

Chief Executive Officer's report



Our activities and achievements during the past financial year have provided a solid base for CFA in the future. Our future and that of the State are inextricably linked and today, more than ever, CFA is better informed about the strategic direction of Government and how we need to be aligned with future planning in Victoria to meet our objectives and the expectations of the communities we serve.

The future is dynamic and this was demonstrated in late 2002 in the Department of Sustainability and Environment 30-year planning vision for Melbourne. This vision is based on Melbourne's population increasing by one million people over 30 years, requiring an additional 620,000 residences and the need for associated support services and infrastructure. The challenge for CFA is to manage the alignment between broad government policy and the implications of its implementation for CFA, not only in metropolitan Melbourne but also in regional and rural Victoria. To assist this, we have established the CFA Growth Strategy Steering Committee to guide work on managing the implications of long term changes on CFA's service delivery.

CFA also faces additional challenges. As a volunteer community-based organisation we face continuing pressures in maintaining effective service delivery. Although the numbers of volunteers increased slightly as at 30 June 2003, this was mainly the result of seasonal factors associated with the extent and prolonged nature of the campaign fires. There has been an overall declining trend in volunteer retention, due to the dynamics of changing social and economic factors which has seen a shift in work and living patterns inconsistent with the on-call availability required of volunteers. In addition, over past years we have placed increasing pressures on volunteers, requiring additional proficiencies and training, and changes in the way we operate.

Volunteers are the key to CFA's past and future success. To meet the challenges of the future, we need to continually change to ensure we can continue to meet and enhance our levels of service delivery and the increasing demands and expectations of the communities we serve. We also need to balance the demands we place on our people and maintain and improve our efficiency and effectiveness.

For this reason, during 2002/03 the CFA Board undertook a comprehensive review of our planning processes and adopted a new framework for annual and longer-term corporate planning. This planning framework provides linkages with Department of Justice outputs and broader whole-of-Government policy and in the way we plan and budget for annual activities and multi-year strategic initiatives (such as capital works). The new planning framework also provides the basis for establishing meaningful performance measures based on outputs and outcomes.

Over past years we have evolved from a fire service to a contemporary emergency service. By 2010 we will have evolved into an emergency management agency, reducing the level of risk and adverse effects associated with emergencies and improving the actual level and perception of safety in Victoria's communities.

Our planning framework recognises that Victoria is not a single community, but an infinite number of diverse communities with differing needs and expectations. Through our volunteers we are a community-based and community focused organisation which is uniquely positioned to contribute to our purpose and objectives of 'creating safer communities' for all Victorians.

We will measure and report our organisational performance through the use of the Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery (PPRR) output model which provides for a holistic risk management approach to all our activities. We have already commenced this process with the emphasis we place on achieving safer communities through effective community education and engagement. While previously our focus as a fire service was on providing a response capability to emergencies, our current approach integrates community safety with response activities. The effectiveness of this was clearly demonstrated during the recent campaign fires, and increasingly our focus will be on prevention and preparedness.

From 2003/04, the new corporate planning process will comprise a formal annual plan, a rolling three-year corporate plan, strategic plan and associated financial plans which will form the basis of future annual reporting.

As a transition to the new planning process, activities during the last financial year were based primarily on outputs extracted from the 2002/03 budget approved by the CFA Board and other substantial activities being undertaken by CFA. They are broadly aligned to the Board's seven priority themes and the State Government policy of *Growing Victoria Together*. This Statement of Activities identifies 20 key activities and provides the basis of reporting achievements and outcomes in this year's annual report.

Our corporate planning process is only one link to meeting future demand and community expectations. The key to achieving our objectives is our people. Over past years we have recorded many significant achievements, all of which can be attributed to the expertise and commitment of our people who have provided a solid foundation for our evolution to an emergency management agency. As we approach a future of continual and dynamic change, our success will depend on the efforts of our people. Our focus in the future will continue to be on providing a rewarding and satisfying environment for our people and to assist them in their efforts. Most importantly, we will continue to recognise their selfless contribution to our continued success.



Neil Bibby
Chief Executive Officer