australia's international interests.

James joined more than 20 employers from both the public and private sector on the tour, which took them to the capital then to outlying districts where the ADF is currently operating.

"We spent three days in Dili, and the ADF were just fantastic the way they took us around to observe defence members doing their jobs," said James.

"It left me personally with a whole new level of respect for members of the ADF, after I watched their dedication and discipline in a potentially hostile environment, where they have to sometimes contend with a range of various challenges in supporting the United Nations operation."

CFA members can join the ADF as a reservist because their

employment with CFA is protected under commonwealth legislation and is enshrined in the CFA employment agreements.

James firmly believes that there are benefits for the individual that can be transferred to the work of both CFA and the ADF. He said experience in leadership roles and managing small teams is of significant value.

"The cross-organisational skills that are taught and practised include experience in decision-making, conflict resolution, liaison with stakeholders, and an understanding of other cultures," James added. "It also provides an opportunity to expand your life experience."

On the other side of the coin, James said that having an employee as either a member of CFA or the ADF has benefits that are valuable to employers. "This includes employees who develop self-reliance and come back with enhanced skills and development of self-reliance and resilience."

He said both the ADF and CFA see a benefit in more highly-motivated and self-disciplined employees.

On the following pages, *Brigade* magazine spoke to three Army reservists – two CFA volunteers and a CFA staff member. ■

Above: James Fox (left) reunites with CFA volunteer David Muskee, who spent eight months deployed in East Timor

SHERENE KEEPS THINGS MOVING

Sherene Mounier is a community safety officer with CFA and is also a part-time soldier who's been an Army reservist for about 15 years.

In her military life, Sherene is what is colloquially known in the defence force as a 'mover'. Officially, she's a movements clerk in a transport company. Movement control and coordination involves the planning, routing, scheduling and control of personnel and cargo movements.

In her role as a movements soldier, she's served in operations supporting East Timor, the Boxing Day tsunami, the Pope's visit to Australia, and the Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

Last year, Sherene was deployed to the ADF's Middle East Area of Operations following almost 12 months of training and preparation. She was a member of the Joint Movement Coordination Centre that undertakes planning, control and coordination in support of the ADF's requirements and priorities.

It's an intense 24-hour, seven-days-a-week environment according to Sherene. "It's like working in an incident management team in CFA, except that the incident never stops – day or night. In my case it went for four months. There's very little down time, you just keep going," Sherene said.

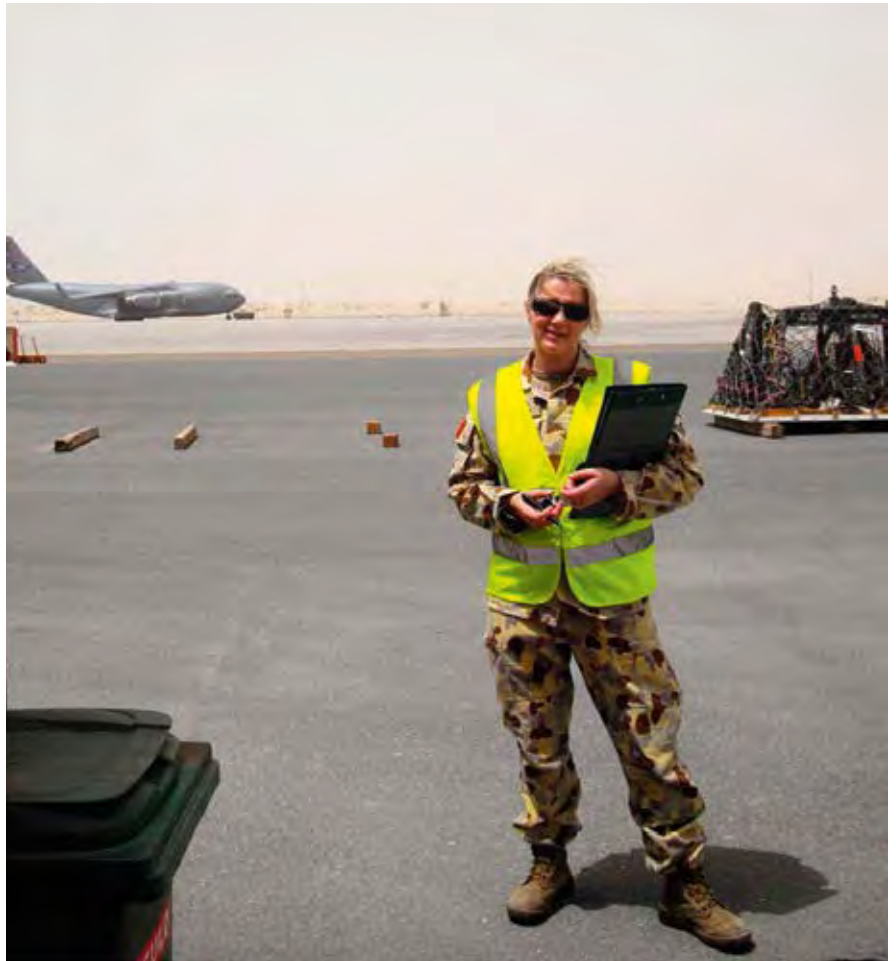
Sherene says that although the broader ADF is a male dominated environment, that's not the case in the military transport world where there tends to be a mix of men and women and personnel from Army, Navy and Air Force.

"So many of my team were female soldiers or officers and I enjoyed the opportunity to work alongside Dutch, Brits and Kiwi soldiers."

Back home Sherene parades with her unit, Joint Movement Control, each week. It primarily consists of reserve personnel based in Melbourne, Puckapunyal and Hobart, and provides constant support in the deployment and redeployment of Defence personnel within Australia and overseas.

Typical tasks include moving general cargo, armoured vehicles and personnel by land, sea and air, and the unit maintains close relations with civilian transport systems and government organisations.

Sherene, who was raised at Waubra near Ballarat, was brought up around CFA. Her father Barry Harrison is captain of Waubra brigade, and husband David Mounier is a station officer at Ballarat City Fire Station. ■



Above: Sherene Mounier at an Army base



Left: Sherene in the Middle East

“WE GET A LOT OF VALUE FROM THE EXPERIENCES THEY GAIN IN THEIR WORK WITH ADF, IN PARTICULAR THEIR OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT”

CFA CHIEF OFFICER AND FORMER ARMY RESERVIST EUAN FERGUSON

MICHAEL'S ALWAYS IN THE THICK OF IT



Sherene Mounier's boss in the Army Reserve is Sergeant Michael Welsh at Joint Movement Control. Michael has also been a member of the Whittlesea brigade since 2007.

He said he joined both organisations because he had a long-held ambition to give something back to the community.

Michael has seen a lot of action both in CFA and the Army. He was the driver on the Whittlesea pumper during the 2009 bushfires and says it tested all the skills he'd learned in CFA and the military.

"There's no doubt my Army training also kicked in that day. The conditions we encountered on Black Saturday were like a battleground – and it required a lot of discipline and cohesion of the crew on our truck," said Michael.

"During the afternoon I was driving our truck along a winding, dangerous stretch of the Yea road near Humevale when we encountered a complete backout as the wind swung around to the south. We couldn't see a thing so we had to stop the truck and just wait it out.

"I didn't panic which was just as well because when things cleared a little we saw there was every chance we might have plunged about 200 feet if we'd run off the road," Michael recalled.

Michael said his job was to make the safety of the crew his first priority. "The fact that we had trained and worked together no doubt helped save us", he said.

"I was exhausted when I came off the fireground the next day. I was relieved at about 7am and was absolutely shattered by the disaster. I went to a staging area to get something to eat and just sat there staring into space until a lady from the Salvation Army came up and offered me some food.

"By 1pm I was back into the job and spent the next month on and off trucks as a crew member and driver."

And he says this is where there are real similarities with the Army. Michael has been deployed to both East Timor and, more recently, Afghanistan.

"Over there you put in 12 to 18-hour days, seven days a week



PHOTO: WARREN MITCHELSON

Above: Michael Welsh in Afghanistan

Left: Michael receives a Unit Citation for Courage award from Chief Officer Euan Ferguson

and the pressure is always on. I was in charge of the Movements Detachment in Kandahar, coordinating the transport of people and logistics in and out of Afghanistan.

"It's a dynamic and ever-changing environment so you have to be adaptable, accept change and deal with it – that's similar to firefighting in CFA.

"Rocket attacks and the threat of improvised explosive devices were common, so that keeps you on your toes. When I was there we lost several Australian soldiers and that makes your family very nervous about your own safety." ■

“RESERVISTS COME TO YOU TRAINED TO USE THEIR INITIATIVE, THEY’RE DISCIPLINED, THEY’RE USED TO PICKING UP NEW SKILLS AND THEY FOLLOW A FINE SET OF VALUES”

CFA CHIEF OFFICER EUAN FERGUSON

ONE IN, ALL IN

It's one in, all in when a family member takes on a 13-month ADF deployment including eight months overseas.

While David Muskee from Dookie brigade was the one to wear the Army uniform, children Ethan, 2, and Keira, 5, managed without dad, wife Andrea kept up full-time work for CFA District 22, and grandmother Carol White kept the family humming on weekdays.

David's deployment included five months living at Puckapunyal with limited access for his family. This was Warrant Officer Muskee's fourth time serving overseas and his second while married. He took a position in middle management in a mixed unit of 47 that included administrators, mechanics and logistics specialists.

"It was our job to look after the 400 members of the Australian Army," said David, "taking care of transport, accommodation, facilities and repairs but also training and discipline and making sure the medics had everything they needed."

David started his army career as a 17-year-old and was getting to the top of his trade stream when, at 39, he moved across to a career in the Department of Corrections. "It's not always easy to get a job outside," he said. "Government organisations might like the military but a lot of organisations don't – they see you as too regimented."

Certainly David's high-level organisational skills served CFA well during the 2006 Whitfield fires when he had a logistics role in incident management.

"CFA recognises frontline army service and, in those fires, my army background was useful because my old army unit was called in to assist. They did what we told them to do and they did it well; they have a lot of skills.

"The military is more rank based and there are no comebacks. It's command style. CFA work is more team based, collaborative and diplomatic. I feel comfortable in both. The army and CFA complement each other."

David came home from East Timor with the CFA goals of building on his incident management experience at level 3 and taking on a training role. "It's very satisfying to see the level they come in at then watching them leave with a new skill set," he said.

He also returned to the challenge of finding his place again in the family. He was a stranger as far as baby Ethan was concerned when he came home on leave mid-deployment. That all turned around when he returned home for good in October. "Ethan wrapped his arms around me and wouldn't let go," said David.

"But it's like learning the whole relationship again," says Andrea. "We had our routines and ways of doing things and now we're all learning to readjust. That's the real impact. There's the financial advantage in the deployment but it's delayed our life as a family. Though, of course, the kids' lives haven't been on hold."

David can only agree. "I've missed things with the kids. Now I'm learning the new rules of the house but also how to talk in a family way. In the military what I say goes, but it's not the way to talk at home.



PHOTO: LETH HILLARD

"I'm finding out all about the kids and what they're up to. I've told them I'll be there for their first day of school. There won't be any more deployments."

Through it all has been the wholehearted support of District 22 and, in particular, Regional Director Alan Davies (called AD by the family).

"It's always family first with AD," said Andrea. "I could tell people in my team about little issues at home then get stuck into my work. It was so busy through the winter months and I would have gone completely crazy without work.

"And Mum was fantastic. We couldn't have done it without Mum."

"CFA did a good job staying in touch with me while I was away," said David. "I would have involved CFA any day if there was a problem at home. I would have gone to a friend first and then to AD." ■

Above: David Muskee with his wife Andrea and children Ethan and Keira

WARBY'S WONDER

STORY GERARD SCHOLTEN

Modern fire stations aren't usually considered things of beauty, but Warburton brigade Captain Tony van Meurs admits he has to force himself to stay away from his brigade's new \$2.6 million fire station, which was officially opened in early September.

"It's beautiful. We are all rapt. It's beyond our expectations," Tony said.

Tony said the new station is a wonderful improvement on the old station where members had to stop traffic just to get their trucks out.

"We've got plenty of room, we've got a drive-through station, we can drive in through the back and we've got plenty of apron at the front. It's all really good," he said.

Tony said a new fire station has been talked about for at least 15 years for this high bushfire risk area.

With a new meeting and training room, office space, breathing apparatus room, workshop and plenty of space for the tanker and pumper, he says it was worth the wait.

"It really helps with motivation of our members, that's for sure, and we've had a good response from the community. Before long we're planning a recruitment drive to get more people involved," Tony said.

The official opening was attended by around 200 people and was a day of celebration for the whole community as well as the brigade's 40 volunteers. ■



PHOTO: JESS HEAD



PHOTO: KEITH PACEHAM

ROSEBUD PUMPED FOR NEW TRUCK

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

Rosebud brigade's incredible fundraising efforts have resulted in the imminent arrival of a new pumper.

The brigade began its fundraising effort at the start of 2009, with a five-year vision to raise just over \$350,000 to build the truck. Remarkably, the brigade raised the funds within three and a half years thanks to several generous donations from the community and local businesses.

The brigade's Third Lieutenant Josh Elliott-Batt said they started the project by putting together two committees – one to organise fundraising and one to research the needs of the brigade and surrounding areas, and the appropriate vehicle body types.

"The team quickly identified the need for another pumper due to the workload of the current Rosebud Pumper 1 – often well outside the immediate area," Josh said.

Josh said the new Rosebud Pumper 2 would increase the brigade's firefighting capability by broadening its coverage along the Southern Peninsula.

"The Mornington Peninsula is one of the busiest tourist areas over summer, which ultimately increases fire risk. This new pumper will boost the brigade's ability to protect lives and property," he said.

Pumper 2 is an Iveco with a 2,000-litre a minute water capacity, pump and roll capacity, along with increased safety features such as ABS, stability and traction control, four wheel disc brakes and an increased weight capacity.

"I would like to acknowledge and thank the Rosebud community that supported us and gave generous donations. We couldn't have done it without them," Josh said. ■

Above: Graeme Jarman, Josh Elliott-Batt, Philip Hill and Joe Allen proudly show off Rosebud's new pumper

IN BRIEF

ECHUCA TURNS 140

To celebrate its 140 years of service to the community, Echuca brigade displayed historic and current firefighting vehicles and equipment in late October. Before the current station was built in 1967, it was common for dances to be held in the old station. Sawdust was put on the floor and the truck was parked outside.

HAMILTON'S FITNESS CHALLENGE

STORY PETER WALL

In July, Hamilton brigade members were set a challenge by brigade member Gavin Wray-McCann – owner of Hamilton Gymnasium – to take part in a six-week fitness program.

The program that Gavin designed aimed to increase the general fitness and strength of members to help them continue to provide an excellent service to the Hamilton community. Gavin conducted this program free of charge as a way of giving back to the brigade.

The support that Gavin has given the brigade by providing this program is a great initiative and one that members are very grateful for. After the six-week course, I'm feeling healthier and fitter.

Explaining why he offered this course to the brigade, Gavin said, "The challenge was not just about physical output, but also about team and morale building and recognition for those individuals who give so much and don't get or expect anything in return.

"Great people do great things and they go unheralded. These are great people."

Around 15 members went to the gym three times a week during the six-week period, with a fitness test carried out in



PHOTO: PETER WALL

the first, third and sixth weeks to track their improvements. Following the program, some members have continued to go to the gym and Gavin has kindly offered a discounted rate to brigade members. ■

Peter Wall is fourth lieutenant with Hamilton brigade

"I COULD NEVER BE A FIREFIGHTER"

STORY SARAH KRUMINS

Having lived through the Ferny Creek bushfires in January 1997, I had become scared stiff of fire. As the summers came and went I would be walking around the house constantly looking for smoke, smelling for smoke, living in constant fear. Some days I would even be in tears when I heard the local brigade's siren.

I remember saying after the 1997 fires that I could never be a firefighter. Then one day a copy of *Firebreak* (our local brigade's publication) arrived in my letterbox asking for auxiliary members. I joined as an auxiliary member willing to make the brave firefighters meals and refreshments.

The more I attended the brigade the more I became hooked. I did the fireground safety course so I could deliver meals to firefighters on the fireground and before I knew it I became operational.

My first operational experience came along when I rocked up to the brigade for training, as I had done for the past few months. The siren went off and I thought they were testing the siren. "Hurry up, get in," everyone was saying, and the next thing I knew we were out the door with lights and sirens and my palms were sweating.

We were turning out to a grass and scrub fire in the national park. It was too late to tell them I couldn't do this and, being a typical woman, the thought crossed my mind that I should have gone to the toilet first.

Everyone was supportive and all the training I'd done was put into action.

That turnout changed my life. It was the point in my life when that arsonist hadn't got the better of me. ■

Sarah Krumins is fifth lieutenant and secretary of Sassafras and Ferny Creek brigade



PHOTO: JOHN SCHAUBLE

IN BRIEF

NEW VEHICLES

After an impressive fundraising effort, Bayswater brigade has bought a new slip-on with the latest CFA-approved design.

Bacchus Marsh recently received a new Scania heavy pumper. A special training package was put together and Chief Officer Euan Ferguson officially handed over the keys for the truck, which was called out to an incident the next morning.

Peterborough brigade First Lieutenant Bill Richmond accepted a new Mitsubishi light tanker for the Minister for Public Transport and Roads Terry Mulder. The light tanker was obtained through the Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program.

YOU'VE EARNED IT



Emergency Memberlink is a key recognition program that thanks members for their significant contribution and dedication to CFA and protecting lives and property.

Through Emergency Memberlink, members can receive discounts and benefits on a wide range of products and services. In excess of 250 offers are now available, with new benefits being added regularly.

Details of the offers can be found in the Emergency Memberlink Guide which is sent out with all new Memberlink Cards and on the Memberlink website www.emergencymemberlink.com.au Be sure to visit the website regularly to keep up to date.

There are a number of ways you can access your Memberlink Benefits. These include:

- **Show your card and save** – discounts and benefits available upon presentation of your Memberlink Card at businesses throughout Victoria, and some nationally.
- **Online Shopping** – goods below RRP delivered state-wide.
- **Purchase Cards** – Safeway/Caltex and Coles Gift Cards available through your Memberlink team at 5% discount.
- **Discount Vouchers** – time limited, special offers updated regularly. Members can download these vouchers from the Memberlink website or call the Memberlink Team.

For anyone without a Memberlink Card, you can call the Memberlink Team on **1800 820 037** or register online.

Members save 5% on pre-purchased Gift Cards.

Cards available include WISH, Coles, Liquorland, Sanity and Rivers.

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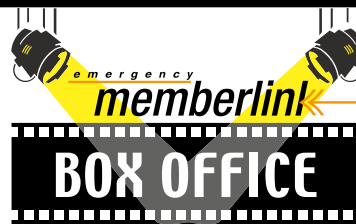
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HIGH-CALIBRE mentors

STORIES LEITH HILLARD

Mentoring is crucial to CFA. Mentors are generous with their knowledge and experience, passing it on through long-term guidance to shape our next generation of leaders. Here are some CFA success stories.

PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD



With a background in Parks Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and now CFA, John Kneebone was the ideal person to assemble an inter-agency team of coaches and mentors within the Incident Management Team Training Project (IMTTP).

He's now one of 18 mentors and coaches for members going through the accreditation process to become Level 3 incident controllers (ICs).

Let's call him Bones, who Deputy Chief Officer John Haynes describes as "a volunteer-friendly incident controller" with 18 Level 3 tours of duty starting in the 2003 Alpine Fires. He spent 10 years as a Parks Victoria ranger along the Murray before becoming an operations manager at DSE.

He managed the north-east recovery following the 2006-07 campaign fires and spent six days working in incident management at the Kilmore Fire Station in 2009.

Bones has flown around the state to join incident management teams. "I mentally prepare before being sent away," he said. "I go into a zone and psych myself up. It means I'm prepared by the time I arrive."

"You learn at every fire with old experienced crews having lots to offer. Someone might come to a meeting with a bright idea and you put that in your box of tricks. You don't realise how much you've learned until you have the chance to pass it on."

"Mentoring is very much a two-way street. One of the drawbacks of incident management teams can be a lack of feedback and I'm keen to improve our giving and receiving of feedback." Bones apparently comes across as calm and

people are comfortable working with him.

"I've learned to walk around the ICC with a bag of lollies," he said. "You find people tucked away and I let them know I'm interested in their work."

"I certainly feel appreciated now. It's a compliment to be asked a lot of questions and I now see that I'm someone people come to for advice."

Bones likes to use humour to cut through grim times. He's been on morning radio so often to give updates that a friend claimed to be sick of waking up to Bones's voice in his bedroom.

Certainly Bones will be able to pass on some valuable insights about dealing with the voice in his head in the aftermath.

"You have to learn to manage the fallout," he said. "I was driving home after a tour listening to talkback radio. Someone called in irate about two bulldozers I'd decided should sit on a road as back-up in case something went wrong with a large backburn near a town. Nothing did go wrong so we didn't use them. I thought it was a sound decision but this person didn't know my entire plan; all he could see were two unused assets. I was aware it was a no-win situation."

"It bothered me and I went over and over that decision but all our decisions are intensely scrutinised. I've gained confidence from that. I don't regret any decision I've made but I forever question if we could have done more."

Bones never listens to talkback after a shift now. "I put on my favourite blues CD and away we go." Another good lesson to pass on. ■

DEVELOPING LEADERS

The Incident Management Team Training Project (IMTTP) was established in response to the findings of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. An interagency coaching and mentoring program is being developed within this project to support those moving up the ranks in incident management roles.

Within this project, a mentor is described as a trusted adviser, guide and advocate over the long term. In contrast, a coach provides support and feedback in a practical situation in the short term such as one shift or over several days.

Mentoring fits into the 'learning-by-doing' model. This recognises that people develop 10 per cent of their skills through courses and reading, 70 per cent through on-the-job experience and 20 per cent is learned from others including coaches and mentors.

Deputy Chief Officer John Haynes is overseeing the IMTTP. "The new generation of our members really wants to have a go," he said. "What legacy do our captains, group officers and DCOs leave if we don't hand on what we know and mentor our younger members as they take over leadership?"

"Mentoring and coaching is now part of the job of everyone in leadership."

DISTRICT 4 PILOT MENTORING PROGRAM

A nine-month pilot mentoring program for District 14 captains and first lieutenants has received rave reviews and pleas for it to continue.

Each mentoring partnership thrived on confidential conversations in person or over the phone and all suggestions were non-binding. The content of those conversations was determined by both participants with no formal requirements from Instructor Kris Wilms and Operations Officer James Dullard who managed the pilot.

Six mentors provided support to less experienced leaders around their broader brigade leadership role. Ray Dickson from Melton brigade was one of those mentors while Captain Jeremy Maries from Mernda brigade was one of the six members being mentored.

RAY – A GOOD LISTENER

Ray Dickson was the captain who took Melton brigade into the complex process of integration and was a brigade officer for 21 years.

“I’ve seen a lot of transition in that time,” he said, “and the population and workload have hugely increased. It took a lot of planning to get members in the mindset for career firefighters to come in, so I guess they asked me to be a mentor because of that experience of leading people through change.”

Ray believes a leader has to have a strong constitution and a thick skin. He describes his leadership style as democratic. “Don’t be above everyone else,” he said.

“While every brigade has its own personality, the issues are the same and they’re 90 per cent about people. You need to work through HR [human resources] issues while planning for the future. I was paired with a fairly new captain of a brigade the same size as Melton and we bounced around a lot of ideas without pre-conceived answers.

“We talked about delegating tasks and I guided him towards the HR chart on dispute resolution. I’ve learned from my mistakes and it’s good to find that someone else can also take on those insights.

“It’s good to chew the fat and listen to different viewpoints before making a decision. I’m probably a better listener than talker so the process suited me.”



PHOTO: WARREN MITCHELSON

CONFIDENCE IS KEY FOR JEREMY

Captain Jeremy Maries has a strong leadership background. He’s a strike team and crew leader and has completed the Darley VFBV Volunteer Leadership Program.

“Yes, I have experience and confidence,” he agreed, “but I thought I could do with some extra assistance. I want to help the brigade grow and prosper and I wanted some reassurance that I was on the right path.

“The beauty of this program was the introduction to someone with huge experience who I wouldn’t meet in the normal run of things. We quickly broke the ice and I almost immediately felt that trust and that bond.”

Jeremy valued the face-to-face meetings (and the pizza that often came with them) and was pleased that his mentor turned up with some of his own brigade issues to discuss.

“We’d weigh the pros and cons and I got an objective point of view. I had the chance to get into his head and understand the knowledge that influenced his decisions. I never came back with his solutions but with integrated solutions.

“I think the main lesson was to trust my own judgement. We’re all elected into these leadership positions for a reason so trust yourself because your brigade trusts you. I’ve got better confidence now to stand up and defend my own work.

“It can be intimidating when there’s a lot of experience in the room, but now I feel able to step up in those distinguished circles.”

Although the pilot program is over, Jeremy believes he will have an ongoing relationship with his mentor. “I’m currently working on a brigade business plan and the priorities are constantly changing,” he said. “My mentor has passed on some fantastic lessons about flexibility and they will stand me and the brigade in good stead.” ■

Above: Jeremy Maries

Left: Ray Dickson

PHOTO: BLAIR DELEMIN



WOMEN AND FIRE MENTORING PROGRAM

PHOTO: JULIE OWENS



The District 4 and 5 Women and Fire mentoring program is reaching the end of its third year. This program encourages the role of women in CFA and provides many committed women with a support network as they work towards their CFA goals.

“Those goals are realistic things like learning to drive the truck or doing breathing apparatus training,” explained mentor and Warrnambool brigade member Adrienne Anson (pictured above right). “We work one-on-one to help women navigate the culture of CFA and access training, while encouraging them to take on leadership roles.

“The benefit of having a mentor is feeling that someone further up the chain is investing in you. Confidence building is a really important aspect: I think the program helps women stand firm in their brigades. A lot of them might be the only woman and this gives them a peer base.”

Invitations to the program are sent out to all new women in brigades, with men and career firefighters also in the mentoring ranks.

The formal part of the program includes each mentee signing a contract to show their commitment, a hands-on day of practical skills at Penshurst, a gathering with guest speakers discussing leadership, a session in an incident control centre, and a Christmas celebration and graduation.

“There’s a real buzz about the ICC session,” said Adrienne. “Women rotate around areas like logistics and air and ground observation and we talk about how they can secure training. A lot of ladies think being in CFA is being on a truck but this helps them realise how many roles there are.”

Kerry Smith from Hawkesdale brigade (on the left of the picture) has been re-energised by Adrienne’s championing. “She’s fab!” Kerry exclaimed. “All the conversations are memorable. She has had so much experience and you can talk to her about anything. She’s had such a huge impact on my life.

“I joined CFA because my hubby and kids were in it and I got catapulted into the secretary/treasurer role. Now I’m really keen on ICC roles and being behind the scenes.

“Being mentored has really got me into a new, busy phase and it’s all about community. It’s a long time since I’ve been this enthused.” ■

MENTORING THROUGH TEWTS

Two years ago, Leading Firefighter Andrew Schulz initiated a series of mentoring tactical exercise without troops (TEWTS) to get District 24 crew and strike team leaders warmed up for the fire season.

“They might not have been deployed in the role for a few years,” he explained, “so we needed skills maintenance so they’re prepared to have people and vehicles under their control. We’ve arranged sessions that had a mix of experienced and inexperienced members with about 30 people at each, and it’s been a chance to share stories in a relaxed setting.”

The sessions begin with a general discussion of fire behaviour, rate of spread and the calculation of slope as well as covering decision-making and conflict resolution. “Then we get a bit more technical,” continued Andrew. “We look at tactics if you have a 10 kilometre an hour fire, for example. It might slow down at a 10:1 ratio when it gets into forest so we talk through those rules of thumb.

“District 24 is fairly diverse in its topography from alpine to flat country and river forests. It’s only natural that brigades from each area would have a different slant on how to combat a fire.”

The sessions then switch from tactical to practical with the fire table lit. “We’ll go through a range of scenarios,” said Andrew, “with the wind speed changing or the place of origin. OK, the truck gets a flat tyre; one of the crew has an asthma attack; you get a red flag warning – what do you do?”

“Experienced members talk about previous fires and there might be three different approaches that will all lead to getting the fire out. It’s not a precise science and it all leads to some great conversations. People are generous and give us the chance to learn from their



PHOTO: DAVID BROWN

Left: Andrew Schulz (centre, in uniform) kicks off the TEWT

mistakes – they might tell us what they did right and wrong in a similar situation.

“My training helps me identify if people are hanging back and we bring them into the conversation. It’s an open forum.”

And it’s popular. The program attracted 30 people in the week before Christmas last year and more members want to attend this year than there are places. ‘Tis the season to be prepared. ■

FIRE BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS MENTORING

Up until 2007 there was no formal fire behaviour analysis (FBAN) training in Victoria. The role is now being developed as part of the Incident Management Team Training Program (IMTTP) and coaching and mentoring are part of the package.

Tim Wells has been mentored in the role since 2008 and, in turn, became a coach in 2011. With a background as a leading firefighter, Tim had his first encounter with FBANs in 2002-03 as a ground observer reporting to people making detailed incident predictions.

“I saw that they really understood fire,” said Tim. “My interest progressed on the back of a lot of conversations, then I worked on reconstructing the spread of the Black Saturday fires. That’s where the FBAN role really clicked for me. We looked in detail at spotting and atmospheric conditions and theory and practice really gelled.”

There are now about 30 active Victorian FBANs from CFA, DSE, Vic Forests and Parks Victoria who work closely with meteorologists.

“FBANs are activated before a fire starts,” he explained. “We look ahead and assess potential fire behaviour for the next week and then look in more detail for the next day or two.

“I think what gets me in is that there are few black and white answers. You can’t just do a course and pick it up. There are so many intangibles in the role. We talk about the art and science of fire behaviour analysis. It takes rational analysis but also intuition. But then some of it is counterintuitive!

“There was a last wag in the tail of the 2009 fire season and I had an FBAN mentor from Noojee. Fire had flared up near Noojee, burning across the slope into the wind which was unusual. We didn’t have a predictive rule to follow but my mentor used his experience and local knowledge to modify some rules of thumb. It also helped that he’d worked through lots of scenarios considering things like long-term effects of the drought and recent timber harvesting.”



PHOTO: LEITH HILLIARD

The informed depth of his response made a striking impression on Tim but also on DSE Chief Fire Officer Ewan Waller. “In answer to the question, ‘How confident are you?’ my mentor pointed to the map and said, ‘That’s my house and I’m not worried,’ recalled Tim. “It was definitive. It’s easy to bamboozle people but his information was simple, not simplistic. That’s the challenge.” ■

MENTORING ALONG THE KOKODA TRACK

It’s a hard road to qualify as a career firefighter.

Two young officers from the Benalla Group, who have applied for the career stream, set themselves a parallel challenge when they accompanied District 23 Operations Manager Stewart ‘Sooty’ Kreltshheim along the Kokoda Track this year.

Sooty’s mentoring through seven challenging days and nights offered Ben Cook and Kyle McCarthy comparable lessons in CFA service.

“It all related,” said Ben. “A lot of soldiers volunteered to go. We had a service at the main battle site, Isurava Memorial, which was really special. The words ‘courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice’ are engraved there and those words all apply to the religion of CFA.

“I wanted to learn more about the history and Sooty passed on what he had learned and also talked about Black Saturday. We had exposure to his leadership qualities but he also talked about war leadership on the ground versus the High Command back at home. He’d point out good and bad decisions made along the way.

“You could bond with him easily,” said Kyle, “because he’s a leader from something meaningful in your lives back home. He’d have a one-on-one chat and help people along if morale was low.”

Sooty got as much out of the experience as his track companions, which included one of his own children. “It’s the opportunity to influence these kids,” he said, “and interact with the magnificent people of Papua New Guinea.



Left: Kyle, Ben and Stewart at the Isurava Memorial

“I try to link the stories of the track back to everyday life. The noise of the world tunes out and it lets you into a deeper place to reflect. The times we sit down along the way and stategise together are really meaningful.

“They say that you either take something away from the track or you leave something behind. I’d say we’ve taken away a bond and we’ll be lifelong friends now.”

And how did the track change Ben and Kyle? “You realise what can be achieved if you set your mind to it,” said Kyle. “It gave us a huge appreciation of what the soldiers did for us.” ■

NEW LOCAL COMMAND CENTRE

STORY **DARREN GREVIS-JAMES**

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson officially opened the new Bacchus Marsh Group headquarters and local command centre at the Moorabool Community Civic Centre at Hallett's Way, Darley, in late August.

CFA members from Bacchus Marsh, Balliang, Coimadai, Myrniong, Parwan and Rowsley brigades, together with representatives from the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria and the State Emergency Service, turned out to the opening and inspected the new facility.

Bacchus Marsh Group Officer Gerry Lavery said, "It is great that we now have a group headquarters and the facilities that enable the group to run incidents more effectively".

Gerry thanked the CFA Grampians Regional Director Don Kelly, District 15 Operations Manager Geoffrey Gray and District 14 Operations Officer John Anderson for their assistance and commitment that enabled the project to go ahead.

The new centre has improved training and meeting facilities, which will also be well used when managing incidents.

Gerry said that as a result of the project operational personnel from CFA and other emergency response agencies have the resources required to manage an incident in a dedicated area, eliminating external disruptions. "The centre can also be made available for other emergency services to use during incidents," Gerry said.

The new facility, with access to parking and a floor area of 140 square metres, is an effective area for training activities. The new location has improved work spaces for both operational and administrative support to deliver better service and support to brigades and the community. ■



PHOTO: DARREN GREVIS-JAMES



Left: Chief Officer Euan Ferguson at the opening with Bacchus Marsh Group Officer Gerry Lavery

PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMUN

BRIGADES SUPPORT MOTOGP

STORY **SCOTT HAMILTON**

In late October, CFA crews converged on the Phillip Island Grand Prix Circuit to provide fire protection and suppression for the 2012 Air Asia Motorcycle Grand Prix.

A highlight of the weekend for the crews was a visit by Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and his wife Kristin. They were given a tour of the event and shown the hazards that we contend with. The Chief was impressed and surprised by the size and complexity of the risk that CFA faces during the event.

This year's MotoGP was the biggest ever with record crowds each day.

CFA event commander was Operations Officer Peter Lucas, supported each day by another operations officer, two senior station officers and the Bass Coast group officer.

To provide protection for the event, CFA operated three fire stations on site. Two outfield stations were equipped with Lang Lang's 3.4C tanker and Dandenong's 2.4C tanker, and an infield site had District 8's spare Type 3 heavy pumper and the Patterson River mobile command vehicle.

An important and often unnoticed part of our operations at MotoGP is providing daily fire safety audits.

Brigades with members at the event included Baxter, Boneo, Corinella, Cranbourne, Dalyston, Frankston, Koo Wee Rup, Lang Lang,



PHOTO: RICHARD OWEN

Left: Crews attending on one of the days (from left): Sue Jenner, Mark O'Callaghan, Kathryn Sloan, Jason Boezalt, Caleb Ratten, Scott Edwards and David Milnes

Patterson River, Pearcedale, Sebastopol, Skye, Springvale, Wangaratta and Wonthaggi.

The District 8 major events committee would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the Phillip Island, San Remo and broader Bass Coast Group for their support of the MotoGP.

The MotoGP went off without a hitch and CFA responded to only a couple of small events during the three days and a number of campground fires. ■

FRAN RECEIVES TOP AWARD

STORY NAN OATES

Panton Hill brigade had a lot to celebrate at a farewell dinner in mid July for two of its long-term members, Fran and Frank Patterson.

The first surprise for most of the 200 friends and CFA members present was when Fran Patterson was awarded CFA's Outstanding Service Medal. At the time, she was only the third recipient of this award.

Presented by Lex De Man, Executive Director Operational Training and Volunteerism, Fran was recognised for almost 40 years service to Panton Hill brigade and to the Lower Yarra Group, and more recently the Nillumbik Group, as both secretary and treasurer.

In addition, for many years Fran singlehandedly ran the Lower Yarra sub-base radio from her home. She also stayed in contact with the families of the five Panton Hill volunteers who died on Ash Wednesday and has worked very hard to keep their memories alive.

The second surprise was Fran and Frank being awarded life membership to the brigade. Frank has been a member for more than 35 years and the long-term communications officer.

Fortunately, Fran and Frank are not moving too far away but they will be greatly missed. For a couple whose priority has always been their local community and their local fire brigade, the evening was a fitting tribute. ■



PHOTO: JEAN PATTERSON

MILDURA OPENS ITS DOORS

More than 100 guests, members and their families celebrated a significant historical milestone for Mildura in late October, when CFA officially opened the new Mildura Fire Station and district office. The ceremony followed CFA tradition, with a march from the old station on Orange Avenue to the new station on San Mateo Avenue, led by the Mildura Pipe Band.

The station was officially opened by Member of Parliament for Mildura Peter Crisp, supported by Mildura Rural City Council Mayor John Arnold, District 18 Operations Officer Ron Shiner and First Lieutenant Peter Bishop.

A thought expressed during the day was that the brigade reflects the City of Mildura in many ways. The isolation has brought about a necessary independence and resilience and both the brigade and city are rich in culture and diversity.

The station and district office cover an area of 4,500 square metres, including shedding and storage rooms. It also has a training and meeting room, technical rope

STORY ADAM YOUNG AND AMY SCHILDBERGER

rescue training platform, accommodation for up to eight people, turnout and standby rooms, five engine bays and a large station yard for training and truck maintenance.

"The new fire station and District 18 office will allow CFA to deliver a more comprehensive level of direct and timely support to the surrounding volunteer brigades, as well as being able to offer the community specific information, guidance and fire safety related services," said Ron

"The building will also provide a much-needed home for the Sunraysia Group and double as a facility that can be used in local incident management."

Service medals were also presented to brigade members by CFA Board member Paul Denham, and national medals and clasps were presented to Ron Shiner and Senior Station Officer Malcolm Hayes. ■

To see more images and video go to cfaconnect.net.au/mildurastation



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM



PATRICK O'BRIEN
LODDON MALLEE
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Recent experiences at three Loddon Mallee region (LMR) leadership courses have led me to reflect both on the subject of leadership in CFA and, in general, the calibre of members we have.

I am routinely inspired and motivated by all the participants in our various LMR teamwork and leadership courses. The range of skills and life experiences of our volunteers and staff is extraordinarily broad, valuable and always instructive.

These courses have taught me that the leader, in any circumstance, really has two principal responsibilities: to achieve the mission (in operational situations) or objective (in day-to-day situations), and to look after the wellbeing of the team.

The mission shouldn't be achieved at the expense of the team. In a very few cases, probably confined to an armed conflict situation, the leader might have to ask the team, or some of its members, to be prepared to sacrifice themselves in order to achieve the mission. For us in CFA that situation should never arise. Anyway, from a simple self-interest perspective, it's not very smart for the leader to place at risk the means by which the mission is going to be achieved. Put simply, no team, no mission achievement (either current or future).

In terms of the leader's responsibility to look after the team, the leader's actions, or inaction, shouldn't place at risk aspects of the team's wellbeing, such as its goodwill, self-respect, mental and physical health, cohesion, opportunity for self-fulfilment, growth, and the contribution of individual members. Without constant attention, it's easy to become so mission focused that the team slips out of focus and starts to be taken for granted.

I strongly believe that two related characteristics of a good leader are the capacity for introspection and reflection. When talking introspection, I mean in the sense of our ability to be self-aware, to see ourselves as others might. Reflection involves the ability to understand and learn from our experiences. Good leaders observe their effect on the team and adjust their behaviour as required.

During an interview, I recently heard Reverend Tim Costello offer the following profound insight: "Relationships and living out our values are what make us profoundly happy in life."

A great leader is going to pay as much attention to the wellbeing of the team as to achieving the mission. Both must be informed by CFA's Fire Service Star Virtues which are the values underpinning our CFA culture. ■



GRAEME ARMSTRONG
EASTERN METROPOLITAN
ACTING REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Eastern Metropolitan region staff and volunteers have been busily undertaking preparedness and readiness activities for the upcoming bushfire season.

However, we're also continuing to emphasise to the community that CFA is an all-hazards and all-year emergency organisation. This is especially true in the more urbanised parts of the region, where structural fires, hazardous materials and road rescue incidents are the norm.

The priority for community programs leading into this bushfire season is to ensure local requirements are being met and supported. The region has approached our brigades with a clean sheet of paper and a host of supporting programs and tools to ensure the best fit can be achieved based on brigade capacity, availability of support, and what suits the local community. Where brigades are involved in major community events, the region will also be offering support and assistance as needed.

The number of brigades requesting to be a part of CFA Sunday has grown significantly since last year and, at the time of writing, 28 brigades in our region have indicated their desire to officially take part in this important event.

Following on from the CFA culture survey earlier this year, the region is planning to run a desired culture workshop, which will be planned and facilitated by a cadre of staff and volunteers.

Region staff and volunteers have also been involved in three initiatives from the Fire Services Commissioner's office. The Dandenong Ranges Landscape Bushfire Strategy – Pilot Project has a large footprint involving the whole of the Dandenong Ranges and eastwards beyond Gembrook and well into Southern Metropolitan region. A number of regional and joint regional meetings and collaborative activities have occurred to ensure a unified CFA approach to the desired outcomes of this pilot project.

The Community Fire Refuge Pilot has identified three primary school locations to develop and trial the new refuge standards in conjunction with the local community. The locations are Millgrove and East Warburton in the Upper Yarra Valley and Ferny Creek in the Dandenong Ranges. There are ongoing community meetings to develop models of refuge readiness and activation should the need occur during a major bushfire.

From a regional perspective the Sirens Pilot Project mostly involves the existing CFA sirens in the Dandenong Ranges being set up so that they can be used for community alerting purposes. A significant brigade and community awareness and education program is being established as the proposed operating date for this project is mid December. ■



BOB BARRY
BARWON SOUTH WEST
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

"A leader with vision has a clear, vivid picture of where to go, as well as a firm grasp on what success looks like and how to achieve it. But it's not enough to have a vision; leaders must also share it and act upon it." Jack Welch, former Chairman and CEO of General Electric

Leadership is very important across the Barwon South West region and we have been looking at how we can develop our future leaders.

This has led us to look at the role of the District Planning Committee (DPC) now and into the future. There are some great opportunities for chairs and members and we want to look at how we can help them become future leaders in the region.

One of the ideas we're exploring at the moment is whether it should continue as a planning committee, become a leadership group or move into the future encompassing both aspects.

We have also discussed the possibility of including the DPC chairs in our Regional Leadership Team as active members and plan to make this happen in the near future following consultation with key stakeholders.

I see this as an opportunity to give key volunteers insight into the leadership and management of the region. Extending this knowledge into the region is something that will only enhance the way we work together performing our jobs to the best of our ability, whether staff or volunteers.

They will have first-hand access to information about regional and statewide issues, management procedures and input into the management of the region. The involvement of key volunteers requires a high level of solidarity as they will have access to confidential issues.

Something that should not be underestimated is the opportunity to have a greater voice and ability to represent brigade members at all levels. It will give our volunteer leaders a greater voice.

The members will not just observe the Regional Leadership Team but will be given specific tasks such as developing and maintaining the Barwon South West Multi Year Plan and our Fire Operations Infrastructure Plan

Further to this, I want to revisit and further develop our Regional Leadership Team charter, values and behaviours that are put together by and applicable to all managers and the DPC chairs.

These changes will all be undertaken in consultation with DPC members. I plan to talk to each of them about how they see their role evolving when it comes to planning and leadership. ■



MARK POTTER
GIPPSLAND REGIONAL
DIRECTOR

This is my first column as the Regional Director appointed to Gippsland. Since Chief Officer Euan Ferguson announced my appointment, I've received many messages of congratulations and I thank you all for this expression of support.

Over the next 12 months I plan to meet and chat with as many of our members as possible. I've already attended brigade functions including the opening of the Tinamba Fire Station and dinners at Inverloch, Traralgon, Morwell and Yarram. I enjoy talking directly with our members and gaining feedback and ideas about where CFA should be focusing in the future.

At the time of writing this column, Gippsland had already experienced a number of bushfires with one resulting in the issuing of an emergency warning to the community of Gypsy Point. This is a sign that the bushfire season is fast approaching and has already arrived in some parts of Gippsland.

I encourage all brigades and groups to check their preparedness levels for bushfires if they haven't already done so. When you have completed this, get out into your communities and talk to your neighbours and community members about what they need to do.

A key message to keep delivering is that, while it's unlikely that we will see Black Saturday-type conditions, history shows that in an average bushfire season we still lose houses and, on some occasions, lives.

As I travel around Gippsland, I'm always impressed by the contribution that CFA members make to the community – whether it's the captain at Jack River talking to ABC radio about an upcoming community event, training for new appliances such as those at Traralgon, Moe and Warragul, or Gippsland volunteers who have served diligently for long periods of time. I was delighted to present CFA honorary life memberships to two volunteers at Tinamba recently.

CFA is an organisation that allows us to contribute to the future by ensuring that our communities are as safe as they can be. The challenge for us all is that we tend to dwell on the negatives.

Step back and have a look at what we've achieved in the past. Whether it is at brigade, group, district or region level, there's always lots of evidence available that shows how good a job we are doing.

Keep up the great work and I look forward to talking with as many of you as possible in the near future. ■

Twitter – [gipps_potzii](#)



PETER SCHMIDT
SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

In this issue's column, I wish to reflect on the growth challenges facing Southern Metropolitan region and the opportunities they present us. The Regional Management Team has for some time been working on the development of its infrastructure strategy and planning materials to best position District 8 in what remains one of Melbourne's fastest-growing areas.

This process has included the development of Operations Infrastructure Plans by Municipality and the instigation of several major building projects. This includes projects either completed or underway such as the relocation of the regional office/emergency management complex, and new fire stations or major renovations at: Wonthaggi, Glen Alvie, Tynong, Heath Hill, Pakenham, Berwick, Springvale, Carrum Downs, Dandenong, Cape Woolamai, Bass, and Blairgowrie. This list of projects is by far the most comprehensive and largest investment in Southern Metro region's history.

The associated planning not only takes into consideration the growth challenges, but also a critical age replacement and previous government announcements in terms of growth boundaries, road network changes, demographic change and population growth.

Furthermore, we are grappling with the enormous challenges of the transient population relating to our tourist areas – in particular the Mornington Peninsula and Bass Coast including Phillip Island. Statistics tell us there are more than four million visitors a year to the Mornington Peninsula, of which approximately 1.2 million holiday in the vicinity over the summer period – thus increasing our risk exposure exponentially. We look forward to working with our brigades and key stakeholders including other government and emergency service agencies and municipalities, to ensure we partner with them and take an interoperable approach to service delivery.

I wish to also take this opportunity as we lead into the summer Fire Danger Period to remind all members that your safety comes first. Remember you are our most important asset when it comes to protecting Victorians, so please look after your health and well-being to ensure we have the strongest team this coming fire season.

It's important that we get our basics right when it comes to being prepared so ensure you use the training exercises that are available to you. To achieve that this year, we have provided several group practical training exercises leading up to the fire season to enhance risk awareness and further build our team approach to protecting lives and property.

I would like to wish all members and their families a safe, happy festive season and all the very best for 2013. ■



GREG ESNOUF
NORTHERN AND WESTERN
METROPOLITAN REGIONAL DIRECTOR

As the wounds slowly heal from the tragic events of Black Saturday and we continue to rebuild, it's fitting that some of the key players from that period are receiving some well-earned recognition.

Recently, both Whittlesea and Arthurs Creek/Strathewen brigades were presented with the Chief Officer's Unit Citation for Courage and their captains at the time, Ken Williamson and David McGahy, received individual Chief Officer's Commendations for Courage. Congratulations to both brigades.

I would also like to congratulate members of Werribee and Wyndham Vale brigades who recently competed in the World Rescue Challenge. While they didn't gain a place in the event, they should be proud to have represented Australia in this competition.

The Northern and Western Metropolitan region (NWMR) continues to build partnerships with other emergency services. The Regional Leadership Teams of CFA and MFB recently began meeting regularly to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences, and to develop strategies to better address common challenges found by both fire services across our shared communities.

The multi-agency Regional Control Team continues to develop an effective cross-agency forum to ensure more integrated readiness and response to incidents. Also, as the new Municipal Fire Management Committees (formed under Integrated Fire Management Planning) start to find their feet, there's an opportunity to deliver more effective fire management strategies across all land tenures through the cooperative efforts of all agencies and organisations.

As well as being CFA's fastest-growing region, contributing 40 per cent to CFA's growth over the last 10 years, NWMR has a large increase in new and emerging communities in the region, and will face more complex challenges to meet the operational, educational and communities' needs. Thirty per cent of NWMR is culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), which is above the Victorian average of 23.7 per cent and considerably higher than the Australian average of 22.2 per cent.

In response to this challenge, the region recently completed a project to scope and identify current gaps in community engagement, corporate understanding, volunteering, and the support to and from the CALD communities in NWMR. The project provided tangible outcomes in understanding the cultural demographics within the region's boundaries, and identifying emerging trends within these populations.

Consultations were undertaken with a number of key stakeholders, which revealed a number of significant outcomes, potential partnerships and future directions for NWMR to undertake when engaging with CALD communities. The region is actively working to progress these initiatives.

Brigades continue to prepare for another unknown bushfire season with a lot of activity recently with group exercises and pre-season briefings, as well as IMT exercises to test the evolving command and control arrangements. ■



DON KELLY
GRAMPIANS REGIONAL DIRECTOR

As we move further into the fire season in the Grampians region, I encourage every brigade to focus on safety as a priority when preparing for the months ahead.

Working in a team environment means that we all have a responsibility for not only our own safety but also that of our colleagues, particularly while operating on the fireground.

With that in mind, I encourage brigades to prepare and frequently practise the burnover drill so that, if the risk is imminent, the appropriate action of your crews will be swift and decisive. Along with this you should also drill Red Flag warnings and Mayday calls.

Another fireground risk is hazardous trees. These pose a real threat to firefighters, so all crew members need to look up, evaluate and take action to avoid this potential risk.

Crew welfare is just as important as safety and water plays a critical role. You need to ensure that there's sufficient drinking water on the truck, and keep an eye on your colleagues for any signs of heat stress, heat stroke or dehydration. Hygiene is another important aspect of operations to avoid illness. Welfare plans should include access to first aid, hand washing and toilet facilities at filling points.

I encourage brigades to get out their copy of the Fire and Emergency Management checklists and the Field Guide as a starting point. Make sure all members are familiar with the procedures.

Division Commanders and other senior leaders should be familiar with the *Victorian Fire Agency Bushfire Handbook*, which summarises the operational management structures and systems used by the Fire Services Commissioner, State Control Centre, CFA, Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade for bushfire preparedness and response in Victoria.

Off duty, all CFA members need to be mindful of local conditions. Grass is still being cut in the south eastern end of the region while harvesting is well underway in the Wimmera. Check your machinery's condition to reduce any potential risk due to overheating or sparks that could start a fire.

Finally, I encourage all CFA members to assist their communities wherever they can by giving them advice on any matters about the Fire Danger Period, Total Fire Ban days, the restrictions in place for burn-offs and local council by-laws. If you haven't done so already, get a copy of the latest version of the *Can I or can't I?* brochure published earlier this year, which is available at cfa.vic.gov.au. ■



ALAN DAVIES
HUME REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Over recent months, there has been a steady stream of feedback from members about the process adopted by Hume region relating to the accuracy of the Brigade Operational Skills Profile. This is the document that the operations officer or operations manager discusses with a Brigade Management Team during the various inspection processes.

The intent of this document is to:

- reach an agreed understanding of the availability of members to undertake their brigade duties focusing on daytime, evening and weekend availability
- reach an agreed understanding of the training needs of the brigade, primarily against the core competencies of the brigade's classification and those members available to respond
- gain an understanding of the brigade's capacity for training in order to acquire specific skills and maintain that skill base, and assess what direct support is required from CFA to acquire the new competencies.

All the above provide fundamental information about the capacity and capability of the brigade, along with an assessment of support requirements. The Chief Officer and ultimately CFA's Board, receive annual efficiency reports about each brigade.

The Regional Leadership Team and regional training is committed to ensuring our operational staff engage in a timely and high-quality discussion with the brigade, with an end product that will provide a realistic training-needs analysis against the core competency requirements for the risk classification of a brigade.

This detail will be given to a brigade within six weeks of the inspection date.

The compilation of the draft annual Hume Region Training Plan will be completed in February 2013 for implementation the following financial year.

The identified members within the analysis will receive an invitation to nominate for specific courses when the Hume Training Plan has been posted on TRAIN, accessible on Brigades Online.

Pre-course preparation will be forwarded four weeks before the start of the course. Course results will be forwarded to the participating member via letter from the training manager five weeks from the date of the course.

Results will be loaded on to CFA's TRAIN system a week after the letter of advice to the individual on the course.

The training-needs analysis will give the name of the brigade member, the required competency and the pathway to achieve the competency. The objective is to provide the brigade with the best opportunity to meet crew-based competencies. ■

ALEXANDRA TRAINS WITH SES

STORY **DANNY READE**

Volunteers from the Alexandra State Emergency Service (SES), Alexandra Urban Fire Brigade and Thornton brigade recently carried out a joint training exercise at the Alexandra emergency services facility in early September.

One exercise simulated a road accident rescue involving a car fire with a person trapped, and a second involved burning gas from damaged gas cylinders. Realism was added by using the Wangaratta training ground gas trailer.

Having volunteers from both emergency services work together in a controlled situation helps them be well prepared when they are called upon to assist the community at actual incidents.

We have attended collisions in the past where the SES had to cut away the car roof and doors to extricate the injured occupants. We have also had to cool down leaking gas bottles that were at risk of igniting, so it's important that we are well trained to deal with these situations.

As part of the training, CFA volunteers used the SES cutters and spreaders commonly referred to as Jaws of Life. SES volunteers were then able to experience using a fog spray of water to walk up to flaming gas bottles to disconnect the gas.

Many of the SES volunteers commented on how beneficial these training exercises are and how both organisations have always worked well together. ■

Danny Reade is the captain of Alexandra Urban brigade



PHOTO: JOHN ROGERS

EMERGENCY AT BUSY SHOPPING CENTRE

STORY **GERARD SCHOLTEN**

Sunday morning shoppers at Knox City Shopping Centre in early September would have been forgiven for thinking a major disaster was unfolding.

Multiple fire trucks, 25 firefighters in breathing apparatus (BA) and 30 seemingly-injured cinemagoers filled the eastern edge of the shopping complex.

A closer look, however, revealed that emergency services were simulating a shop fire that had spread toxic smoke into the adjoining cinema complex, as part of a major multi-agency training exercise.

CFA Knox Group Officer Ian Atherton said it was a perfect opportunity for emergency services to test a likely scenario.

"Knox City Shopping Centre is obviously one of the biggest risks in the Knox district. So something like this, where we have to go through a search, rescue and extraction phase, is a real possibility," Ian said.

The scenario involved a fire in a ground floor shop, with smoke spreading to

an upstairs cinema where 50 people were watching a film.

Volunteer members from all brigades in the Knox Group were able to test their firefighting skills using BA, as well as incident management skills. While crews fought the blaze below, firefighters in BA entered the cinema and looked for people overcome by smoke.

"We've got eight useable cinemas and it's completely dark, so it's a fantastic venue for BA crews to do search and rescue," said Ian.

The exercise also provided an outstanding chance to test and strengthen links between other agencies, including Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Knox City Council and Knox City Shopping Centre management.

Thanks to the Salvation Army for catering the exercise, Frankston brigade for providing BA support and Yellingbo brigade for supplying its specialist rehabilitation and BA units. ■



PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMINA



TEAMWORK COURSES GO STATEWIDE

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Courses developed 16 years ago in Loddon Mallee Region by Regional Director Pat O'Brien are now available to members statewide as part of a pilot.

The residential courses have been tried, tested and raved about by hundreds of members who've attended the Hattah campus near the South Australian border. Training provider Canoe Images is now also operating a campus in Blampied near Daylesford, making the courses accessible to more people.

Anyone who's stayed at the new venue would agree that 'Glampied' is a more accurate description of camp conditions, because permanent tents offer a glamorous camping or 'glamping' experience.

The Operational Training & Volunteerism (OT&V) team is piloting a general teamwork course, as well as Stepping Stones – a course designed specifically for women. Both courses offer two and a half days of challenging team-building fun with insight into thinking and learning styles.

Executive Manager Training Development James Stitz from OT&V attended the teamwork course with close colleagues. "The courses offer great benefit to intact teams but they're also open to individuals from different regions," he said. "It's learning through seeing and doing with skills provided in a non-threatening way. People have their confidence boosted by tapping into their own skills to move their entire team forward. Collective struggle and success is a very bonding experience."

Contact your district headquarters to find out more. ■



NEW CHAINSAW TRAINING FOR HUME STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

PHOTOS: SANDRA O'CONNOR



The 2009 fires left a trail of fallen trees and branches across roads and tracks in the fire areas. The sheer scale of fallen material hampered brigades' firefighting efforts and their ability to give immediate assistance to fire-affected communities.

The morning of 8 February 2009 echoed with the sound of chainsaws across the hills of District 12, as CFA crews cut their way into fire-affected towns.

It was clear to Hume region Bushfire Instructor Tony Scicluna on that day that CFA needed more chainsaw operators, and he's been the driving force to get a chainsaw training course registered with CFA.

CFA acknowledged the value of chainsaw use and registered the chainsaw cross-cut competency course in winter 2012. Tony started training in spring. Initially, he plans to train around 100 members a year in District 12, but next year will speak to bushfire instructors across the state to assess CFA's chainsaw capability, which is likely to lead to more chainsaw cross-cut training.

"Chainsaws are an integral part of fighting bushfires," said Tony, who used to train chainsaw operators when he worked for the Department of Sustainability and Environment. "The use of chainsaws also extends to our support of the State Emergency Service during storms and floods and dealing with car accidents and other emergencies.

"Chainsaws, in the hands of good operators, can make our job safer, provide access to incidents and speed up blacking out operations.

"Chainsaw cross-cutting is a high-risk activity often undertaken in tough conditions and it should only be done by properly-trained people.

"I've been a bushfire firefighter for 30 years and I'm passionate about the correct use of chainsaws and skilling up our CFA crews in using them during bushfires." ■

DISTRICT 6 MOBILISES STORY BRIAN BRADY

At the end of September, 57 out of 60 brigades in District 6 jumped in their trucks for a large training exercise.

Normally the six groups in District 6 would conduct their own exercises on different days, but Acting Operations Manager Nigel Parsons thought that mobilising the whole district in one morning would be a great way to test the planning, logistics and operations functions of the district and its command and control capabilities at the one time.

In all, there were 57 trucks, 10 strike team leader vehicles, two headquarters brigade catering trailers, and four local command facilities involved in three exercises.

In the first-aid exercise, crews left their trucks and walked along a track with the equipment they'd need to carry out the construction of a rakehoe trail. A member of the crew was then advised they had been bitten by a snake. The crew had to treat the snake bite victim using correct first-aid procedures, with the contents available in the first-aid kits.

The safety and survival exercise consisted of protecting the crew and truck with fog nozzles from an approaching bushfire in an entrapment situation. This procedure is practised in District 6 because some trucks have not yet been fitted with the crew protection spray system (CPSS), and it's worth learning this method as a backup in case of a failure of the CPSS.

The hazmat exercise was a 'talk through' scenario where crews were refreshed on the information contained on hazmat placards on trucks, freight containers, rail wagons and drums. They were briefed on how to interpret this information using the yellow windscreen hazmat scale sticker on their trucks



PHOTOS: BRIAN BRADY

and to decide what actions they should take using *Dangerous Goods – Initial Emergency Response Guide*. Members were also made aware of the hazmat resources available to support them.

The day went well thanks to the cooperation of brigades, groups, District 6 operations staff and the bushfire and structural instructors of Districts 6 and 7. ■

KNOX COMMUNITY MEETS EMERGENCY SERVICES STORY LYNNE SMITH

Intermittent rain on a Sunday in early October didn't dampen the spirits of the hundreds of visitors to the Knox Community Safety Expo.

From late morning, crowds were entertained by the Victoria Police Show Band, emergency services vehicles of all shapes and sizes, State Emergency Service (SES) cutting up a vehicle and a variety of kids' activities.

Constable T Bear and SES mascot Paddy Platypus mingled with the crowd, delighting both kids and their parents by giving out handshakes and high fives. There may also be some video footage of a CFA deputy group officer dancing with Paddy!

CFA was represented by Knox Group brigades Scoreby, Upper Ferntree Gully, The Basin, Ferntree Gully and Boronia. Their hard-working volunteers promoted fire safety to the community and entertained the children.

CFA's fleet was showcased by the Scoresby tanker, Upper Ferntree Gully slip-on, Ferntree Gully big fill and Boronia pumper tanker and pumper. All the vehicles were keenly investigated by the public.

The event has doubled in size since last year and will build into a major event in the Community Safety Month calendar in coming years thanks to the efforts of Victoria Police, CFA, SES, Knox City Council and the generous help and support of Knox City management.

If you missed this great day out this year, put it in your diary for next October! ■

*Lynne Smith is deputy group officer of Knox Group
To see more images go to cfaconnect.net.au/Knoxexpo*



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM



PHOTO: NICOLE COOPER-WARNEKE

GIPPSLAND EMPOWERS VOLS STORY NICOLE COOPER-WARNEKE

Volunteers travelled from South Gippsland Shire and far East Gippsland to attend a region initiative to empower volunteers to deliver community education in their local areas.

At the end of September, 42 volunteers from 21 brigades went to Gippsland's first round robin equipment training at Gippsland Fire Training Complex. The focus of this training was the smokehouse, the new Integrated Fire Management Planning (IFMP) community engagement trailer and fire education trailer.

The burn table was a real drawcard of the day and the feedback we received was outstanding.

"It's an excellent practical demonstration tool for use with brigade training and

community engagement. You're only limited by your imagination," said Captain Ian Ewart from Callignee brigade.

"Fantastic tool", "great system", "the best thing out", "very good resource", "excellent training", "great investment", "look forward to using it", were just a handful of the comments from volunteers about the fire education trailer.

Brigade support officers Jodi Butler, Emily Durbridge, Joanne Melton, Rob Melville, Keith Condratoff and volunteer Sarah van der Velden facilitated the activities. Both staff and volunteers were enthusiastic about the training and all contributed to making the day a huge success. ■

SUMMER CAMPAIGN update

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

FIREREADY VICTORIA PARTNERS WITH CRICKET VICTORIA

FireReady Victoria and Cricket Victoria are aiming for a top-scoring partnership this summer, with plans underway for bushfire and grassfire safety to be promoted at matches and club events throughout the state.

There will be a variety of joint activities to look out for over summer, from family fun days to FireReady signage at international Test matches.

The partnership will also see cricket players acting as FireReady ambassadors and charity matches pitting Cricket Victoria against FireReady teams made up of members from emergency services including CFA, Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the State Emergency Service.

Because both organisations have such strong grassroots connections to their communities, it's a natural fit for CFA. We're hoping to see plenty of opportunities for CFA members to take part in Cricket Victoria events this summer, and vice versa.

For the latest updates, go to news.cfa.vic.gov.au and search for 'Cricket Victoria'.

CFA'S KEY MESSAGES

Here are seven messages to help you help others – whether you're answering a casual question at a barbecue or going along to an event with your brigade:

- Victoria is one of the most fire-prone regions in the world – the best way to stay safe is to leave the night before or the morning of a Code Red day, or early in the morning of a Severe or Extreme day.
- Make sure you know what fire weather district you're in, and check the Total Fire Ban and Fire Danger Rating for that district every day over summer.
- Talk to everyone you live with about your plans so you all know what you'll do on a bad day.
- Pack a relocation kit with important documents, photos, medications, money and clothes so you're ready to leave early. Practise packing and leaving.
- Don't rely on getting a warning – it's your responsibility to know when to leave.
- Download the FireReady smartphone app so you can check Fire Danger Rating and alerts and warnings any time, any place.
- Check out CFA's website – cfa.vic.gov.au – or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 for more information on how to stay safe this summer.

If you'd like to see a full list of messages, visit the Template Toolkit on CFA Online or Brigades Online.

The *Members Quick Reference Guide* (sent to members with the *Pre-Season Update*) is another great resource to support your conversations in the community.

SUMMER ADS THIS SEASON

TV, radio, newspaper and online radio advertising will run once again as part of this year's summer FireReady campaign, with the tagline 'If you wait, it's too late'.

The latest research tells us that almost 40 per cent of Victorians in high-risk areas still plan to 'wait and see' on a Code Red day. The 2012-13 advertising campaign is aimed at this group and features inner monologues from people grappling over whether or not to leave early. ■

Below: Bill Bowery, member of the Loddon Mallee Community Education group, at Elmore Field Days



PHOTO: LETH HILLARD

Right: Hugh Davies, Courtney Benwell, Pelican Man, Dion Moseley and Mark Simpson from Hastings brigade at the Kids Day

Far right: Elias, Fletcher, and Malaika on board a Pakenham brigade truck at the Road Safety Expo in Pakenham



PHOTO: ANDREW BARTELS

PHOTO: CLINTON PLOWMAN

PHOTO: STEVE CORRIGAN



Far left: Presenter Barrie Stewart, Acting Manager Community Safety Neil Thompson and Acting Regional Director Martin McPhee in front of Southern Metropolitan region's education trailer at Aspendale Gardens

Left: Buninyong brigade doing a demonstration at Buninyong Good Life festival

PHOTO: MEGAN EARLS

COMMUNITY SAFETY MONTH STORY EMMA MCDONALD

October was Community Safety Month. This statewide annual campaign is yet another great opportunity to highlight key fire safety messages leading up to the fire season, and another chance for brigades to connect with their communities.

Community Safety Month was set up in 1996 by the Victorian Safe Communities Network. Local communities, groups, schools, regional services, businesses, state and local government departments and agencies, are encouraged to build community safety partnerships by organising safety ways with other groups.

Here are some of the ways CFA members marked the event:

- Edithvale brigade attended the official statewide Community Safety Month launch day, organised by City of

- Kingston Council, at Aspendale Gardens.
- Hastings brigade attended the annual Kids Day organised by various preschools at a local Hastings park.
- Staff from Southern Metropolitan region attended the 2012 Road Safety Expo at Cardinia Cultural Centre in Pakenham.
- The Southern Metropolitan region community engagement team coordinated the Harmony Soccer Cup and Family Fun Day at Heath Soccer Complex.
- Buninyong brigade attended the local Good Life festival to promote summer season key messages.
- Waubra brigade went to the Waubra community festival.



BRIGADE TRIUMPHS AT VANILLA SLICE TRIUMPH STORY STEVE RUSSELL



PHOTO: ZOE BROWN

In mid August, the Merbein community hosted the Great Australian Vanilla Slice Triumph, an event previously held in Ouyen since 1988. Merbein brigade took the opportunity to engage the community.

Merbein brigade worked with Loddon Mallee region Community Engagement Coordinator Kevin Sleep to get hold of equipment and supplies including a 6-metre by 3-metre CFA marquee, balloons, show bags, brochures and handouts. The brigade also borrowed a freestanding touch-screen computer system that showed fire safety videos throughout the day.

To add to the day's effectiveness, the brigade hired a helium canister. The result was a street flooded with red CFA balloons bobbing up and down.

Given that this event is a cooking competition, the majority of handouts and discussions at the marquee and demonstration area focused on smoke alarms, fire blankets and home fire escape plans. The brigade gave away fire extinguishers and fire blankets donated by Safety Results, and smoke alarms. These were well received by the public and heightened awareness and interest in the importance of home fire safety.

Between 10am and 1pm the street was alive with thousands of people and at times brigade members at the marquee were swamped by enquiries. By midday we were completely out of resources and we had to get more balloons and raid the fire station supplies for CFA material. We reckon we had contact with well over 2,000 people.

The event's MC, Anthony Gerace from ABC Mildura-Swan Hill, was very supportive of CFA. He gave us the opportunity to appear on the main stage and recorded an interview with Captain Trevor Willcock. ■

Steve Russell is fourth lieutenant with Merbein brigade

MOSQUITO CREEK BUZZES WITH IDEAS STORY LEITH HILLARD

Camping spots tucked away in high bushfire risk areas in Mosquito Creek have long presented problems for all local emergency services.

Mosquito Creek brigade is on the shores of western Lake Eppalock at the confluence of the Coliban and Campaspe rivers.

"As a brigade we know most of the sites but at night you have no chance of identifying them," said Captain Michael White. "They've been established in a very ad hoc fashion. Most of them have just a caravan on site and they're all very close together. You reach them via a winding dirt road and it's one road in and out. It's a heavily-forested conservation area right up to the lake.

"We've had the situation of an ambulance having to park on the road and bring an injured person out because it's such a rabbit warren in there. Crazy.

"A lot of things slid during the drought, but now the lake is full and we can have up to 10,000 people camping in the holiday period."

To manage the risk, the brigade came up with an idea that won them a 2012 CFA Loddon Mallee region initiative award.

"The land use manager is Goulburn-Murray Water and it has given each of the sites a number designation," explained Michael. "The coastguard had prepared a map of the lake and surrounds. Our brigade took the western side of the map and put in the details of every individual club, school and service organisation site.

"The map is now available to visitors and we've also laminated it and presented it to all the emergency services. The feedback from them has been fantastic."

Reflective material donated to the brigade was cut into identifying numbers to be used as individual site signage this fire season, so that campsites can be identified at night.

"Paul Ford is a life member of our brigade and he's been a major driver," continued Michael. "He recently retired from the construction industry and he really pushes things along. All I have to do is tell him what we need and he's head down and bum up making it so. He's a fantastic member to have." ■

Below: Paul Ford (holding a reflective campsite sign) with Captain Michael White (holding the map showing the campsites)



PHOTO: BILL WARREN

CFA AT THE ROYAL MELBOURNE SHOW

STORY NANCY THOMPSON

More than 80 staff and volunteers manned our display at this year's Royal Melbourne Show in September and October. It was the first time that volunteers had helped at the show and the first time CFA joined forces with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the Department of Sustainability and Environment to present a single display.

Over 11 days the display attracted huge crowds, with Bendigo brigade's pumper and Fire Safe Kids computer games being particularly popular with the public. Captain Koala and Station Officer Sophie made regular appearances at the show, giving out fire hats to children.

Thanks to Mills-Tui for supplying the stairs for the pumper. ■

To see more images, go to cfaconnect.net.au/rms



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

LEGENDS OF EASTERN METRO REGION

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Members who've been integral to CFA response in Eastern Metropolitan region for more than 25 years were invited to a special dinner in October.

"We also invited people who have carried out their roles under particularly trying conditions or through personally stressful times," explained Regional Support Officer Anne Blomley.

"This was our way of saying thanks to people who'd been central figures in brigades some years back, but perhaps haven't been active for a while: 'You've done the hard yards. You've been with us through all the changes with a do-what-you-have-to-do attitude. We really appreciate you.'

"Some group officers have told us that the dinner rekindled people's interest in CFA. They've been reinvigorated and asked their brigades what they could do and become part of their fire brigade community again."

Dandenong Ranges Group Officer Rod Stebbing is one of those enthusiasts.

"This initiative is one of the best I have ever seen in my time in CFA," he said. "The idea of District 13 CFA and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria recognising our most senior volunteers in this way is just another outstanding example of best practice by our members and the HR team here in 13. It shows the respect that's both due and well deserved by these members, many after a lifetime of active involvement.

"Some of the members I have spoken to after the presentation said they were just blown away by the fact that this recognition had happened. It was totally unexpected. Another had a visible spring in the step as he walked across the engine bay!"

Around 60 people attended the dinner including staff. Regional Director Dave Baker gratefully acknowledged the 1,742 years of combined service in the room. Eastern Metro is keen to make the dinner a regular event with brigades nominating attendees in future. ■



PHOTO: ANNE BLOWLEY

Left: Frank Wood, Barbara Peacock, Geoff Peacock, John McLeod, John Sutton and Chad Kuipers at the Legends Dinner

PHOTO: JESSICA MERRITT



Footy FUNDRAISER

STORY SHARON MERRITT



PHOTOS: PHIL SPENCER

In spite of the horrendous weather in late August, the enthusiasm of 17 fire brigades working in conjunction with the Yarra Valley & Mountain District Football League (YVMDFL) for its inaugural CFA Fundraiser couldn't be dampened.

The rain came in sideways and the players were deep in mud trying to chase the elusive ball across the increasingly slippery ground. YVMDFL CEO Stephen Walter said, "It was the worst day of the season weather wise."

The YVMDFL had been trying to get the fundraiser off the ground for a couple of years and, with the concerted efforts of Fiona Spencer and Bernie Blair from Macclesfield brigade, it finally happened.

It was a huge logistics effort covering three CFA districts and football grounds from Belgrave to Yea and Alexandra.

The fundraiser managed to get just over \$4,000, which was incredible considering the weather.

Brigades involved were: Alexandra, Belgrave, Selby, Macclesfield, Sassafras and Ferny Creek, Emerald, Glenburn, Yarra Junction, Little Yarra, Upwey, Wandin, Warburton, Wesburn Millgrove, Hillcrest, Yellingbo, Gruyere and Seville.

This was a fantastic effort by all the brigades involved and hopefully will become an annual event. ■

Above right: Macclesfield Captain Sharon Merritt awards a medal at the fundraiser

ELMORE FIELD DAYS

STORY LEITH HILLARD

The dedicated members of the Loddon Mallee region Community Education Group were out in force at the Elmore Field Days in early October.

Throughout the three-day agricultural extravaganza, CFA's community education tent stood alongside almost 700 exhibition sites. The full range of CFA publications was laid out for adults to browse while children coloured in. An electronic Fire Danger Rating sign with push buttons helped the public understand what each rating means for them.

Jude Alexander and Susan Kidnie from the grassland curing project had a display. "We're into our second year," said Jude. "The laminated field card is available for interested farmers to keep in their tractor or ute. Volunteer field observers from around the state – they're almost all CFA volunteers – have let us know where their pasture is up to week by week compared to the photographs on the field card."

Cass Alexander, a dynamic member of Rushworth brigade, was also on site with a presentation of cover stories from

the Waranga News about his brigade. The keen writer and photographer is passionate about all things CFA and makes sure the community knows all about brigade activities – a great way to attract new members.

Corop West and Elmore trucks were also on site in case of emergency. ■



Left: Tracey Mastropavlos from Heathcote brigade at Elmore Field Days

PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

THROUGH THE AGES Moorooduc

COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM



FACES OF CFA

DAWN WOOD WILLUNG SOUTH BRIGADE, DISTRICT 10

How long have you been with this brigade?

I officially joined CFA 17 years ago but I'd been volunteering with CFA long before that – making phone calls and helping with administration work for the brigade.

Why did you join CFA?

Willung South is a small community. CFA is our family and home. It's about being part of the community, banding together to look after one another. If I was in trouble I'd like to know that someone would come to help us.

I grew up in Erica and have always lived in the country. When I was six or seven years old, I remember sitting in the passageway of our house watching a major bushfire over the hills. Bushfires are just a part of living if you're out in rural areas, as well as floods and snakes.

Which incident has had the greatest impact on you?

We were very active in the 2009 fires. I was working in the Incident Management Team and spending my days off with my brigade on the truck. At one point people were saying, "Go home, your place is going to burn out!" I called home to check if the answering machine picked up, which it did, which meant that the power lines hadn't gone.

My other half was out on the truck at Calignee. I couldn't get in touch with him because he'd lost his mobile phone. I finally heard from someone at 2am to let me know that he was still up there.

It wasn't fun but it's much better to be out on the fireground or in an IMT rather than at home waiting for a phone call. In the IMT you'd be one of the first to know if a firefighter went down – no news is good news.

What do you do when you're not firefighting?

My husband Craig and I run a beef farm, we've got a couple of dogs and I teach martial arts – Tang Soo Do. It's not all fire. That being said, Craig works as an airfield firefighter as well as a PAD [practical area drill] operator!

What's next for your brigade?

We're encouraging some of our younger members to take on more of the leadership roles. My husband has been captain for more than a decade and this will be his last term. He'll still be active in the brigade – he just believes it's time for



someone else to take over. He doesn't want to get stale.

I focus on providing mentoring for a lot of new people – especially for the females. If we have an incident I'll be the one to say, "OK you guys grab the hose," and I'll be right beside them helping. Succession planning. Hey, we're getting old! ■

Interview by **Jason Leigh**



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