

WINTER 2011

# BRIGADE



## FACTORY INFERNO

130 firefighters battle fireballs and exploding oil drums

ALSO: VOLUNTEER SUMMIT, CFA CONNECT REDESIGN, NEW OH&S LAWS

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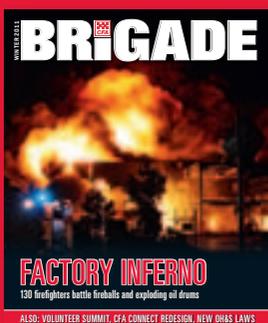
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**Cover:** TriTech Lubricants factory fire in Dandenong South. Photo by Keith Pakenham.

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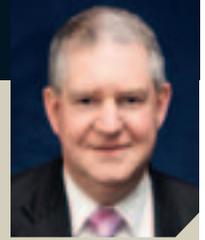
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**Mick Bourke**



From the CEO

# Creating our future together

## STRATEGY

In this edition, I'd like to take the opportunity to talk to you about organisational change.

At its May meeting, the Board considered proposals we took to it about CFA strategy. And the Board has called that strategy 'Creating our Future Together'.

The strategy has two very strong starting points. First, we recognise that we're a community based fire and emergency service. Second, we have a powerful mission to protect lives and property, particularly here in Victoria.

To put the strategy in place, we aim to do a variety of things. One of those is focusing on service delivery through our brigades, our Districts and our Regions. We're going to ensure that our volunteers get adequate support and focus; they're such a magnificent part of the capacity we have in Victoria.

We're going to develop and grow more leaders. We're going to ensure we invest in the development of our people. And, furthermore, we're going to maintain our focus on delivering what the community needs, always.

Our strategy also sees us working together as one CFA, not as many CFAs. Out of that there'll be great benefits for our organisation.

## STRUCTURE

To deliver the strategy we have to change our structure. I'm sure you'll agree that the structure has served us well over a period of time. But the needs of today and the needs of the future can no longer be delivered through the current structure. The structure

will ensure that the Chief Officer has at his command the resources that are needed in the field to deliver the services that we must deliver.

It will also ensure for the first time that the Chief Officer has a clear line of sight and a management control through Regions, Districts and brigades. The line of sight for all parties will be direct and clear. Likewise, there'll be a clear focus in the structure on volunteerism.

Also, in the structure we'll be looking to ensure that our service delivery people – those at the front line – are well supported, and that support is aligned behind them.

## NEXT STEPS

We are committed to this change and we would ask that you come along the journey with us. To ensure you know which way we're going, we'll keep you regularly informed so you know how to contribute and how to participate.

Change can sometimes interrupt activities. We'll be sure that this change does not interrupt our preparation for the next fire season. ■

**Mick Bourke**  
CEO

# Acknowledging our members

As revealed in the last edition of *Brigade*, the Board is commissioning a special badge acknowledging the efforts of all CFA members involved in the 2009 fires.

This badge is a symbol of CFA's appreciation, acknowledging the professionalism, dedication and selflessness of CFA members who, in such difficult times, continued to protect our community.

The design of the badge is being finalised and it will appear on [www.cfaconnect.net.au](http://www.cfaconnect.net.au).

It's not too late to order your badge. You can contact your district headquarters, call Janette Parker on 03 9262 8486 or email [2009badge@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:2009badge@cfa.vic.gov.au). Orders will be accepted until 1 August 2011, and badges will be sent in October. ■



The new lapel badge acknowledges the commitment of CFA volunteers during the 2009 bushfires. Photo by Keith Pakenham

**Kerry Murphy PSM AFSM**



## From the Chairman

The June Board meeting was held in Swan Hill in recognition of the sustained work of Loddon Mallee CFA members through the recent floods. It was also recognition that, for many members, the flood crisis is still exacting a heavy toll.

Loddon Mallee Regional Manager Pat O'Brien hosted a dinner for Board members, the Chief Officer and CFA members representing a range of brigades from across the Region. It was an opportunity for those members to pose forthright questions about immediate needs, channels for assistance and other matters of concern to them.

The Board members were updated on the CFA submission to the independent Jones Inquiry into arrangements for CFA volunteers. The Honourable David Jones held open sessions for volunteers across the State, with training emerging as one of the most pressing issues for our members, amongst many others.

The Victorian Floods Review has also conducted community consultations around the State. CFA provided information on a range of issues including community advice and warnings, emergency management capacity and deployment.

The interim report from the Floods Review is due to the Premier at the end of June, and the report from the Jones Inquiry is likewise expected to be completed soon after the end of June.

The Board was also briefed on the rapid and cautious approach taken to the discovery of asbestos at the South East Training Ground in April – see right for more details.

The Fire Services Commissioner consulted with the CFA Board on his reform plan. More detailed information will be passed to members as it becomes available.

CFA took many opportunities during May's National Volunteer Week to showcase the dedication of our members. Stories appeared in newspapers around the State celebrating the work of local brigades and their vital commitment to their communities to protect lives and property.

The 2011 State Budget was good news for CFA with funding received for 101 new vehicles and 60 new or upgraded rural stations to be built in 2011-12.

The Chief Officer reported on the Dandenong South factory fire, a significant structural incident with a number of agencies involved. Board members congratulated the Chief Officer on his own attendance at this incident, saying it sent a strong message across the organisation of supporting the front line.

Work on the CFA strategy and a preferred organisational structure were supported by the Board. See Mick Bourke's column, p3, for more details. It's vital we stay focused on our role as a community-based fire and emergency service, and our mission to protect lives and property. ■

**Kerry Murphy PSM AFSM  
Chairman**

# Review of honours continues

**BY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES**

Proposed changes to CFA's honours and awards are at the consultation stage with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) and unions, following a call by the CFA Board for a review of the current system including the process for nominations and range of awards.

Changes may include enhancing some awards, discontinuing others and formalising the hierarchy of awards available to CFA members. New awards and enhancements that could also be introduced include insignia to complement commendations and 'unit citations' for courage.

An Honours and Awards Review Reference Group, led by CFA's Executive Manager for Operational Training and Volunteerism Lex de Man, will oversee the development of the future system. Lex said it's about 10 years since CFA reviewed its honours and awards and the Board agreed the timing was right to streamline and improve the process. He said not only would the criteria for awards be reviewed, but also the design of awards, medals and ribbons.

"Criteria for life membership will also be reviewed to consider including CFA staff in the award," Lex added. "But until the CFA Board makes a decision on the honours and awards system, all current nominations for awards will be treated under the existing process," he said. ■

## Asbestos found at Bangholme

**BY GERARD SCHOLTEN**

Bangholme training ground returned to business as usual on 30 May following the removal of small fragments of asbestos cement debris found in the soil of a garden bed in late April.

CFA management took a proper and cautious approach and the area was cordoned off. Testing later found asbestos cement debris also in the soil at the driving range under construction. No other areas of the grounds were found to be contaminated.

CFA informed media of the contamination on 3 May after first contacting Bangholme staff and other CFA members, including the parents of junior CFA volunteers who had worked in the area. Everyone was reassured about the low level of risk and has been given any support necessary, including information sessions.

Remedial work was completed and results of air testing were below the detection level.

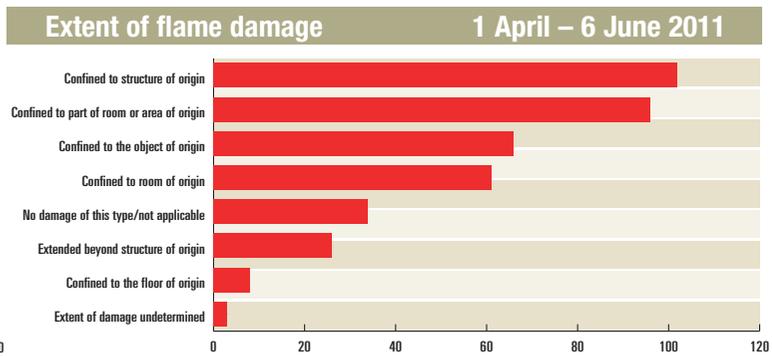
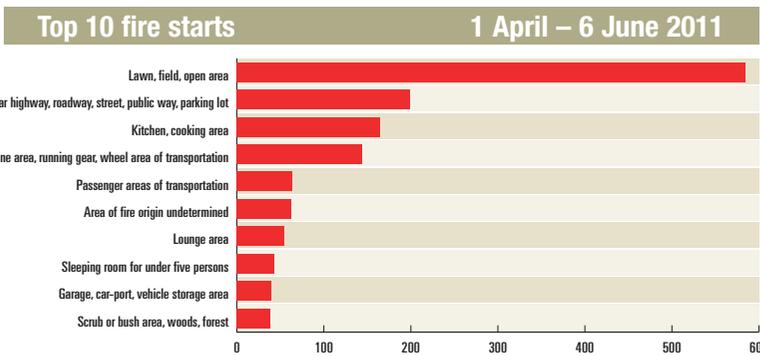
Tests on a sample of five vehicles from different brigades that had visited the ground since June 2010 (when the soil arrived) showed no contamination. Further tests on five more vehicles and CFA clothing also gave negative results for asbestos.

CFA informed WorkSafe Victoria, the Environment Protection Authority and other interested parties. ■

In this section of *Brigade*, we summarise CFA incidents and give the total number of incidents for each region. All statistics are from CFA's Fire and Incident Reporting System (FIRS).

Summary	1 January – 31 March 2011			1 April – 6 June 2011		
	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	Incident count	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	Incident count
Bush and forest		13,357	15*		131	16
Car fires and MVA			1,213			891
False alarms			2,656			1,133
Grass fires		878	52#		274	38
Hazardous materials			606			449
House fires	\$14,181,615		285	\$8,700,200		230
Industrial fires	\$3,491,830		62	\$40,631,310		43
	<b>\$17,673,445</b>	<b>14,235</b>	<b>4,889</b>	<b>\$49,331,510</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>2,800</b>

\* Forest and bushfires and scrub or bush and grass mixture fires larger than one hectare  
# Larger than one hectare



# Multiple threats at factory blaze

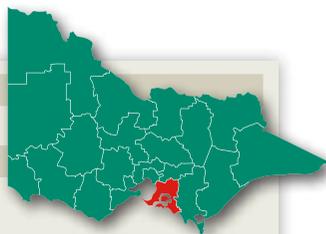
BY KAYLA MASKELL

**Incident:** TriTech control

**District:** 8

**Date:** 19 May 2011

**Brigades:** Dandenong, Frankston, Berwick, Hallam, Carrum Downs, Devon Meadows, Patterson River, Hallam, Scoresby, Hampton Park, Cranbourne, Boronia, Springvale, Somerville, Narre Warren



CFA crews battled a huge blaze at the TriTech Lubricants factory in Dandenong South for eight hours before bringing it under control.

Brigades were called to the Williams Road factory at around 8pm. The fire involved the front office and extended into the warehouse where more than 700,000 litres of mineral oil, used to manufacture engine oils and lubricants, were stored.

“The main chemical involved was engine oil and the difficulty was that it burns very, very hot and is something that cannot be put out with water alone,” said Operations Officer Mark Kennedy.

During the height of the fire around 130 firefighters from CFA and MFB worked to control the blaze, which also threatened neighbouring factories. In all, 36 trucks and vehicles attended the fire.

Mark said that while Class B foam was being used to try to contain the fire, crews also used water to cool and protect nearby buildings, in particular hydrogen gas lines leading to neighbouring glass manufacturing company Viridian.

“Hydrogen is a highly flammable gas so it had the potential to make this fire even more significant,” he said.

“While there was some damage to neighbouring factories, we were able to shut off and protect the gas lines and save those buildings.”

A long hose relay was used to supply water from Greens Road, and Melbourne Water boosted the water supply to assist the fire fight.

CFA crews remained on the scene through the following morning to monitor hot spots.

As the sun rose the day after the huge fire the devastation was obvious. The elevated view of the ruined lubricants factory revealed the extent of the blaze and the remarkable effort of those involved to contain it.

Melbourne Water worked closely with CFA and EPA Victoria to reduce the potential for chemicals to make their way through drains and into Eumemmerring Creek, 3km from the factory. After creating a temporary dam in the Abbotts Road drain, crews then used pump trucks to suck out contaminated run-off and dispose of it carefully. ■





# Views from the front line



**Troy Smith** – Hampton Park Third Lieutenant

Our pumper and tanker were on the scene early and we swung into helping the fire officers get equipment ready.

We were involved with getting more water to the scene and helped with additional hose lines. We had to assist with our quick-cut saw to gain entry through the front roller doors. Our position was then on the north-east corner and we fed water on from an MFB appliance in the water relay.

Each sector was run by a different fire officer and the safety officer made sure we weren't in harm's way. Communication on the fireground was really good. It was very well run once we got into the groove.

It's the biggest incident I've been to in 12 years because of the fuel load. You could hear drums exploding and see big fireballs.

One of the major issues we're looking at now is the 64mm Storz couplings fitted to most integrated stations' trucks. We had to find all the adaptors to couple up. We had some on our trucks but not enough and it was a bit of a flurry to source enough of them.

Overall, it was an incident with a lot of little issues to deal with and we had to keep pushing through each of them. It was really satisfying to be one small part of an operation that size. ■



**Adrian Devenish** – Operations Officer

This escalated pretty quickly into a long-duration incident with complexity.

Paul Carrigg dealt with all the behind-the-scenes issues and I developed firefighting strategies with my three sector commanders – Kerry Phillips, Jamie Lakeland and Marcel van Elmpt.

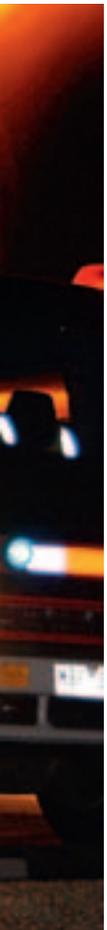
The fire and explosions were compromising the integrity of the large tanks. Cooling the boiling oil tanks was essential, but as water jets penetrated the vessel hatches it caused the product to react violently resulting in boilover. Leading Firefighter Luke Patterson was in charge of the water sector and his good work with the assistance of the Scoresby Hoselayer crew resulted in us using a nearby factory's water supply and access to its boost pumps.

This was the biggest job I've ever attended. It was like multiple jobs in one. There was potential for multiple gas line ruptures. There was the explosive threat to firefighters and neighbouring businesses and the threat of burning oil and other harmful additives going down the drain and into nearby creeks.

Everyone worked fantastically together. They maintained their composure and operated as tasked. If you fall back to your training and your fireground practices, it should run smoothly. Structure, sectors, support: they all make a job tick along as it should.

Everyone came away with a story to tell. ■





### Paul Carrigg – Incident Controller

I arrived on the scene about 25 minutes after the initial call and observed intense fire well and truly through the whole factory. A company representative advised that the factory contained approximately 700,000 litres of engine oil.

After the roller door was cut, we saw a large amount of fire around the drum storage area and the overhead tank mixing facility. Spilt fuel had ignited and was flowing towards the outdoor bulk storage tanks.

Operations Officer Adrian Devenish and I set up a command structure and communications plan and discussed the control priorities. These priorities were the safety of our personnel, effective warnings to the community, protecting the adjoining factories and containing the run-off of oil, water and foam.

We had to reduce the temperature of the fire and cool the oil tanks before applying foam, but water flows were insufficient. By 10pm we developed a water relay from a larger-capacity mains some 1.5km away and used the fire service system at a local plant.

Hydrogen, nitrogen and compressed air flowed in above-ground pipelines along the rear of the premises. Water streams maintained cooling but a wall collapsed on the pipelines and caused a high pressure leak. The pipelines were eventually isolated but this was complicated because the nitrogen was needed at a neighbouring premises as a safety requirement for its manufacturing process.

The fire was under control by 4.33am and we continued cooling tanks until 6.25am.

It was a great multiagency incident that resulted in the fire being contained to the one site, no injuries and the run-off being contained. ■



Compiled by Leith Hillard. All photos by Keith Pakenham

# Grovedale inferno

BY DARREN APPS

**Incident:** Grovedale structure fire  
**District:** 7  
**Date:** 24 May 2011  
**Brigades:** Belmont, Highton, Grovedale, Geelong West, Geelong City, Corio



A fire in Grovedale destroyed a building containing three shops. Initially, Belmont, Geelong City and Grovedale brigades were paged to the fire in a furniture store.

On the way to the call, Belmont pumper was advised that VicFire was receiving numerous calls about the fire at a busy intersection. When Belmont brigade arrived at the scene, Incident Controller Senior Station Officer Wayne Alymer advised that flames were visible and requested “make pumpers four” with a further request for aerial support from Geelong’s Bronto ladder platform.

The fire started in a furniture store and rapidly spread to a car parts outlet next door, and there was little firefighters could do to stop the fire engulfing a third shop. Police blocked the busy Surfcoast Highway as a large crowd gathered to watch the inferno from a safe distance.

Corio brigade provided additional support with breathing apparatus and Teleboom. ■



# Silo fire proves tricky

BY SONIA MACLEAN

**Incident:** Springhurst structure fire  
**District:** 23  
**Date:** 5 May 2011  
**Brigades:** Springhurst, Rutherglen, Chiltern, Wangaratta



The fire started when a light bulb blew, causing a piece of burning cable to fall into a pit of grain residue between two silos.

When crews arrived, grain was smouldering around nine metres below ground level and the main conveyor belt between the two silos was producing smoke.

As a first precaution for passing trains, VicFire was advised of the fire and CountryLink was notified.

Locating the fire in dark and smoky conditions proved to be no easy task. Breathing apparatus was used and thermal imaging cameras helped to find the source.

Firefighters encountered further complications when information came through that the owners regularly dropped phosphine tablets into the pit to kill vermin. Phosphine is known to produce toxic gas when wet.

Twenty minutes and a few phone calls later, a CFA scientific officer gave crews the go-ahead to continue operations.

Firefighters blanketed the area with Class A foam, and contained the grain residue fire around three hours after the call-out. ■

# Complex rescue at Rowville

BY KEITH PAKENHAM

**Incident:** Stud Road control  
**District:** 13  
**Date:** 16 May 2011  
**Brigades:** Rowville, Scoresby, Dandenong, Knox SES rescue



Photo by Trevor Sharman

CFA crews and SES attended a technical rescue on Stud Road, north of Kelletts Road, Rowville. The call was typical of a complex training scenario that could be used at Fiskville.

A Toyota Aurion left the road, hit and travelled over the Armco steel barrier and then demolished, and became impaled on, the pedestrian bridge railing.

The car was suspended from the edge of the bridge, almost in the deep running creek below. Crews had to deal with a man at risk from drowning who was found outside the car. His arm was trapped by a log and he had to have his head held above the waterline while he was freed.

Crews also freed a pregnant woman who had one leg trapped under the car. She was forced out by the steel railing that entered the front of the car near the radiator and exited through the glove box and the front passenger door.

A third person, a man sitting on the back seat, was also injured.

The vehicle was very unstable and there was a risk it would slide into the creek, so multiple security points were fixed to the car using chains and winch lines.

Senior Station Officer Don Wilke from Dandenong Fire Brigade was the rescue commander, and he coordinated both the SES and CFA rescue teams on site, along with Incident Controller Second Lieutenant Ray Ben from Rowville brigade.

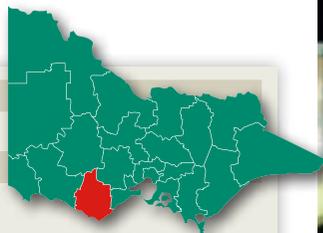
The complexity of the call meant a variety of specialised equipment was used, including high and low pressure airbags, StaBFast stabilisers, multiple hydraulic cutting gear and vehicle winches.

Police blocked Stud Road to allow crews to work unhindered and the injured occupants were either flown to hospital by Air Ambulance Victoria or taken by road thanks to Ambulance Victoria. ■

# Camperdown factory fire

BY BRIAN BRADY

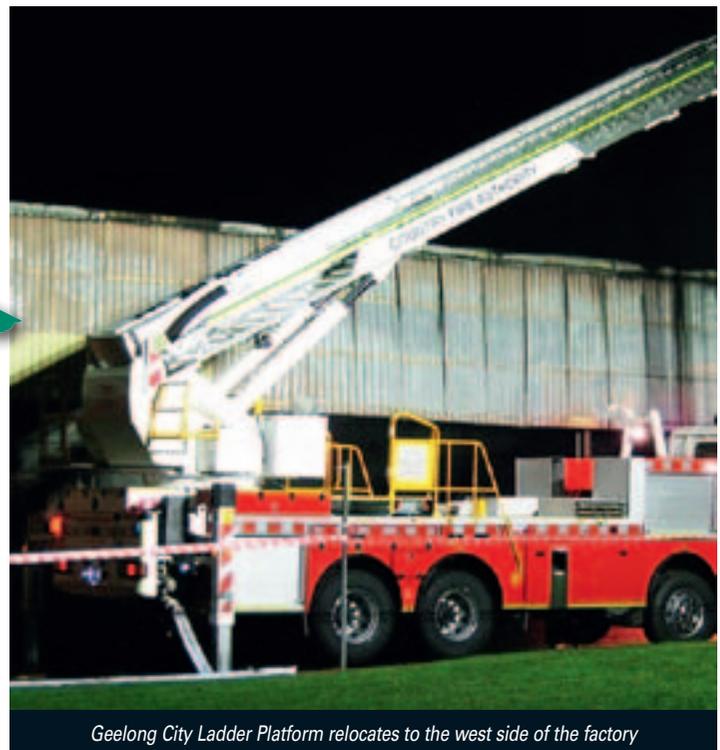
**Incident:** Camperdown structure fire  
**District:** 6  
**Date:** 1 April 2011  
**Brigades:** Camperdown, Cobden, Warrnambool, Geelong City, District 6 HQ



A deliberately lit fire in a disused cheese and butter factory in Camperdown was no joke for emergency services in the early hours of 1 April. Two men have been charged in relation to the fire.

While CFA crews fought the blaze, Terang Pumper stepped up to Camperdown to cover the area as all trucks were committed for some time. Camperdown SES provided lighting.

An external attack was conducted because of the old factory's instability. While this was likely to be the last hurrah for Camperdown's old Type 2 pumper, it was the maiden voyage for Warrnambool's new Scania. ■



Geelong City Ladder Platform relocates to the west side of the factory

# Through, down and over

BY DARREN APPS

**Incident:** North Geelong road accident  
**District:** 7  
**Date:** 16 May 2011  
**Brigades:** Belmont, Geelong City



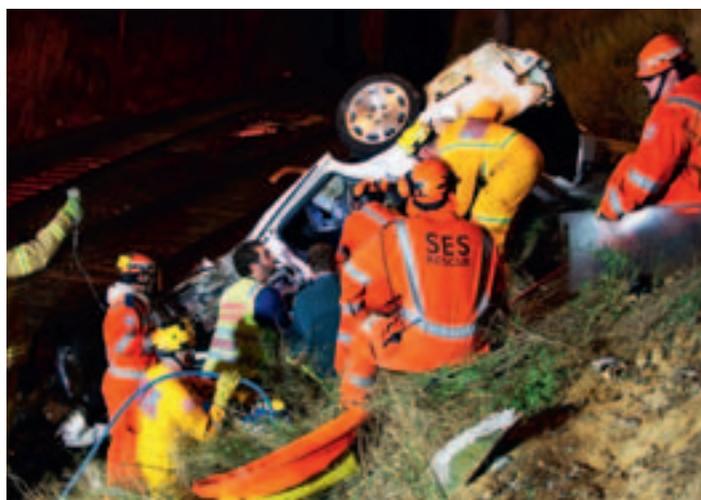
A man had a miraculous escape after his car catapulted off the Separation Street bridge in Geelong and nose-dived 15m on to train tracks.

CFA and SES crews spent an hour freeing the driver from the crushed car, which was jammed upright against an embankment after landing on its roof. SES is the lead agency in the Geelong area for road accident rescues.

Geelong City Leading Firefighter Chris Wallace said crews were amazed to find the driver still conscious. “The motor and transmission were still sitting on the bridge,” said Chris. “There were sections of bridge railing leaning on the car and power lines had fallen across it with fuel leaking.

“Access to the scene was difficult with three train lines through the area. Trains were stopped while we carted all the gear about 100m to the scene and did the extraction.”

The driver was flown to hospital in Melbourne but was fortunate enough to be released later the same day. ■



# A chilli night

BY KEITH PAKENHAM

**Incident:** Cranbourne North false alarm  
**District:** 8  
**Date:** 9 May 2011  
**Brigades:** Cranbourne, Dandenong



CFA crews were called to Lawless Drive neighbourhood late at night after neighbours reported a toxic smell in the area. Cranbourne Fire Brigade Station Officer Ian Glass said when crews arrived it was evident there was a “pungent smell” in the area, so the Dandenong Hazmat Detection Unit was called to attend.

“Hazmat detection didn’t get a reading so we kept investigating,” Ian said.

Eventually, the brigade located the source of the smell – the culprit was a fiery fruit. Ian said the brigade discovered someone in the area using an electric wok and cooking oil to dry out a box of chillies.



“Unfortunately, it was just due to the weather on the night that it was so still and the smell was just hovering around the neighbourhood so we notified the people in the area,” he said.

Ambulance Victoria said there was some concern, with residents up to 150m away having breathing troubles.

So while the incident was eventually marked as a false alarm on CFA records, it certainly had everyone fired up – at least for a little while. ■

# Bunnings burns brightly

BY KEITH PAKENHAM

**Incident:** Gladstone Road control

**District:** 8

**Date:** 8 May 2011

**Brigades:** Dandenong, Hallam



A deliberately lit fire at the rear of the Dandenong Bunnings store in Gladstone Road caused serious damage at around 2am. Dandenong and Hallam fire brigades responded to a fire alarm from the Bunnings store to find flames and smoke visible above the roofline at the rear loading bay. A fire had been started in a large stack of cardboard and pallets against the rear wall.

As the fire grew in size it soon spread into the store through the metal wall cladding and activated the sprinkler system which helped to slow the spread of fire.

Unfortunately, the area where the fire broke through contained a large rack of timber and insulation material and flooded the surrounding area. Bunnings and fire maintenance staff arrived to help shut down the alarm and fire warning systems. Power was then restored to help clear the huge volume of smoke in the building using exhaust fans.

An aggressive fire attack by crews in breathing apparatus, under the guidance of Incident Controller Senior Station Officer Paul Caligari (from Dandenong brigade) managed to contain fire damage to the loading bay and the rear of the store.

The City of Greater Dandenong building surveyor assessed the integrity of the structure. ■



Photo by Tyler Hogan

# A bad start to Good Friday

BY ANDREW DUNCAN

**Incident:** Yarragon structure fire

**District:** 9

**Date:** 22 May 2011

**Brigades:** Yarragon, Trafalgar, Willow Grove, Nilma North, Warragul, Traralgon



Volunteers were woken early on Good Friday in the small town of Trafalgar in the Gippsland area.

Both Trafalgar and Yarragon brigades responded Code 1 initially and the message of “smoke showing” echoed across the radio from the group officer shortly after. At the scene, the next request was “make tankers five”, as the fire was in an area with no reticulated water.

It was good to see that the occupants had managed to escape from the premises, albeit with some minor burns.

Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria attended and the occupants were given the OK, after being checked by ambulance officers.

A number of issues confronted the brigades at the scene, including narrow access and no close, easy access to water. It was also discovered that the premises contained asbestos, so a few members were without their turnout gear over Easter, because it was bagged up and sent away for testing for asbestos contamination. ■

# Caravan and house destroyed

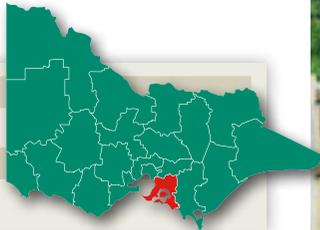
BY ERIC COLLIER

**Incident:** Somerville structure fire

**District:** 8

**Date:** 5 April 2011

**Brigades:** Somerville, Tyabb



Residents in Kevin Court Somerville had a rude awakening on 5 April when they noticed a caravan on fire. “As we left the fire station, we could see a large column of smoke, so we knew it was a going fire,” said Incident Controller Graeme Rigg. “When we arrived, we found that the caravan was totally involved and the adjacent house was also well alight.”

It took fire crews using breathing apparatus around 20 minutes to control the fire. The caravan was completely destroyed and the house next to the caravan was extensively damaged.

Graeme said the location and timing of the fire had caused problems with access. “The fire was located at the rear of the primary school. Incoming fire trucks had to contend with traffic problems associated with parents dropping off their children,” he said.

“I would ask all motorists to be aware of emergency vehicles and make room for them to pass. Manoeuvring a 15-tonne fire truck is not easy, and we’d appreciate motorists making a clear path for us,” he said. ■



# Teamwork in Mudgegonga

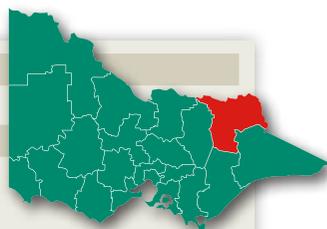
BY SONIA MACLEAN

**Incident:** Mudgegonga road accident

**District:** 24

**Date:** 6 April 2011

**Brigades:** Mudgegonga, Myrtleford, Porepunkah, Yackandandah



The emergency response to a car accident in Mudgegonga showed the excellent level of cooperation between the area’s services.

Phil Park from Mudgegonga brigade said that with CFA, Ambulance Victoria, SES and VicPol on the scene (along with two helicopters and five ambulances) there was plenty of potential for communication breakdown.

“But as it happened, every person present filled their role to an impeccable standard, even as control was handed over a number of times through the different phases,” said Phil.

“The fact that all personnel are local and work together regularly obviously paid off,” he said.

Phil and Eddie Rozitis from Porepunkah brigade arrived minutes after the car crash, calling in the report and establishing a road block. Eddie played a pivotal role in administering first aid until the ambulance arrived.

Mudgegonga Brigade Captain Andrew Cross, who attended with a full crew of brigade members, filled the role of operations officer for the CFA part of the operation. Phil, also a CFA brigade administrative support officer, took on the role of commander.

Yackandandah brigade members who lived close by helped with traffic control.

A decision was made to fly the car occupants to Melbourne for further treatment, and two helicopters landed on the road, on each side of the accident scene. ■

# Sodium pandemonium

BY ADAM TOWNSEND

**Incident:** Lakes Entrance Hazmat incident

**District:** 11

**Date:** 8 March 2011

**Brigades:** Lakes Entrance, Morwell, Traralgon, Dandenong



Around 30 firefighters, including the specialist Hazmat detection vehicle from Dandenong, attended a chemical spill at the Lakes Aquadome Recreation and Aquatic Centre in Lakes Entrance.

Lakes Entrance brigade Captain Geof Bassett, the initial incident controller, realised that 2,000 litres of sodium hypochlorite had leaked from a damaged valve at the bottom of a 4,000-litre tank. Eventually, all 4,000 litres spilled out. Sodium hypochlorite is used to clean pools. The spillage had leaked into the area designed for such an occasion.

Lakes Entrance brigade quickly constructed a decontamination zone, staging and control point area.

District 11 Operations Officer Glenn Harrap took over as incident controller and activated Morwell Hazmat, Traralgon breathing apparatus support and Dandenong Hazmat detection vehicle.

"It was an extended-duration event as we tried to locate a suitable vehicle for the removal, decanting and transport of the Class 8 corrosive chemical," said Glenn. It took crews around 12 hours to clean up. ■



From left, Bob Richardson of Lakes Entrance brigade talks with Captain Geof Bassett

# Gas leak shuts down Seville

BY AMY SCHILDBERGER

**Incident:** Seville gas leak

**District:** 13

**Date:** 11 May 2011

**Brigades:** Seville, Lilydale, Wandin



Photo by Alvin Aquino

# Banks threatened by fire

BY MARTIN ANDERSON

**Incident:** Werribee structure fire

**District:** 14

**Date:** 15 June 2011

**Brigades:** Werribee, Truganina, Point Cook, Toolern Vale, Diggers Rest, Hoppers Crossing, Caroline Springs, Corio, Geelong



A major fire at a shopping strip in Melbourne's west threatened to spread to nearby buildings including two banks. CFA crews were called to the incident in the early evening as fire spread into the roof of the building in between ANZ and NAB banks in Watton Street, Werribee. The main street was blocked off for several hours as CFA and MFB firefighters fought to save the neighbouring businesses.

Due to further fire threat, CFA crews had to make a forced entry into the NAB building, which was successfully saved though it sustained water damage. The ANZ building was also saved as a result of CFA and MFB's combined efforts. Twenty-six firetrucks and vehicles attended the incident that took two hours to bring under control.

Werribee brigade Captain Michael Wells said it was a difficult fire fight because of the position of the building, but it was an example of great teamwork from all the brigades. Crews were still on the scene in the early hours of the next day. ■

Contractors installing a traffic light on the corner of Links Road and Warburton Highway hit a gas main that caused an extensive gas leak. Most of the town's residents were evacuated and the Warburton Highway was closed between Wandin and Woori Yallock. CFA had five trucks at the scene while gas workers tried to isolate the leak.

There were worries about a possible explosion and the incident generated a lot of media interest, especially because the wet conditions made it more difficult for the gas to dissipate.

Senior Station Officer Wayne Hirth sent a warning to residents through the media to "turn off your power, turn off your gas and isolate, close all windows and doors so that any gas that may be around doesn't enter the building."

Residents were allowed back into town after gas levels had been checked. ■



# Mission Command: what it is and why we are doing it

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission was critical of a number of aspects of how CFA exercised command and control during Black Saturday. Decision making, communication, warnings, and foresight were all areas that CFA needed to improve. Evidence from crisis management experts promoted systems of command and control that make decentralisation work, delegate decision making authority and allow the exercising of initiative and local knowledge during major incidents.

In the context of the recommendations from the 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission, CFA has a renewed emphasis on systems of command and control. CFA is now moving to adopt a command philosophy called 'Mission Command'.

Mission Command is based on military command and control doctrine that's been adopted by many armies, including the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Mission Command denotes decentralised leadership and is based around, on the one hand, an expression of the 'Commander's intent' (the outcome expected, and the reason why the leader is seeking that outcome), rather than telling subordinates 'how' to do something. On the other hand, there is an expectation that subordinates will be delegated authority to act and will exercise initiative in carrying out the Commander's intent.

Mission Command holds great potential for CFA. While Mission Command is an operational command and control philosophy, its implementation is expected to result in a change to the whole of CFA culture.

Mission Command promotes an organisational culture in which senior leaders are comfortable with relinquishing control and authority to subordinate leaders (while setting a broad intent). Subordinate leaders accept the responsibility and risks associated with leading and have a bias towards action – particularly in complex and uncertain environments.

The concept of Mission Command presupposes the existence of trust in the ability of subordinates to act wisely and creatively when faced with unexpected situations. There is a mutual understanding between the leader and the subordinate about what outcome is to be achieved. The subordinate is granted freedom to choose unanticipated courses of action in order to accomplish the mission or to achieve the Commander's intent. The concept requires good communication between the leader and the subordinate.

It needs to be reinforced, however, that delegation of authority does not absolve leaders of their responsibilities or their accountability.

Successful adoption of Mission Command should result in an operational system of work that promotes decentralisation through delegated authority, encourages creativity and innovation, and allows the exercising of initiative and freedom of action by subordinates.

So the Mission Command philosophy supports and promotes a culture where:

- missions are defined in terms of effect or outcome
- authority is delegated
- there is mutual trust
- leaders and subordinates know each other well from training and exercising together
- good communication and feedback exists between leaders and subordinates
- there is a shared understanding of the organisation's doctrine
- there is prudent risk-taking
- a high value is placed on learning
- there is a tolerance for well intended mistakes
- there is a propensity for action and initiative
- initiative is constantly rewarded
- there is a belief in the ability of individuals to make sound judgement calls
- the Commander's (or leader's) intent is central to the command and control process.

There has been strong positive support for the concept of Mission Command and CFA is in the early stages of implementing it. CFA has established a steering committee and an advisory committee (the latter comprises CFA members who are serving or former ADF members) to guide implementation. Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria is represented on both these committees. CFA is moving to engage with our key fire and emergency service partners to adopt Mission Command in a collaborative manner.

The initial actions to adopting Mission Command include developing an updated and revised doctrine. This includes an operational decision making process, a revised set of principles of operations and a set of individual CFA member values and behaviours. There is a strong interaction between CFA strategy and the Mission Command project. Over the coming months, you'll hear and see Mission Command a lot. It is an exciting and significant change for CFA and for command and control in emergency services.

If you have any questions or ideas regarding Mission Command or anything in this column, please log in to the CFA Connect Forum ([www.cfconnect.net.au](http://www.cfconnect.net.au)) and comment on the Mission Command thread, or email [missioncommand@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:missioncommand@cfa.vic.gov.au) ■

**Euan Ferguson AFSM**  
Chief Officer

# Women train at Axedale

BY DAVE PATTERSON

Several neighbouring brigades in Region 2 have for some time been trying to organise a women's training day, to recognise the growing number of female operational members at Axedale and its neighbouring brigades.

The day was an opportunity to meet others and discuss issues relating to female operational membership of brigades and to carry out a number of training exercises. The brigades involved were Axedale, Junourton, Mosquito Creek and Goornong.

The day also included a presentation by the Peer Support Group from Loddon Mallee Region (LMR).

Comments from the day showed the overwhelming success and benefits of organising this type of activity.

*"...the peer support lady gave a great relaxed presentation – she talked about support offered and the importance of this type of day to broaden friendships and confidence. For example, she said that if we get called out to a campaign fire, then linking up with another lady that you have met here will make things easier, especially when we need to go to the loo in pairs!"*

*"...the day gave me the confidence to not hide behind the blokes (because they know how to do it!) but to step up and have a go. It also made me feel proud to be 'one of the experienced ones' among the crew, and to actually step forward and show a few tricks of the trade."*

*"...I was also filled with pride and appreciation as Tim McCrohan (incoming captain) described the growing female membership and the important role we'll play in the future of the brigade."*



*"...the day was filled with learning and laughter and we all agreed that this should become a regular event."*

A number of the more experienced members stepped up to take a mentoring role with the less experienced members and it was a pleasure to watch others shine after being involved in the day.

The day's training activities included using the quick fill, floating collar tanks, draughting from overhead sources, hose and pump operation. Tim demonstrated the 'clinker' from the Gilmac fire and talked about 'preserving the scene'.

Thanks to Axedale brigade for organising the day and the trainers for the day – Peter Harkins (Axedale), Tim McCrohan (Goornong), James Hickson (Woodvale) and the LMR team. ■

## Warrnambool Airport exercise

Warrnambool's emergency services were put to the test in May during a mock plane crash at Warrnambool Airport. Warrnambool, Koroit, Winslow and Woodford brigades were just some of the services on the scene to treat casualties and deal with a number of small fires that resulted from small engine parts detaching after impact. The scenario included leaking fuel from the plane and the concern that the plane may catch on fire. ■



Photo by Mathew Deans

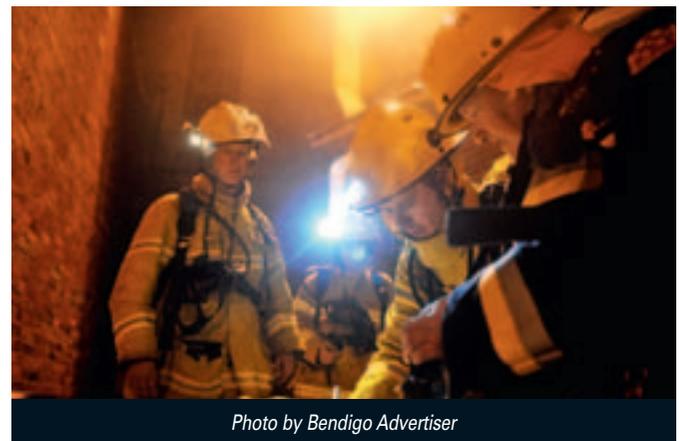


Photo by Bendigo Advertiser

## Go to jail

BY LEITH HILLARD

Fire crews pulled six 'missing people' out of a smoke-filled Bendigo jail in late May as part of a training drill.

Volunteers and crews from Maiden Gully and Marong teamed up to fight a fire and rescue 'squatters' in a scenario put together by Bendigo brigade.

The mission was part of training to keep the structural firefighting and rescue skills of rural firefighters up to date. ■

## Getting clean after chemical spills

BY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

Moonsuits descended on training grounds at Ballarat in late May and Traralgon West in early June as a new method of decontamination at hazardous chemical incidents was tested. The exercise also trialled a new air-inflated tent with several compartments, including a warm water shower.

Volunteers and staff performed the role of civilian casualties to test decontamination of disabled people, emergency workers and children. ■



Photo by Blair Dellelijn



## Chief heats up recruits' training

BY AMY SCHILDBERGER

CFA's top firefighter was hot to trot with a group of new recruits at Fiskville Training College.

Having Chief Officer Euan Ferguson attend the training session was a morale boost for the recruits. He may be the Chief but he hasn't forgotten how to use a fire hose. The hot fire training was the last exercise in their course.

The recruit course ran for 16 weeks and had 25 recruits and six instructors. The course started in late February 2011 and the graduation was held on 10 June 2011. ■

## CFA and MFB share knowledge

BY GEOFF STEWART

In mid May Bayswater brigade hosted a combined training session with members from other Knox Group brigades and MFB crews to share knowledge and experience. The stimulating evening included plenty of discussion about the agencies' abilities to combat chemical/biological/radiation (CBR) incidents. Around 40 members attended the event.

MFB brought along a pumper, Hazmat pod and breathing apparatus bus, and set up a full decontamination area to explain procedures and equipment use.

The training session, which was organised by Training Officer Allan Budziarski and firefighter Greg Stevens, was a huge success, offering members a unique look at ways the two agencies can better combat CBR incidents on their borders.

It's hoped this event will open the door for more interaction and training between both services. ■



## Casterton warms up at WDTG BY MATHEW DEANS

Casterton brigade members had to be on their toes as they responded to a multitude of incidents around the Western District Training Ground (WDTG) in late May.

The Casterton brigade turned out to accidents involving multiple cars on fire, dealt with 'irritated' residents, attended a structure fire and an LPG loading dock on fire involving unconscious victims, and a major gas spill that quickly turned the frosty Penshurst air into a very warm night.

Captain Peter White described the night as a great success for the brigade. Members used the opportunity to improve their firefighting and leadership skills in a controlled environment where individuals were encouraged to step out of their comfort zones and build self confidence.

It was fantastic to see volunteer brigades enjoying the training that was being offered at WDTG and I appreciated the time that brigade members contributed to improving their skills to support their community.

*Mathew Deans is the structural training coordinator for Districts 4 and 5. ■*



## Fire investigation course has wide appeal

BY NICOLE HARVEY

CFA's structural and vehicle fire investigation course was held at the Fiskville Training College in May.

Course participants came from several CFA brigades and district headquarters from across the State. There were also two members from Energy Safe Victoria and one member from Fiji's National Fire Authority.

The training course covered a broad range of topics including fire dynamics, principles of fire investigation, fire scene hazards, arson and incendiary fires, explosives and explosions, vehicle fires, gas and electrical-related fires, report writing and fire scene photography.

There were guest instructors from the Victoria Police Arson and Explosives Squad, Victoria Police Forensic Services Department (Fire and Explosion Investigation Unit and Crime Scene Examination Unit), the insurance industry and Energy Safe Victoria.

The course participants put their new knowledge into practice by carrying out investigations into structural fire scenes. Each fire investigation team assessed the fire scene to establish the origin and cause of the fire, and prepared and presented a report outlining their findings. ■

## Irymple exercise is a blast BY LEITH HILLARD

Sixty personnel from Irymple, Mildura, Merbein and Red Cliffs brigades, SES and New South Wales Rural Fire Service's Buronga brigade gathered for a well-planned training exercise that went off with a bang.

Bernard Denner, Irymple second lieutenant from July, planned the exercise, backed up by the enthusiasm of neighbouring brigades.

"We wanted to make it real," said Bernard. "We had the use of a car yard in an industrial area but there were also some houses not too far away. We did a letterbox drop so everyone was informed."

"We got started about 6pm with a call-out to a major car fire at a wrecking yard with risk to the surrounding structures. The crews minimised the risk but then the second incident began with an 'explosion' in one of the cars in the yard."

"Basically, one of our members, who's suitably qualified, created that explosive scenario. The Merbein gas unit was called in at that time."

"The third part of the incident came when fire from the yard escaped, as planned, into the back paddock."

Bernard used his background in health training to ensure all members were challenged and engaged in the complex scenario.

"It was an exercise for volunteers," continued Bernard. "The staff from Mildura brigade are more used to dealing with this sort of incident so we called on them to observe and help at the debrief."

Irymple brigade Captain Richard Ballard was delighted with the exercise. "I don't think we can have too much training," he said.

"My take is that it's all about working with our sister brigades. This training was relevant to the sort of incidents we might face. Everyone there was doing something and that's really important – to keep up our members' enthusiasm."

"It gave us a skills audit. We can see where we're up to and what we need to work on. How can we do it better next time?"

"We also had the instructor Tony Shilson there. He had some really good input." ■



*Photo by Bernard Denner*

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**Dean Alderson was the lucky new Emergency Memberlink Member that won this for his Brigade.**



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# FEATURE Canberra Summit

## YOUNGSTERS ARE THE FOCUS

BY STEVEN MYERS

An enthusiastic delegation of CFA volunteers and staff attended the 2011 National Emergency Management Volunteers Summit in Canberra at the end of May. CFA was one of 47 volunteer emergency service agencies represented at the two-day summit.

This was the third summit hosted by the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department and it was an opportunity for current and future leaders of volunteer emergency services to discuss priorities and provide possible solutions.

The conference theme was 'The future is in our hands – partnerships, experiences and solutions', with an emphasis on the younger generation. Social media including Facebook and Twitter were used in parallel with the conference program to allow another level of interaction among delegates and volunteers who couldn't attend.

Sessions discussed interagency training partnerships, national transferability of qualifications, challenges to volunteering, young volunteers as leaders of today not only tomorrow, modernisation of volunteer recognition schemes, respecting volunteers' time, engagement through social media, public perceptions of volunteers versus paid emergency service workers and diversity in recruitment.

CFA Executive Manager Operational Training and Volunteerism Lex de Man was impressed by the calibre of CFA representatives. "Our delegates conducted themselves with enormous professionalism. Our CFA volunteers actively contributed in the open forum discussions

and breakout sessions, and did themselves and the organisation proud while shining light on the CFA brand at a conference of national significance," he says.

Delegates attended a formal dinner in the Great Hall of Parliament House where Stuart Diver, the only survivor of the 1997 Thredbo landslide, gave a presentation about resilience in the context of the life changing 65-hour entrapment he survived. Twenty-one year old Fourth Lieutenant of Kallista–The Patch Fire Brigade, Roy Peterson, says: "It was just amazing to be in Parliament House with Stuart Diver and a room full of emergency service volunteer leaders from across Australia. It will be one of those moments in life I'll never forget."

"The next time I'm on the end of a rake-hoe on a strike team, in 45 degree heat and feeling like giving up, I think my memory of Stuart Diver's persistence will help me power on and get the job done," Roy adds.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria Executive Officer Adam Barnett was particularly impressed by our young delegates. "CFA was one of the only volunteer emergency service organisations that gave due credit to its younger members. Half of CFA's delegation was under the age of 25, which provided the right mix of old-school knowledge and wisdom with the fresh, enthusiasm of our young volunteer leaders."

The recommendations from the summit were compiled by the Attorney-General's Department and will be presented to the Australian Emergency Management Forum. ■



CFA's delegation at Canberra was a good mix of young and experienced volunteers. Photo by Amanda Smrdelj

# New OH&S laws spell change for CFA

BY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

The Commonwealth, state and territory governments have agreed to harmonise work health and safety laws (acts, regulations and codes of practice) from 1 January 2012.

One of the changes to the Work Health and Safety Act (WHS Act) classifies volunteers as “workers”, which means CFA will owe the same duty of care and obligations to all its members, both staff and volunteers.

CFA’s OH&S manager, Jeff Green, said: “The implementation of the new legislation reminds all of us that we need to be aware and attentive, and that we each have clear obligations to ensure a safe working environment and a duty to care for ourselves, our colleagues and the broader public while undertaking CFA work.

“Under the new legislation a volunteer will have the same duty of care as an employee, but this should not concern or affect a volunteer if they follow the procedures and training CFA has provided for health and safety,” Jeff said.

“CFA members need to continue to act within the scope of their role, instructions and training and adhere to safe work practices while on the job for CFA. This holds true whether the work is at the fire station, driving a CFA vehicle, on the fireground, at an emergency incident or other CFA



Photo by Keith Pakenham

event. However, a CFA member attending an emergency incident can take actions or make decisions beyond their level of skills and competencies, provided it’s a reasonable response to the situation.”

The CFA Board and the Board of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) are working together to ensure a smooth implementation of the new legislation to make sure it doesn’t impose any additional workload on CFA volunteers.

As part of the national feedback process, CFA and VFBV have made submissions to Safe Work Australia about the proposed ‘Model Work Health and Safety’ Regulations and Codes of Practice draft documents. ■



# CFA shows off its rescue skills

BY NANCY THOMPSON

The inaugural Disaster Response Capability Expo in Melbourne made a successful debut at the end of March. CFA was on hand to showcase its emergency service skills and capabilities, including high-angle rescue and information about the Incident Management Team training project.

The aim of the Expo was to show the capabilities of Victoria’s emergency services, and there were displays from CFA, MFB, VICSES, Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police and DSE.

The CFA stand had a mix of emergency response equipment and assets including CFA’s aerial pumper and Hazmat vehicle. The IMT Training project team showed how incidents are managed in crisis situations.

Acting Specialist Response Officer Doug Broom, head of the Technical Rescue Team, was on hand to answer questions on wind farm exercises, rope rescue, confined space rescue, trench rescue, and urban search and rescue situations.

A display from the rope rescue team showed off the equipment and techniques that can be used to rescue people trapped at height, in confined spaces or other difficult-to-access locations.

“These demonstrations aim to give people a real sense of what goes on during a major incident and how it’s important for each person to have a specific role,” said Doug. ■

# ID project moves forward

BY NATASHA ROCCA

Over the past three months, over 200 CFA volunteers across the State have given essential feedback to the member identification project team about redeveloping the CFA identification system.

The consultation process used blogs on CFA Connect, emails, phone calls and face-to-face meetings with volunteer groups and individuals. Members described their experiences with the difficulties in moving through traffic management points and vehicle management systems, as well as their thoughts on previous and current CFA identification systems.

Some useful insight was gained to ensure the best possible volunteer identification options were made available.

Gary Lyttle, a long serving and experienced CFA volunteer, who's also on the Board of VFBV, said the new identification system was essential to ensure CFA members were able to move through traffic management points quickly and efficiently.

"The first step is getting 60,000 CFA members an ID that is recognisable. From here I believe we need to look to the future and develop new technologies," he said.

"We are not at this stage yet but I think this is something we can work towards." ■



# Township Protection Plans double in size

BY SONIA MACLEAN

Township protection plans (TPPs) will expand from four pages to eight to allow more flexibility with local information.

The expanded format is one of a number of changes to the TPP standard template, a document that will form the basis for local plans throughout the State.

All new TPPs produced before next fire season will use the revised template, but existing plans will remain until they are phased out from the beginning of 2012.

Project Manager Paul Harris said that brigades, community members and leaders, and stakeholder partners had all contributed to the process.

"Our aim is to develop a product that backs up the Prepare-Act-Survive message with relevant local information, set out in the clearest possible way for communities," said Paul.

TPPs may include key contacts and organisations, community assets, high risk vegetation areas and other local hazards, access and egress roads, and available bushfire shelter options. ■

# DVD supports awareness

BY HUGO ZOLLER

Maiden Gully Fire Brigade has helped to produce a DVD designed to help CFA members deal with stress and prepare for trauma. Research shows that people recover better from trauma in the long term if they are mentally prepared beforehand.

The DVD describes the effects of a traumatic event on the human body, explains the physiological changes in the brain and gives tips on how to manage stress. It also outlines the services provided by CFA for all its members.

Maiden Gully firefighter Dennis Crouch features in the DVD while brigade members Brian Perry and Captain Andrew Howlett provided valuable support in the production process.

Paul Tangey from District HQ organised the catering and filming permit, and assisted the production crew. Norm Bowen, Loddon Mallee peer coordinator, contributed his knowledge of firefighter and peer support and features in the DVD.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson also features in the DVD, acknowledging that CFA members will experience stress from time to time – whether from personal issues or from their demanding work.

"Natural resilience will help a quick recovery in a lot of cases," said Euan, "but all members must know that there is support available to help them resume life as it was before."

"CFA is a caring organisation. As a member, you are important to the community, important to your family, and important to us. Whether it's for you, a member of your family or another member, we have peers, chaplains, counsellors and psychologists available in times of need." ■



Norm Bowen, Loddon Mallee peer coordinator, contributed his knowledge

# CFA welcomes Charter legislation

BY LEITH HILLARD

The passing of The Country Fire Authority Amendment (Volunteer Charter) Act 2011 through the Victorian Parliament in early May is a step in the right direction for CFA and its volunteers.

“We welcome the introduction of this legislation,” said CFA Chief Executive Officer Mick Bourke, “and reaffirm the importance of CFA volunteers to our organisation and the Victorian community. The legislation recognises that CFA exists because of its volunteers, backed by the support of our career staff, both operational and administrative.

“This is another significant step forward in defining CFA’s future direction. Volunteers are critical in fulfilling our mission of protecting lives and property and our vision of working together with communities to keep Victorians safe from fire and other emergencies.

“We also reaffirm our commitment to open consultation with our volunteers and also through Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria. This commitment is enshrined in the legislation and we will be providing further detail about this consultation in the near future.”

Mick noted the “happy coincidence” of the legislation passing on the eve of National Volunteer Week, the largest celebration of volunteers and volunteerism in Australia.

“National Volunteer Week’s motto was ‘Inspiring the volunteer in you’,” he said, “and I know that many people will continue to be inspired by the example of CFA volunteers.

“Let me take this opportunity to again thank you for your outstanding service to your communities across the State,” said Mick. ■



## Remembering the fallen

BY KAYLA MASKELL

CFA marked International Firefighters Day and St Florian’s Day on 4 May with a service at Fiskville.

Guests gathered beside the memorial wall, established after the Ash Wednesday fires in 1983, with 65 plaques showing the name and brigade of each CFA firefighter who has lost their life since CFA began in 1944.

“This memorial service ensures that service and sacrifice of those CFA members who have tragically lost their lives in the line of duty will never be forgotten,” said Chief Officer Euan Ferguson.

“It also allows an opportunity for family members, friends and brigade members to come together and remember those who are no longer with us. It is a poignant reminder of the risks that people in our community face every day when they turn out to a job.”

This year’s memorial service was also attended by the Red Knights, a social motorcycle group made up of CFA members.

“We thought, being firefighters ourselves, that the memorial service would be a great thing to attend,” said Joseph Giarrusso, secretary of the Craigieburn chapter. “We sent two representatives from each chapter – 10 in total – and they were all stoked to be there and felt privileged to be a part of it.”

St Florian is the Patron Saint of Firefighters. ■



Photos by Blair Dellelijn

## CFA Connect gets a makeover

BY LIVIA DE SANCTIS AND JENNA CLARKE

In May Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley officially launched the redesigned CFA Connect website at the Grampians Headquarters in Ballarat, and emphasised the importance of online communication.

CFA's Digital Media Manager Martin Anderson also spoke about the importance of CFA Connect in establishing organisation and community resilience in emergency management.

In June, CFA Connect was recognised by Senator Kate Lundy at the 2011 Australian Government ICT Awards in the Sydney Convention Centre. Senator Lundy presented a finalist certificate to Martin in the Excellence in eGovernment: Government 2.0 category, and CFA Manager Corporate Communications Guy Sigley received a finalist certificate in the Government 2.0 Innovator category.

Due to the amount of information now being published on CFA Connect, it was difficult for the old site to keep up. So the redesigned site now has:

- an 'Around the State' section that allows you to quickly access your district's news from the homepage
- an embedded video player that lets you browse and play CFA TV videos directly from the homepage
- a feed of the latest five uploaded blogs on the homepage
- access to 165 stories on the homepage, a huge increase from the previous site's homepage that displayed 14 news stories
- a media hub that gives the media a place to access the latest media releases and audio clips
- a handy left-hand column that lets you easily share news via social media
- a column displayed on all news pages that allows forward navigation to the latest headlines, blogs, social media links and a featured video feed
- a homepage feed of the latest uploaded photos.

The relaunch coincided with CFA Connect's second birthday. Over the last two years 2,863 news stories, 7,870 forum posts and 141 blogs have been uploaded. The site receives an average of 37,000 visits a month. ■



From left: Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley and Martin Anderson at the relaunch. Photo by Keith Pakenham

## Firestar Phoenix now on sale

Following the success of Firestar Rose, Firestar Phoenix is the new rose in the series designed to support CFA.

The rose was named after the mythical bird that builds a nest that ignites and then the bird rises from the ashes to begin life anew. The phoenix is a symbol of hope.

The Firestar Phoenix and the new season Firestar Rose are now available to buy online for \$26 each, with \$11.50 from the sale of each rose going to a CFA brigade of the customer's choice.

This multiple award-winning rose is a very fragrant French rose grown by Knight's Roses in the gateway to the Barossa. This plant produces roses in two shades like early summer mornings, when night gives way to day. Before being set aglow by the sun, the sky becomes tinged with crimson pink. On a dense bush buds open out in a cup shape. The dark pink melts little by little into a bright yellow as the sun rises. Deep pink buds unfurl to beautifully scented apricot pink flowers on a background of dense dark green foliage.

It grows to around 1.3m tall.

For more information and to buy the rose visit

[www.firestarrose.com.au](http://www.firestarrose.com.au)

Deliveries of the bare-rooted rose will only be available until the end of August 2011. ■



## Bunnykins hops into museum

BY JENNA CLARKE

The Victorian Fire Services Museum recently became home to the very last CFA 'Bush Firefighter' Bunnykins. The 1,000 limited edition figurine was specially developed as a tribute to CFA's firefighters by Waterford Crystal Wedgewood Royal Doulton Australia, and is now on display.

Last Easter, CFA ran a popular competition for the only other available Bunnykins in the country. The winner was volunteer Barry O'Connor of Samaria brigade. "I don't usually receive phone calls from headquarters, so I immediately thought that I must have forgotten to lodge a report! I was very pleasantly surprised to have been drawn as the winner," said Barry. ■



Barry O'Connor of Samaria fire brigade won his own Bunnykins



## Narre Warren has room for three trucks

BY JODIE WEIR

Narre Warren's new three-bay station opened in early April. It includes meeting rooms, training rooms and offices for the brigade management team.

CFA Narre Warren Captain Paul Hardy said the new station would make a huge difference to the brigade's training and how it responds.

"We used to park a truck in our old training and meeting room, as we had three vehicles in a two-bay station. The training room in the new station is a lot larger than the one we're in and we don't have to park a truck in it," he said.

"When I joined 15 years ago, we were doing 200 calls a year and now we are doing 600–700. So the area has certainly grown and I think that's why this station now suits this area.

"We'd like to thank the local community, who have donated money over the years. We've spent \$25,000 out of the brigade's budget towards the station. We'd also like to thank CFA, CFA's building and property department, Operations Officer Cliff O'Connor and all the members led by Lieutenant Andrew Davey who have done a great job setting up a fantastic asset for the local community." ■

## Lismore's dual purpose station

BY PATRICK SHAWCROSS

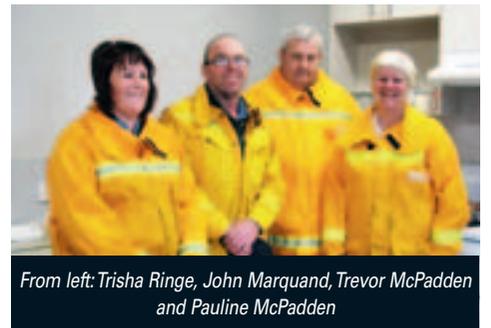
A large crowd of CFA volunteers and staff, special guests and locals attended the opening of the new dual agency Lismore fire and ambulance station. The building is also the headquarters of the Lismore Group and an established DivComm.

Service awards totalling 465 years were also presented and Operations Manager Malcolm Fallon gave particular praise and thanks to partners who go unrewarded.

District 6 relieving Operations Officer Dean Manson and District 6 Corangamite catchment BASO Jenna McMeel worked hard to ensure everything ran smoothly on the day. A special mention must also go to Lismore brigade members who ensured the station was in an impeccable state for the ceremony.

The new Elingamite–Glenfyne station also opened on the same day. The local Elingamite–Glenfyne brigade community showed its hospitality by providing a well-catered BBQ lunch for all those attending the brigade opening.

Particular emphasis was placed on the local children present, to make the point that the future success of the brigade will rely on these young kids. ■



From left: Trisha Ringe, John Marquand, Trevor McPadden and Pauline McPadden

## New Whittlesea station takes command

BY KAYLA MASKELL

It was a whole community celebration at the official opening of Whittlesea Fire Brigade's new station in early April, with more than 300 people attending.

"It was far above our expectation and we had a whole range of people come along. It went well and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves," said Brigade Captain Ken Williamson.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Peter Ryan MP, officially opened the four-bay station. It replaces the previous station, which had operated from its Church St site since 1987.

Ken said the new \$1.5 million station better accommodates the needs of the active, busy and growing brigade of Whittlesea.

"This new station will see so many benefits for Whittlesea brigade, replacing an old station that we'd outgrown and that was becoming increasingly crowded and difficult for members to turn out," said Ken.

"Now, we have a four-bay station, including a large motor room as well as a spacious multipurpose room and training facility on site.



Photo by Blair Dellelijn

"And thanks to additional space, the station will be used as a divisional command centre in the event of a bushfire and other significant incidents."

Ken said the brigade's capacity to respond was further boosted by the addition of a new 3.4C tanker, which was also presented at the opening.

Whittlesea brigade is one of a handful of emergency medical response (EMR) brigades, having received specialised training from Ambulance Victoria as emergency first responders.

"This means our members are trained to assist with CPR, among other things, as well as provide level two first aid until paramedics arrive. This new tanker will have the capacity to carry EMR equipment, additional to our other vehicle designated to carry the gear," said Ken. ■

## New brigade for Wyndham Vale

BY KAYLA MASKELL

A new CFA fire brigade will be formed in Wyndham Vale in July. The resolution to establish the brigade – currently a satellite station of Werribee and known as Manor Lakes Fire Brigade – was passed at a public meeting in May.

Northern and Western Metropolitan Region Acting Regional Manager John Deering said the community support for the new brigade was fantastic.

“Wyndham Vale is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia,” he said, “and now is the right time to form a new brigade in this area.”

Werribee Fire Brigade Captain Michael Wells said the move was well supported. “Werribee Fire Brigade has always got the community’s best interests at heart, which is why we’ve been involved in the push for a new fire station in the area for some time now,” he said.

Werribee was the first CFA brigade to open in the area, in 1915, followed by Truganina in 1940, Hoppers Crossing in 1977 and Point Cook in 2001.

More than half the people who attended the public meeting expressed interest in becoming a member of the brigade. ■



## Strath Creek celebrates station

BY SONIA MACLEAN

The Strath Creek/Reedy Creek brigade and its communities celebrated the official opening of the Strath Creek Fire Station in mid May. The brigade also used the event to present many CFA service awards.

Brigade member John Hatchell-Brown and CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson cut a ceremonial cake, and a new memorial garden – dedicated to the two lives lost in the 2009 fires – was presented to the community.

There was also a display outlining the history of Strath Creek brigade.

The Strath Creek/Reedy Creek brigade has 69 members, which is a great commitment for such a small community.

A special presentation of a Firestar Rose was made to Euan and Sharyn McDonald, who’ve recently left the district after 56 years of service to the brigade. ■



Woodend Captain Mick Christie receives the commendation letter from Operations Manager Mark Gilmour. Photo by Keith Mason

## Woodend commendation

BY MIKE DORNAU

A rare Victoria Police commendation was presented to Woodend Fire Brigade in May for its handling of a fire this year in which a local resident died.

CFA District 2 Operations Manager Mark Gilmour made the presentation, saying he had never heard such praise made to a brigade from the Victoria Police Arson and Explosives Squad and an arson chemist.

“It was reported that the firefighters displayed a high standard of firemanship by using minimal water and causing minimal scene disruption which enabled an extensive, thorough investigation and analysis of the scene,” noted Mark in the letter of commendation.

“It is imperative in these circumstances that brigades not only protect and preserve the scene for investigation purposes, but also protect and preserve the dignity of the deceased.

“The Woodend brigade should feel justly proud with the recognition of their performance and professional approach by another emergency service. The high standard you have set reinforces why CFA is held in such high regard within our communities.”

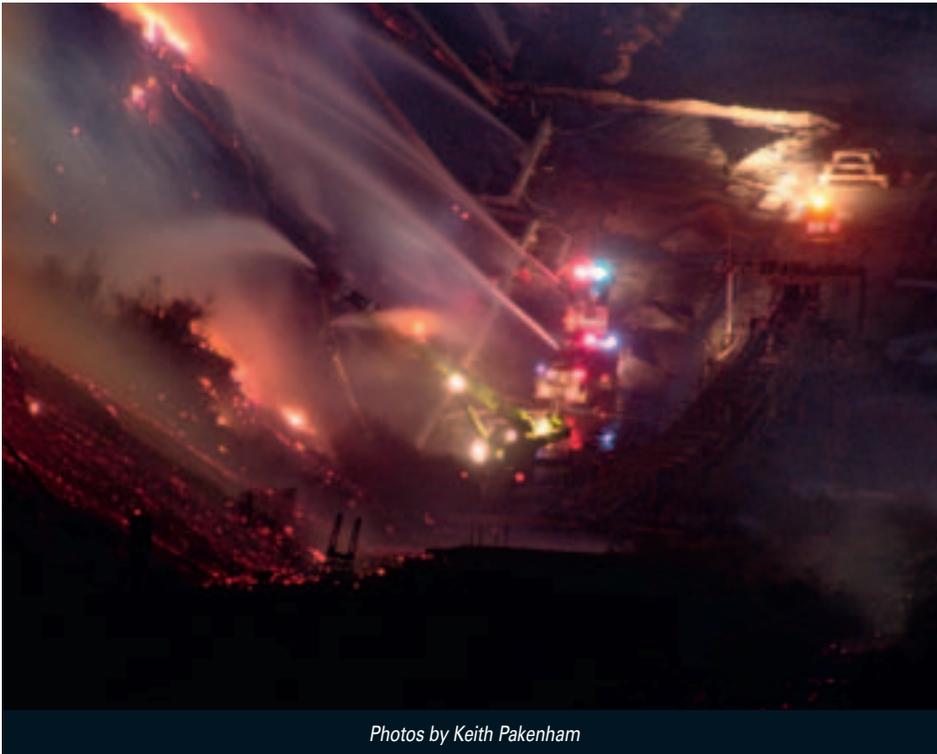
Woodend brigade First Lieutenant Mike Dornau said it was a privilege for the brigade to receive such recognition.

“It’s a great honour and it’s also a justification of the training we go through,” he said.

Mike praised the careful work of all those involved. “I recall that the team that went in initially did a great job,” he said.

“They realised it wasn’t too dangerous so they tried ventilating, which is essentially airing out the smoke so less water is needed.

“They used the minimal amount of water and common sense prevailed. The crew did a great job.” ■



Photos by Keith Pakenham



## Mateship at Morwell BY JASON LEIGH

**T**he Morwell brigade operates in an unusual environment. It's an integrated station surrounded by coal mines and power stations as well as facing bushfire risks.

As well as major infrastructure, such as the La Trobe Regional Hospital and the Latrobe Valley Regional Airport, the brigade works in an area that produces over 80 per cent of Victoria's electricity.

There is usually a large fire at one of the major facilities every year, which includes the Hazelwood power station, Morwell open cut mine, Yallourn power station and open cut mine, Energy Brix power station and Australian Paper Manufacturers.

"We often have to use thermal imagery for coal fires as it produces such a clear flame. You can smell the fire but not see it," said District 10 Operations Officer Shane Mynard.

"You have to trickle water over it. Coal is a water repellent and blasting water at it can cause explosions of embers. We've actually seen hunks of flaming coal float past us – still burning on top of the water."

According to Qualified Firefighter Colin Corbett, they recently put 400 litres of water over a coal fire the same area as a dining table, only to find it reignited when they returned with more water. It took another 400 litres and two hours to put out the fire.

The brigade has attended some huge jobs at the coal mines as well as house fires with multiple fatalities, an explosion that almost levelled an entire street in the town, incidents at the Esso gas plant in Sale, fires in the Strzelecki ranges and the 2009 bushfires.

"Even house fires are different around here due to the presence and build-up of coal dust, which is extremely flammable and blows into people's roofs. If you can stop the fire at a room and a roof it's a good save. Even green grass will burn due to coal dust," said Shane.

Through these jobs and shared experiences, the brigade has grown close, and the staff and volunteers all train, work and socialise together.

"We're an extremely strong integrated brigade and all look after each other – you have to. I find it a privilege to work with the team I do," said Shane.

First Lieutenant Pat Quinn has been with Morwell brigade for 29 years and has seen it grow from one to three fire officers.

"We have a good relationship with the staff, which I've always pushed for. It's something that has to work. Some of the career staff have stayed here for 15 years, which says something about the brigade and local area."

Pat began volunteering as part of his school's Duke of Edinburgh program and has loved it ever since.

"We've experienced a lot and attended some huge incidents. It really bonds you together, like the feeling a football team shares after winning a grand final – the Morwell brigade is like my grand final team."

"For me it's about mateship. The Brigade is there for each other, they back each other up. I've knocked back jobs to stay in the area because I see the brigade as my anchor. I can rely on these people and I have a passion for the brigade," said Pat.

One of the bigger incidents the brigade tackled was the fire at the Hazelwood open cut mine in 2006 (see photos above). It took two weeks to put out and caused \$300 million worth of damage.

"Nearly the whole coal face was alight and we were working 24 hours a day with strike teams from across the State. There was so much to deal with at once that a lot of people outside the area weren't used to, and many got sick from the heat stress and carbon. ■



## Bacchus Marsh turns 100

BY SARAH LONG

Bacchus Marsh Fire Brigade celebrated 100 years of service to the community in late May with a series of events including a civic reception, the launch of a book and the sinking of a time capsule.

Brigade Captain Nathan Ractcliffe said the community showed great support for the brigade, particularly the torchlight parade. “We owe the community a big thanks for braving the weather, rugging up and coming out to cheer us on,” said Nathan.

The main streets of Bacchus Marsh were lit with hundreds of brass kerosene lanterns, as more than 30 brigades from across the State took part in the opening of the weekend’s celebrations with a torchlight parade. The brigade was accompanied by pipe bands, tankers, CFA vehicles and antique fire appliances.

The procession finished at the Bacchus Marsh Public Hall where families and more than 500 CFA members took part in a civic reception. Also, more than 600 people visited the fire station on Main St during the open day.

The brigade’s history book was launched by the longest-living former member, 91-year-old Pat Adair. “Pat came to every event over the weekend,” Nathan added.

The book, ‘Ring the Bell: Celebrating 100 years of service’, was co-written by Chris Eggleston, Vicki Tudball and Dianne Barnett, who are members of the Bacchus Marsh Urban Fire Brigade. It includes a range of stories and information going back to 1910, when Bacchus Marsh brigade was established. The book is named after the 100-year-old bell that’s still housed at the local brigade. ■



Photo by Keith Pakenham

## Mt Eliza celebrates 75 years

BY TRISTAN FAITHFULL

As a part of its 75th anniversary celebrations, Mount Eliza brigade opened its doors to the community in May with an activity-filled open day.

A display of old photos, new articles and turnout gear showcased the rich history of the brigade. Captain Koala ensured the kids enjoyed the challenge of the smoke tent and fire hose squirting, followed by a sausage sizzle.

A display of old and current firetrucks included Frankston’s Teleboom, a 1963 Austin front-mounted pumper from the Fire Services Museum, an Austin tanker supplied by a local collector, and the brigade’s current vehicles.

A great talking point during the day was the CFA Firestar Rose for sale and the brigade’s native garden display of local fire-resistant plants.

The celebrations will continue later in the year with a formal cocktail function. ■

## Sunday morning fun at Sunbury

BY KAYLA MASKELL

More than 150 people gathered to celebrate Sunbury fire brigade’s 100th anniversary in early April, by attending a special breakfast held at the Gap Road station.

Brigade member and event organiser Joe Consiglio thought the breakfast was a huge success. “We were really happy with the turnout and also that the majority of people were past members,” he said.

Joe said this included Ron Forbes who is the brother of John Forbes – member and brigade secretary during the 1960s and 70s.

“We have an award, the J.A. Forbes Memorial Award, presented each year to the most consistent member so it was fantastic to be able to have John’s brother attend,” he said.

Although Ron is now a member with Queenscliff – also celebrating its centenary this year – his involvement with CFA began with Sunbury brigade.

“It was a great event, we really enjoyed it,” Ron said. “I used to coach a running team and saw three or four people there that used to be in that team during the early 1960s.

“Someone said I was the oldest past member there so that might give you an idea of just how old I am.”



Photo by Blair Dellemijn

Joe said the long distance travelled by past members such as Ron was much appreciated, with some even attending from as far as Mildura.

“It was just fantastic, it was low key but far exceeded our expectations and we’ll now look forward to the next big centenary celebration, the gala dinner in September with comedian Michael Pope as MC,” he said.

Several events are being held throughout the year to mark Sunbury’s milestone. During May and June there was a display about the history of Sunbury brigade at the George Evans Museum. Sunbury brigade members were grateful for the help received from the Fire Services Museum to set up this display. ■



# CFA gets physical at Championships



Photos by Keith Pakenham and Blair Bellemijn

## URBAN SENIORS RESULTS

### DRY AGGREGATE

1st	Wendouree	26 points
2nd	Kangaroo Flat	21 points
3rd	Melton	9 points

### WET AGGREGATE

1st	Maryvale	58 points
2nd	Kangaroo Flat	52 points
3rd	Stanhope	48 points

### SECTION AGGREGATES: A

1st	Maryvale	66 points
2nd	Melton A	56 points
3rd	Wendouree	54 points

### SECTION AGGREGATES: B

1st	Kangaroo Flat	83 points
2nd	Tatura	34 points
3rd	Trafalgar/Moe	32 points

### SECTION AGGREGATES: C

1st	Kooweerup	58 points
2nd	Stanhope	48 points
3rd	Geelong West	30 points

## RURAL SENIORS RESULTS

### DIVISION A AGGREGATE

1st	Napoleon-Enfield A	58 points
2nd	Hurstbridge A	28 points
3rd	Hurstbridge B	21 points

### DIVISION B AGGREGATE

1st	Mannerim B	22 points
Equal 2nd	Chiltern A	21 points
Equal 2nd	Miners Rest A	21 points

### DIVISION C AGGREGATE

1st	Mt Buninyong B	37 points
2nd	Eldorado C	22 points
Equal 3rd	Loddon Mallee Region A	18 points
Equal 3rd	Swan Hill B	18 points

## RURAL JUNIORS RESULTS

### CHAMPION BRIGADE

1st	Greta	75 points
2nd	Irrewarra	55 points
3rd	Linton	52 points

### 11-13 YEARS AGGREGATE

1st	Linton A	52 points
2nd	Irrewarra A	48 points
3rd	Greta A	36 points

### 11-15 YEARS AGGREGATE

1st	Greta A	38 points
2nd	Strathmerton A	24 points
3rd	Connewarra A	22 points



# Home Bushfire Advice Service

BY SONIA MACLEAN

**F**ire Safety Officer Scott Winder shares some of his experiences inspecting properties in high risk communities.

## What attracted you to your job?

I enjoy volunteering with my local brigade and getting out there and meeting people so I decided to take things one step further and join the fire safety officer team.

## What's the advantage of these individual visits?

In one street or area you might come across five or six types of house in a range of conditions. So instead of giving people general advice and asking them to go through it by themselves, we walk around their garden and sit at their kitchen table pointing out things. People then ask those little questions they often forget about. I'm trying to get the idea out of people's minds that "it won't happen to me".

## What kind of response do you get from residents?

They've all been fantastic. People are so willing and so appreciative and I can see they really take things on board. People often want reassurance that they are doing the right thing.

## What issues are commonly overlooked?

I often see people using wood chips or straw as mulch, and many people put mulch against their house. They don't realise this is a huge risk. These materials are extremely flammable so I suggest alternatives such as pebbles, sand or rocks.

Water supply is another issue, even for property owners who plan to leave early. People are quite surprised when I tell them that if there's a fire in the area it's likely that the electricity will fail and there won't be much more than a dribble of water coming out of taps. Only about five per cent of people have a water tank with a backup diesel pump.

We see many houses with branches and vegetation overhanging the house.

We encourage residents to get to know their neighbours, and if there is an elderly resident in their street find out if they need help with clearing vegetation or cutting branches. ■



Photo by Jade Smithard



Photo by Keith Pakenham

# Winter fire safety

BY JASON LEIGH

**T**he joint CFA/MFB Winter Fire Safety campaign began on 1 June to encourage all Victorians to be vigilant during the colder months.

Members of the Boronia, Montrose and The Basin brigades were joined by Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley to launch the campaign to metropolitan media.

Sale brigade members and Minister for Police and Emergency Services Peter Ryan launched the campaign to regional media and used a Year 7 cooking class to highlight the dangers of leaving cooking unattended.

First Lieutenant David Thewlis showed Class 7.4 from Sale College how to use a fire blanket, and they promised to remind their parents to check the smoke alarms in their houses. ■

# Information for all Victorians

BY JASON LEIGH

**C**FA has been recognised for its work in making information more accessible for people who are blind or have low vision, with a 'Highly Commended Award' from Vision Australia, for its Making a Difference campaign.

"It's essential for us to provide potentially life saving information to all Victorians, especially people who may need extra assistance such as those who are blind or have low vision," said CEO Mick Bourke.

CFA recently produced the FireReady Kit booklet in audio format, as well as a version for DAISY players that is popular with blind and vision impaired readers. CFA already produces a range of bushfire safety material as part of the Programs for Diverse Populations project.

"I encourage people to let those around them know about our audio FireReady Kit, as well as our range of materials that have been translated into 32 languages. It might be a family member or a neighbour, but we all know someone who could benefit from this information," Mick said.

If you want CFA's free audio and translated materials, ring the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667. You can also find them on our website, [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au). ■



## Volunteer educators' open day BY PAUL TANGEY

The Loddon Mallee Community Education Group is holding an open day at the Community Safety shed in Hinch Street, Long Gully, Bendigo, on Sunday 24 July. The group (shown above) would like to invite all brigade representatives from the Loddon Mallee region.

There will be a demonstration of the group's smoke house and cubby house and its trailer, marquee and pull-up signs will also be on display. It's a great opportunity to meet group members and community safety staff over a BBQ lunch and learn more about what they do.

If you'd like to attend please email [p.tangey@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:p.tangey@cfa.vic.gov.au). Over the years the Loddon Mallee Community Education Group has been a vital resource delivering CFA programs, displays and information sessions.

As well as attending many annual events, the group supports brigade and community-based activities and aims to make sure that the Loddon Mallee community is informed, prepared and safer in regards to fire. ■



*Children from St James' School meet Captain Koala*

## Fire Safe Kids launch BY SONIA MACLEAN

With the help of Captain Koala, CFA launched its revamped education program, Fire Safe Kids, with April events at Toolangi Primary School and St James' Parish School, Sebastopol.

St James' students and teachers were thrilled by a special visit from Sebastopol brigade and Captain Koala. Fire Safe Kids presenter

Christine Dudley led a 'Stop, Drop and Roll' exercise with a parachute simulating smoke.

Schools, early learning centres and youth groups can all participate in Fire Safe Kids by contacting their local CFA district headquarters or by calling 1800 620 362. ■

## Brigade goes above and beyond BY KAYLA MASKELL

Members of Hoppers Crossing brigade have added a special touch to a rescue they carried out at a Werribee house in early April.

The brigade was first on the scene to a call for help when a five-year-old boy trapped his arm in between the tyre and frame of a bicycle. With time against them, Hoppers Crossing and Werribee brigade members had to cut the bike apart to free the boy.

“The job was time critical as the ambulance suspected the boy’s arm was fractured or broken,” Hoppers Crossing firefighter Justin Lyons said.

Justin added that the boy was extremely calm during the rescue and was later taken to Sunshine Hospital. “For his age he was just fantastic and the ambos did a great job keeping him calm,” he said.

But the girl who owned the bike found it hard to watch it being cut apart. “She was pretty shattered about her bike,” said Justin.

“We were thinking about how we could help get the girl a new bike so I called Neil Mitchell’s program on 3AW to see if he could help.”

Justin appeared on the program and asked if someone would donate a bike. Within minutes the calls came flooding in and Melbourne Bicycle Centre in Prahran gave the girl a new bike.

“It was fantastic that there were so many people offering to help,” said Justin. ■



Photo by Wyndham Weekly



## Barmah armed against harm

BY SONIA MACLEAN

It’s always interesting to find out what drives our CFA captains. Why do they put their hand up to accept the responsibility?

“It’s us going up against Mother Nature,” said Christina Jackson, captain of Barmah brigade. “The more you know the safer you are. I just find everything about it fascinating.”

Barmah brigade currently has seven women members. Most of the men work in Shepparton or Echuca-Moama, so it’s the women who usually respond first to a call.

“We tell everyone we’re the best,” laughed Christina. “It’s good kudos for us to get out there as a bunch of women. We’re doing a very serious job but we all get along well and we make it so that we can go out and have a good time.”

Christina has completed a number of training modules including using a chainsaw and breathing apparatus. She is keen to do more, with her sights set on strike team leader and AIIMS (Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System) training.

Barmah, north-west of Shepparton in District 22, is bordered by forest both in Victoria and over the Murray River in New South Wales.

“If there’s a fire over the river then we get there first,” said Christina. “Then we do the sensible thing and hand it over to the New South Wales services.” ■

# Relay has huge Appeal

BY KAYLA MASKELL

**M**ore than 35 CFA members joined with MFB to take part in the second 24-hour relay to raise funds for the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal. This year, there were more supporters, more laps run and more money was raised.

Relay co-organiser and Boronia Leading Firefighter James Wong said the event brings the two services together.

"It's not about breaking records, but thanks to the support of so many people, from the runners to the CFA Sporting and Recreation Association who provided catering throughout the night, we have been able to donate more than \$18,400 to a very worthy cause," said James.

CFA members enthusiastically embraced this appeal by rattling tins and knocking on doors across the State. ■



The Knox Group of fire brigades. All photos on this page are by Blair Dellelijn



## New regional manager for Gippsland

BY JASON LEIGH

**M**ark Reid has been appointed Acting Regional Manager for Gippsland, bringing with him a wealth of experience that includes two years as Chief Officer of Fiji's fire services.

He joined CFA 32 years ago as a volunteer with the South Warrandyte Rural Fire Brigade and is now responsible for Gippsland's 147 fire brigades, 84 staff and 6,400 volunteers.

"Gippsland has the most diverse range of brigades, risks and hazards – and the most fantastic group of practical and no-nonsense staff and volunteers," Mark said.

"We have remote rural brigades where the next supporting brigade is over an hour away, as well as highly skilled urban brigades protecting critical infrastructure.

"My focus is on providing support to our people on the front line. I believe in heading out to visit our volunteers, and meeting them around kitchen tables as opposed to offices."

At age 29, Mark was the second youngest station officer in charge of a fire station (the youngest was ex-Chief Officer Ron Orchard), and has worked in a number of stations from Portland to Morwell.

He moved permanently to Gippsland in 1999 and was the senior operational officer responsible for managing CFA resources for the 2003 and 2006 Gippsland fires.

Mark's career has also included a senior role with CFA's Bushfires Taskforce, time at CFA headquarters running the State Emergency Coordination Centre and two years running Fiji's National Fire Authority as Chief Officer.

"My time in Fiji taught me a lot about leadership. I had to implement strategic planning that would succeed after CFA staff (including me) had left, and worked with a lot of different communities to achieve some meaningful goals," he said.

"It's always good when your bosses think the way you do and I'm excited about the direction that the CFA board, CEO and Chief Officer are providing. My job is to ensure that this new direction is carried out and that our members are supported 100 per cent.

"I look forward to working with my team to continue delivering the innovative and cutting edge support to the field that Gippsland is becoming known for."

Mark lives in Paynesville with wife Carmel and his two adopted Ethiopian children (Sebi, 15, and Jack, 13), and he enjoys working on old timber boats. ■



Photo by Michael Grattan

## Captain at 24

BY SONIA MACLEAN

**A**t just 24 years of age, Evan Bouchier, a dairy farmer on his family's farm, is half way through his first term as captain of Strathmerton Fire Brigade and is, by all reports, a very level-headed character.

After starting out as a junior with the CFA running club, Evan became an active firefighter six years ago and moved up quickly through the ranks to be elected captain last year.

"Volunteering is all about doing your bit for the community," he said.

As well as looking after the Strathmerton station, Evan has to keep tabs on a satellite station out of town. "The couple of blokes out there are pretty quick to let me know what's going on," Evan said.

Strathmerton, close to Cobram, is bisected by the Murray Valley Highway which can throw up a few challenges for firefighters.

It's also home to Bega Foods, a major international food processing company. ■



Photo by Shepparton News

## Sherene on ADF operation

BY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

**A**CFA training coordinator at Fiskville and BASO coordinator in District 15, Sherene Mounier (née Harrison) has temporarily swapped her blue CFA uniform for the sandy coloured desert pattern of the Australian Army.

Sherene is a long-serving member of the Australian Army Reserve and is currently on full-time duty as a movement control officer in support of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) operations in the Middle East.

ADF movement control and coordination involves the planning, routing, scheduling and control of personnel and cargo to and from Australia and at various points in the Middle East.

Before her deployment, Sherene said she was looking forward to using her skills as both an Army reservist and as a CFA administration officer in her temporary role.

"The demands of working in CFA during the fire season have taught me how to work in a pressure environment," said Sherene, "while the work I've done in the Army has improved my skills in applying attention to detail.

"Once I get back from the Middle East, working in CFA incident control is my next objective." ■



Photo by David Mounier

## Winslow juniors learn new skills BY MATHEW DEANS

Once a fortnight the kids in the Winslow and surrounding community look forward to putting on their CFA overalls and getting down to the business of learning a new skill or making a difference in the community.

Winslow Rural Fire Brigade currently has nine active junior members. The brigade members don't participate in any running events, but enjoy meeting every fortnight for an hour and a half to have fun and gain new skills they can use and develop throughout their lives.

Michael McDonald, 15, described the activities at the Winslow Junior Brigade as "awesome. I really like the fact that I have the opportunity to learn how to use the equipment on the tanker. I am looking forward to doing my minimum skills training and being able to turn out with my dad." Michael's father is a member of the brigade and is First Deputy Group Officer of the Merri Group.

Oliver Massey, 15, said participating in the Junior CFA program at Winslow was "gutsy". Oliver has been a junior member for four years. He has really enjoyed his time in the brigade and appreciates the time and effort the junior leaders devote to teaching everyone.

Oliver said he has gained a lot of skills from being a member, ranging from hands-on practical hose handling techniques, through to communication and leadership skills, and he really enjoys going on the annual camp and participating in the Good Friday Appeal.

Harry Ross, 11, was really pleased to receive the honour of being elected as captain of his junior brigade. Harry enjoys having fun at the brigade, making new friends, and learning something different each week.



Junior brigade leaders Teresa Moloney, Kathy McDonald and Mat Deans enjoy being able to teach the junior members about leadership, communication, team work, respect, volunteering, and community spirit. They also show them practical firefighting skills that will assist them in their endeavours to become senior members of the brigade. ■

## Ethan inspires Sale community BY JASON LEIGH

Members of Sale brigade completed a 24-hour walking event as part of the Sale Relay for Life, and raised more than \$9,000 to fight cancer. The event and team name (Ethan's Firey Team), were inspired by the bravery of young Ethan Monck and his parents David and Mindy.

Ethan, aged four, was diagnosed with cancer when he was eight months old. The Monck family moved to Melbourne for almost a year for life-saving treatment at the Royal Children's Hospital.

The Sale Brigade Ladies Auxiliary was also heavily involved in both the relay and fundraising for the event.

"The whole community was keen to help, which I think was a tribute to our family's involvement with Sale brigade. David's brother is the brigade secretary and his mum is also secretary of the Ladies Auxiliary," said mum and key organiser Mindy Monck.

"Ethan is doing brilliantly now. He joined us in the relay and had an absolute ball being pushed around on his tricycle," said Mindy.

Sale Fire Brigade Captain Doug Brack said: "The Moncks should be commended for all the work they've put into this, and the Ladies Auxiliary did a tremendous job too." ■



*The banner was made by Mindy Monck.  
Photo by Glennis Appleton.*



## Ops officer bolsters Buller

BY SONIA MACLEAN

A permanent operations officer is now stationed at Mt Buller for the first time, adding an extra level of support to a brigade that faces some specific challenges in the alpine environment.

David Harris began the secondment in June and is looking forward to working with the recently appointed brigade management team and helping with training and development.

“This brigade is capable of great things,” he said. “We’ll be working to increase skills, capabilities and resilience with a particular focus on emergency management planning and command and control.”

At the peak of the winter sports season, up to 10,000 people can be on the mountain at any one time.

“They are there for a good time,” said David, “and safety considerations are not high on their list of priorities. A lot of work goes on around fire safety inspections, with Fire Safety Officer Mark Williams making sure buildings are safe.

“When you consider that outside temperatures are in the sub-zero range, any evacuation that takes place would have a significant impact on the occupants.”

The level of risk and potential for isolation mean that emergency services need a high degree of self-sufficiency, and bad weather can cut off access at a moment’s notice.

The Mount Buller Resort Management Board and Buller Ski Lifts work closely with emergency services to plan for and respond to emergency events, including search and rescue. ■

## Prince William visits Loddon Mallee BY HUGO ZOLLER

As part of his tour of flood-affected areas of Victoria and Queensland, Prince William visited Kerang, Murrabit and Benjeroop at the end of March. The Prince attended a barbecue with 400 community members at the Murrabit recreation reserve, where he met Captain Boyd of Lake Charm brigade.

At the Kerang Memorial Hall, District 20 Operations Officer Mark Owens explained to the Prince CFA’s role in the flood response and recovery.

Mark said that although it was very brief, his meeting with the prince was a career highlight. “He was most interested in how the community was holding up and what help it needed,” he said.

Prince William also met with members of the Kerang brigade – Captain Steel, Lieutenant Greenwood and Secretary Walsh. ■



Operations Officer Mark Owens briefs Prince William and Premier Ted Baillieu. Photo supplied by Mark Owens

## CFA has a field day

The joint CFA/DSE display at the East Gippsland Field Days in April was a big success. The interactive wildfire simulator was on show several times a day, with the public learning how fires behave

in different types of topography and how fuel loads affect fire behaviour. Fire Ready presenters, brigade members from Lindenow South and CFA staff were on hand to discuss fire prevention strategies. ■



Photo by Adam Townsend



A PHOTOGRAPHIC DIARY OF A CFA BRIGADE



# THROUGH THE AGES

# WONGA PARK



COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM





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