

Brigade

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June storms hit
Victoria hard

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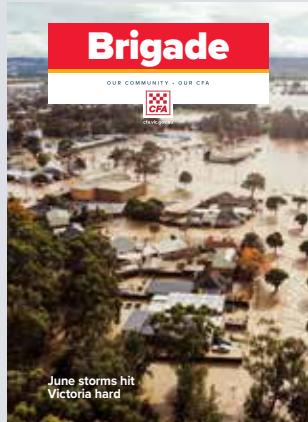
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June storms hit Victoria hard

PHOTO
BLAKE BOURNE

Spring 2021

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CFA encourages all volunteers and staff to get vaccinated against COVID-19

Go to
coronavirus.vic.gov.au/book-your-vaccine-appointment



cfa.vic.gov.au

STORMS BATTER VICTORIA

In early June heavy rain and strong winds caused widespread damage in Victoria, with the Dandenong Ranges and Traralgon being especially hard hit.

EXTENSIVE DAMAGE IN THE DANDELONG RANGES

A devastating storm brought down so many trees in the Dandenongs that the electricity network was extensively damaged, and some people had to wait for several weeks before power was restored. Across the state, more than 9,000 requests for assistance were received during the storm and in the following days.

CFA volunteers worked tirelessly alongside SES members and other emergency services agencies to clear massive trees that came down onto homes and across roads. Dandenong Ranges Group Officer Stuart Parker said he had never seen a storm of this magnitude.

"On Wednesday evening, 9 June, as the winds really picked up, we kept getting pager reports about structure collapse, trees through houses and possible people trapped," Stuart said. "There were also reports of gas leaks because tree roots were getting pulled out of the ground which was then pulling out the gas mains."

Given the dangerous environment, Stuart said he was grateful that no community members, firefighters or first responders were lost during the storm.

"At one incident on Thursday morning, someone was trapped at Olinda and the responding brigade and Strike Team 1313 not only had to cut the access for the ambulance on the way in, but trees were falling behind them so they also had to cut the access for the ambulance exit as well."

"There was a lot of damage right along the ridge of the mountain in areas like Kalorama, Olinda, and Sassafras, but the outlying areas like Monbulk, Silvan, Lilydale were all impacted as well. The extent of the damage and the clean-up was just huge."

"Knox Group members also helped on the weekend, and individual brigades came to do some welfare door knocking on Monday. It's been great to see all groups out of District 13 helping out throughout the week, as Maroondah and Yarra Valley Groups have all been up on the mountain."

On Saturday Clematis Fire Brigade Captain Jarryd Miller was part of a strike team that helped to clear fallen trees.

"Arriving at Olinda on Clematis Tanker 2, I was honestly shocked to see the amount of damage through the town. It was crazy. There was so much ruin it was hard to even get through the roads," Jarryd said.

"Parts of the Mount Dandenong Tourist Road had been wiped out by enormous historic trees, some of the biggest trees I have ever seen. I instantly thought what it must have been like on Wednesday night hearing and seeing these horrific conditions."

"We managed to get some support from Forest Fire Management Victoria and their excavator which could lift big chunks of tree."

"It was probably one of the most rewarding strike teams I've been on. To be able to see the job through and work alongside the residents, I'll always remember that. You could see just how much it meant to these people."

STORY MARK BLACKMAN

FLOODING HITS TRARALGON

There was heavy rain in Central Gippsland and the wider south-east region on 9 June that continued into the early hours of 10 June. Traralgon Creek burst its banks at about 6.30am, and shortly after water streamed down residential streets of Traralgon and an evacuation warning was issued for the Traralgon Creek area. Eighty-seven houses were damaged by flooding.

Traralgon Creek rose four metres in around four hours on Thursday morning and the area peaked at around 5.8 metres, its highest since 1978. Brigades in CFA's Hyland and Merton Groups were busy across the La Trobe Valley region, banding together to help community organisations and residents.

Traralgon East 3rd Lieutenant and 1st Deputy Group Officer Hyland Group Leigh Roberts said following the destructive





weather the Hyland Group organised a coordinated clean-up effort over the long weekend.

"We spent the entire day on Sunday and Monday helping the local Football Netball Club, Traralgon Tennis Stadium, Traralgon Showgrounds, Men's Shed and Roller Derby Club to clean up those facilities," Leigh said. "This was a massive effort by everyone involved and I'm proud we were able to help."

"After the major flooding and storm on Thursday, the rain came back Friday night and Saturday morning which increased water levels in Traralgon Creek again. There was a lot of work to do over the following weeks."

Hyland Group Officer Simon Lund said members have been putting the ultra heavy tanker to the test, using its 9,000-litre capacity to clean up facilities using recycled water.

"Members were out moving debris and clearing mud all weekend," Simon said.

"There were some brigades within the group that couldn't assist because the damage had restricted their access, but those members helped by remaining on standby, ready to respond at a moment's notice. Our group really came together that week and I was rapt with everyone's effort."

Previous page and below left: Damage in the Dandenong Ranges

Above: Members of Traralgon East brigade help with the clean-up

Below right: Flooding in Traralgon PHOTO BLAKE BOURNE

He said the group liaised with the district office to coordinate teams for chainsaw operations to help clear trees from roads.

Leigh said in times of emergencies it can be easy to forget emergency services members can also be directly impacted, so many volunteers checked in on one another.

"I reached out to most of the captains from surrounding brigades to see how their members were going," Simon said.

"It has not been easy for Gippsland and the broader South East Region with fires, the pandemic and now major flooding, but the community response in times like these is still overwhelming."

"Not just emergency services, but the broader community have given up their time to help one another – there are so many helping people they've never met before – our community spirit has been phenomenal."

STORY MARK BLACKMAN AND MITCHELL GASTIN



Apollo Bay double emergency

In the same month Apollo Bay Fire Brigade dealt with two of the worst incidents in the brigade's history.

On 3 April there was a chlorine leak at Apollo Bay Aquatic Centre. Of the 21 people needing treatment, five needed urgent medical attention. Apollo Bay Firefighter and Incident Controller Aaron Melrose said it was like a war zone.

"Arriving on scene, we'd been briefed on what to expect but it can never prepare you for that type of scene," Aaron explained. "It was confronting. There were multiple patients involved and one was unconscious."

"Being a rescue unit, we are trained to respond to highly traumatic situations, but I've never responded to an incident as chaotic as this."

"Ambulance Victoria was already on scene when we arrived at 10.51am. I sent a crew in breathing apparatus to sweep and secure the building. We then started triaging the patients. After assessment I escalated the situation through Fire Com to receive six additional ambulances and called the rostered duty coordinator to put out a local community warning."

"Around an hour into the job the last few patients were being lifted into the ambulances. By this time extra crews from Wye River and Colac CFA brigades and Fire Rescue Victoria arrived so we set up an exclusion zone."

"We pulled back about 400 metres away and set up a staging area for the oncoming crews and hazmat team. We sent in an additional crew in BA to isolate the power."

"I remember thinking just how switched on the Apollo Bay crew was, as it's easy to get overwhelmed by a situation like that."

"I can only describe it like a war zone with the number of patients laying across the scene. It's really hard to train for something like that, but all crews across the emergency sector worked well together."

Only 11 days later, the Apollo Bay community was left shattered after a fire tore through three shops on the town's main street. The blaze, which started in the early hours of Wednesday 14 April, destroyed the local Chinese restaurant and historic Blue Bird Cafe and badly damaged a hardware store.

Driving to the station, Aaron could already see the blaze he had to face. "I don't think anyone could imagine what would unfold that night," Aaron said. "The fire was truly ferocious."

"We arrived on scene just after 3am, six minutes after receiving the pager alert, and there were 50 to 100 people out on the street watching. Five of us were on scene first and after a quick assessment we knew the first structure couldn't be saved."

"Winds were around 50 kilometres an hour and we were just setting up protecting the exposures when a gas bottle exploded causing the fire to jump to the neighbouring building. Because of the violent winds the 38mm hoses were not effective and any water getting close was turning to steam."

"Apollo Bay Captain Dave Howell upgraded to 64mm hoses which allowed us to make more of an impact. We used these for the next three hours straight."

"We tried an internal attack from the eastern side, but the fire was well established in the roof and we had to make a hasty retreat as more gas bottles exploded."

The first building was vacant and two people escaped unharmed from the second building, so crews only needed to evacuate the local motel.

"We were on scene for 12 hours," Aaron added. "Crews from Wye River, Forrest and Colac brigades, plus Corangamite Group and FRV stations 63 and 62 were also on scene."

During the firefight, the brigade's 10 crew members used 13 38mm hoses, 14 64mm hoses, and 17 BA cylinders with four members onto their fifth set.

"We debriefed straight after both incidents and have had a number of follow-up sessions," Aaron said. "It's really important to talk through incidents and take time to process them."

"The brigade is incredible, the training we have and the leadership. We're really fortunate to have Dave as our captain. He has a calming presence and that's the kind of leadership you need in situations like that."

Dave said the brigade has seen a recent surge in interest to join the brigade.

"The last few months have been some of the busiest for our little brigade," Dave said. "The brigade did an impressive job and we've now seen over 10 new applications from locals wanting to join."

STORY HOLLY PENKETH



CFA helps with NSW flood response

In mid-March 2021, the entire NSW coast experienced the most significant floods in decades, with some areas receiving more than 400mm of rain. Flooding stretched 600 kilometres from Sydney to the Northern Rivers region, and tens of thousands of people were ordered to evacuate from the Hawkesbury-Nepean River area in Sydney.

Between 22 and 28 March, 16 CFA members helped NSW emergency services during the devastating floods. Fourteen CFA employees and two volunteers took on roles such as information and warnings duty officer, intelligence officer, management support officer, mapping officer and operations officer. We spoke to three of the people about their experiences.

Rachael Leoncini, who's a volunteer with Mt Buninyong Fire Brigade and also Regional Operations Coordinator based in Ballarat, carried out the night-shift intelligence officer role in Maitland, near Newcastle.

"I monitored rain gauges and flood meters and compared them with the flood Intelligence guide to see what we needed to do and when," Rachael said. "When the flood water reached certain levels on the meters, we had to take action. This included supplying the relevant functions for community messaging and issuing of evacuation warnings and orders.

"We received information from ground crews to verify the data and turned that into intelligence to create a bigger picture. I also wrote briefings comparing this flood to previous ones and the impact these floods have had on the effected communities."

Rachael experienced a truly multiagency environment, which included SES, NSW Fire and Rescue, police, Surf Life Saving NSW and Victoria DELWP. She worked very closely with SES, who gave CFA members all the support they needed in an unfamiliar environment.

"Working with SES was really good and they helped us to understand their processes and documents," she said. "Also, my team was predominantly women which was wonderful to see."

Rachael said a lot of wellbeing support was also offered.

"While in NSW, I was contacted by our local rostered duty coordinator, state agency commander and state duty officer to make sure I was OK, and when I got home Peer Support also made contact with me."

Kyneton Fire Brigade firefighter John Pearce is a Level 2 incident controller, working mostly in incident control centres (ICCs) in District 2. John has been to NSW before to help with fires in the Blue Mountains, but this was the first time he has travelled interstate to help with floods.

He carried out a five-day shift as a Level 2 deputy operations officer at the ICC in Maitland (pictured).

"My role was to liaise between the ICC and div comms up and down the coast. We were dealing with floods from Newcastle to the Queensland border," John said. "We talked to divisional commanders to find out what they needed and then the ICC organised it.

"It was an interesting experience and I appreciated the opportunity to help. I worked with agency personnel from all over Australia which was very rewarding. SES NSW were easy to work with and they appreciated our help.

"Although the NSW standard operating procedures and computer system are a bit different to Victoria's, we had good briefings and it was quite easy to get up to speed."



David Stephens, who is a Mount Mercer Fire Brigade firefighter and 2nd deputy group officer of Leigh Group in District 7, was initially a deputy operations officer in Maitland. But a couple of hours into his first shift he was switched to work with the deputy incident controller working through the transition to recovery process.

"There was a lot of work to be done to return communities back to as close as normal as soon as possible," David said. "This included critical infrastructure assessments and repairing roads and bridges, power supply and connectivity for phones and data."

On the third day David became a deputy incident controller.

"This was my first interstate deployment and the first significant flood I've been involved in. Although it was a major flood event, a lot of the issues are the same as fire or any other emergency. One of the main similarities was the fatigue – of personnel in the field and IMTs and, just as importantly, the fatigue in the communities.

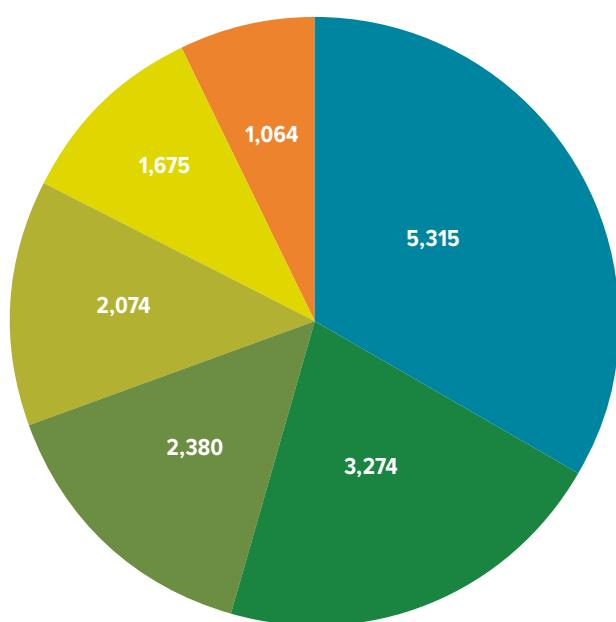
"Although challenging, this deployment was very fulfilling. I had the privilege to work with many members from NSW Police, RFS, Fire and Rescue NSW, SES and ADF and many others. I've kept in touch with a few people I got along with.

"It's a nice feeling to come home and feel that you may have helped someone in a very difficult time in their life."

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL



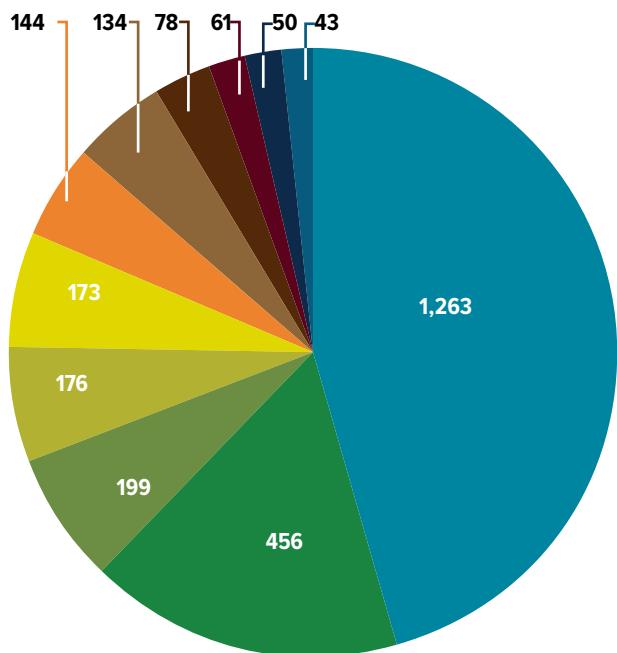
INCIDENTS BY TYPE



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

* Includes 4,163 callouts in support of Fire Rescue Victoria

ORIGIN OF FIRE



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

INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT



SOUTH WEST	
District	Incidents
4	115
5	339
6	254
7	1213



WEST	
District	Incidents
15	871
16	294
17	225



NORTH WEST	
District	Incidents
2	876
14	2402
18	404
20	407



NORTH EAST	
District	Incidents
12	423
13	1721
22	712
23	391
24	361



District	Incidents
8	3672
9	502
10	296
11	246
27	346

Brigades are reminded to submit their incident report as soon as possible after attending an incident. Brigades on strike teams also need to submit a report to the Service Delivery Reporting Centre (SDRC). Call 1800 628 844 between 8am and 10pm.

CEO



Natalie MacDonald

Our volunteers are the heart and soul of CFA and together with Chief Officer Jason Heffernan my priority is to ensure we are improving the way our processes, training, resourcing and capability models support our volunteers.

Since joining CFA, I have taken the time to get out and talk to as many of our members and stakeholders as possible to hear first-hand what matters most to you. While COVID-19 restrictions have slowed this down, I am still taking part in online events and gatherings at every opportunity.

Access to training, the right equipment and the need to improve collaboration have been consistent themes in your feedback. To tackle this, we needed to ensure our organisation was set up to allow us to deliver support to our volunteers in the most effective way possible.

A realignment of our organisation's structure, particularly at the senior level, has brought decision-making for volunteer training delivery and support back to the regions. Our Regional Deputy Chief Officers now have significant accountability to ensure services are targeted to your needs.

We are also improving how we deliver training and ensuring our volunteers have equipment to do their jobs.

Opening later this year, our new \$31 million, state-of-art training facility in Ballan includes an off-road complex and live fire training PADs. We're also embracing new technologies through the rollout of our virtual reality training program.

Funded under the Victorian Government's \$126 million Capability package, our next generation personal protective clothing will deliver modernised wildfire PPC to thousands of operational volunteers, providing an enhanced level of protection from radiant heat and heat-related illness.

The production of 50 replacement tankers funded under the Capability package is also underway. These will be progressively rolled out over the next three years.

New stations at Carlsruhe, Bairnsdale, Casterton and Ararat are now online, with construction well underway on stations at Buninyong, Phillip Island, Coldstream and Plenty.

The rollout of \$1 million of the latest road rescue equipment to all CFA rescue brigades will greatly increase their operational efficiency and capability. We will also be distributing new workwear to provide a clear and distinctive identity for members undertaking CFA duties in the community.

And this is just a snapshot of the range of projects underway to support our volunteers in the great work they do.

We have a lot to be proud of at CFA. Together with the Chief Officer, I look forward to working with you as we continue to deliver on our commitment to the communities we serve.

CHAIR



Greg Wilson

Through significant change for CFA over the past year, including returning to a volunteer firefighting organisation, one primary factor remains the same. Our people are committed to their communities and respond when people are in need.

As a Board, we continue to support the great projects and initiatives that are both planned and underway throughout CFA, which will be assets to the volunteers who give up their time to protect others.

Road rescue equipment, structural helmets and defibrillators are just some of the frontline equipment that has been provided to our people to keep them safe. We've also enhanced our training delivery, both in person and online, so that our people can adequately prepare and perform their duties to the highest standard. Our capability to adapt during the challenges of COVID-19 is a shining example of the talent and skill set our volunteers and staff bring to CFA.

I encourage our members to read about these projects and initiatives on Members Online to monitor the progress.

Within the past year the Board has appointed both Jason Heffernan and Natalie MacDonald in the positions of Chief Officer and Chief Executive Officer, respectively. They have now realigned CFA's organisational structure to improve how CFA meets the needs of our volunteers to ensure they have the right training, resources and capability.

We're confident the changes Jason and Natalie have implemented will achieve the key objectives of better connections between our support teams and delivery, including training delivery, volunteer development and greater understanding of role requirements and decision-making processes.

These changes have resulted from feedback the organisation received through multiple feedback forums with volunteers and staff. The level of engagement across these sessions and platforms was another example of the passion and drive of the skilled people who represent CFA.

Your commitment is why CFA's reputation as a trusted and respected emergency service remains high. We have continued to work alongside our community partners to ensure Victorians are prepared for and safe from fire.

CHIEF OFFICER



Jason Heffernan

It has been a busy winter period for our brigades. The breadth of our activities and responses demonstrate that CFA is so much more than just a bushfire firefighting service.

Many hundreds of our volunteers were involved in the response, relief and recovery efforts from the significant storms and floods in June. Many brigades are still actively supporting communities through the recovery phase.

Forested and mountainous areas were hit with wind gusts in excess of 125km per hour causing extensive tree-fall, property damage and road closures. Miraculously no one was killed, but tens of thousands of people were left without power or blocked in by road closures, some for many weeks.

CFA members rose to the challenge and supported their communities every step of the way. CFA stations became makeshift drop-in centres, members conducted welfare checks on vulnerable neighbours, thousands of tonnes of fallen trees and debris were sawn and moved, generators were delivered and IMT shifts were filled.

Meanwhile in Gippsland, and particularly Traralgon, members were similarly removing trees and debris as well as assisting with evacuations, rescues and cleaning up significant water and mud from right across the region. Tragically in Traralgon two people lost their lives, demonstrating the dangers of floods.

Brigades have also continued responding to house fires and other emergencies through winter and promoting the messaging of our annual smoke alarm campaign. With 22 Victorians dying in preventable house fires last year, we know how important that work is.

Our members across the state have remained agile and responsive despite the challenges of multiple lockdowns and changing response levels, and I'm incredibly proud of the community spirit and hard work put in by all.

There has been much work behind the scenes to ensure our members are supported, trained and equipped to perform their vital duties. Over the past few months we have delivered a new online training calendar, commenced the rollout of new battery-operated road crash rescue tools, delivered internet services to hundreds of stations, commenced planning for next-generation personal protective clothing, and started delivering hundreds of defibrillators to ensure every brigade has at least one.

These and many more projects are dedicated to enhancing the volunteer experience at CFA. If community members are volunteering their time with CFA, then I am determined they will be supported to perform their roles to the best of their ability and have a rewarding experience.

2021 has again been a difficult year, with the COVID-19 pandemic impacting communities right across the state. As we head towards another fire season, I encourage you to look after yourself, your family and fellow members. Stay safe.

DCO NORTH WEST REGION



Gavin Thompson

As we prepare for another fire season it's timely for us to reflect on the past 12 or so months. We came out of a very busy fire season into a pandemic coupled with fire services reform. What has really shone through is that all our people, whether they are in Werribee or Werrimull, are committed to helping their communities and it's a privilege for me to lead the North West Region.

On reflection, we have a lot to be grateful for over the past year. While challenging, there have been a number of incidents that have shown our courage, commitment and leadership in adversity.

I am immensely proud of all members in North West Region for the way they conducted themselves during this time. With the complexity that COVID-19 created for responders, our brigades responded with professionalism and we had no cases of COVID-19 while responding. Our Community Safety team, both staff and volunteers, found new ways to engage with communities ensuring that fire safety messages were still delivered.

Our members were on the frontline responding to the needs of our communities assisting SES after a massive storm that significantly impacted Gippsland and the Macedon Ranges. I toured the areas impacted in Macedon Shire with ACFO Jayson Hirt and witnessed first-hand the damage as well as the great work of SES, Forest Fire Management and CFA personnel trying to get the community back to normality.

The training we provide our members in first-aid was an invaluable investment when members of Glenlyon, Daylesford and Spring Hill brigades provided critical first-aid to Captain Scott Selle after he collapsed at an incident and went into cardiac arrest. In May I had the privilege to attend Kyneton Fire Station with our Chief who presented members from those brigades along with some Ambulance Victoria paramedics with a Chief Officer's Commendation. It was great to be able to talk to some of these members and indeed Scott himself who was well on the road to recovery.

Continuing the theme of recent successes, five members from Werribee and a member from Wyndham Vale took out top spot at the 2021 NSW State Road Crash Rescue Challenge. The team did an exceptional job and demonstrated the importance of teamwork in a high intensity environment. Well done team.

With the start of the Fire Danger Period just around the corner, I encourage you all to get ready for the coming season. Let's get our burnover drills done and the Tree Hazard Awareness package for those who need to do it and be ready for what has the potential to be a busy season.

HEAD COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS



Lucy Saaroni

In a year characterised by social distance, CFA's community engagement has been transforming to connect us with more people than ever before. We've adapted our flagship programs like Fire Safety Essentials (formally known as Fire Ready Victoria) so they can be delivered online, reaching people wherever they may be.

We've developed a suite of digital resources such as our animation videos that cover radiant heat and ember attack. These can be viewed on the CFA website (cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/am-i-at-risk). A grassfire animation and two property preparation videos will be added shortly.

Although online programs will never fully replace our face-to-face offerings, they do give our people a flexible way to engage communities and can be used in conjunction with some of our direct engagement activities like smoke alarm installation work and property visit services.

To meet people wherever they may be, CFA has invested close to \$1 million from donations funding to design and deliver new mobile education units to every CFA region. Vehicles are being procured as this magazine goes to print. The fleet of vehicles has been co-designed with volunteers and can be used by volunteers:

- to engage with community members at local events
- as a platform to support learning activities and CFA programs (the vehicles are kitted out with screens, education aids and hard copy resources)
- as a mobile fundraising and recruitment hub
- as a community incident engagement response vehicle to structure fires
- as a public information vehicle at campaign fires or other prolonged events.

When the vehicles are out in the field, the project management team at Burwood will rely on your feedback to understand how the vehicles are working for you, so please let us know by emailing craig.hearson@cfa.vic.gov.au.

No column about community engagement would be complete without discussing community engagement activity reporting. CFA's Activity Reporting Tool (ART) has been streamlined so it now takes less than two minutes to make an entry. Across Victoria, CFA members are using ART to show how they are helping to prepare their communities for fire. More than 4,000 community engagement activities have been reported since ART launched, which means direct community engagement with more than 100,000 people on fire safety issues.

If you deliver community engagement activities, it's important to report it. Brigades can use ART to show how they are helping to prepare their communities for fire. They can also use the ART Dashboard to see which activities are popular in their district and uncover opportunities to share resources with other brigades.

GROUP OFFICER BALLARAT GROUP, D15



Graeme Ford

The Ballarat Group consists of eight brigades – Ascot, Burrumbeet, Cardigan, Glendaruel, Invermay, Learmonth, Miners Rest and Waubra in the region north of Ballarat. They are mainly rural brigades and semi-urban brigades that all work well together to keep our communities safe.

Our brigades attend a variety of incidents including car accidents, bushfires chemical incidents and structure fires. Sadly, more recently we've attended stolen car fires.

Given our proximity to the large township of Ballarat, we're fortunate to have the support of Fire Rescue Victoria Ballarat. After some initial teething problems, we've taken large steps forward and I hope we overcome any obstacles and work together to protect the community the way CFA has for the past 50 years.

During the last Anzac Day commemorations, 30 members of the group worked with Ballarat RSL to assist the servicemen and women by carrying out the role of COVID-19 marshals. On arrival we were briefed and set up on the gates to make sure that everyone registered using the QR code. It gave us all a good opportunity to chat with the returned servicemen and women about how they were coping with COVID-19. I felt proud that our group was called upon on this significant day and was proud of the CFA members who came forward.

Anzac Day was also a good opportunity to mix with other brigades we haven't seen recently after a quiet fire season in terms of strike teams.

Our group was approached by Emergency Management Victoria to host in our area the first worldwide trials of night-time fire bombing. With the cooperation of a local farmer, on the first night we lit up stubble burns for the aircraft to water bomb. Gathering afterwards for supper, we chatted about the success of the trial with Emergency Management staff and pilots of the aircraft, and everyone in attendance was shown over the aircraft.

We have since seen these water bombing trials move forward to become business as usual, with helicopters being successfully used for water bombing and spotting at night. Seeing it used now certainly makes me feel proud that our group was involved from the beginning.

It's important to me that the group continues to work together, and friendships continue to make our group stronger. We do this by holding group exercises outdoors in the summer. With Ballarat's notorious winters, in the colder months we hold tabletop training exercises indoors, making for a nicer environment and ensuring good attendance. As we share these exercises around the brigades, it gives each brigade the opportunity to open their station and showcase their area to us all.

QUARTERLY OPERATIONAL UPDATE



Chief Officer's Message for 2021

This year I'm pleased to introduce the first of the new Quarterly Operational Updates, which replace the once-a-year Seasonal Focus with four smaller updates. This increases the information

given to CFA members by providing relevant topics at the time of each update. The Quarterly Operational Update will be released in September, December, March and June.

In this September update we are sharing information about:

- Chief Officer Expectations for the upcoming fire season
- safety shares generated from current CFA safety issues
- new hazard tree marking symbols
- transfer of control
- cultural heritage awareness.

Chief Officer Expectations for the upcoming fire season

Our fire season is rapidly approaching and we're working together to make sure all members prepare themselves for the summer season. This year the minimum safety requirements of the Chief Officer are unchanged, but they need to be carried out taking into account COVID-19. In light of this, my expectations are as follows:

- Everyone comes home, every time, safely. The safety of our people is my highest priority.
- COVID-19 will still be impacting our communities and CFA. Remain focused on keeping yourselves safe and ALWAYS follow the COVID-19-safe procedures on Members Online.
- CFA encourages all members to get vaccinated against COVID-19.
- All members responding during the summer bushfire season must have currency in:
 - the safety requirements of Minimum Skills/General Firefighter
 - the annual entrapment drill as per SOP 9.32. I cannot afford to exclude it from this year's safety requirements as we cannot reduce our commitment to every single one of our member's safety
 - tree hazard awareness training. This year there are new nationally accepted markings. I encourage all members to complete the tree hazard course to become familiar with the new marking system. This is not compulsory if your three-year endorsement is still current.

During my tour in 2020-21, I committed to carrying out a review after this bushfire season, with help from VFBV, to

look at the Chief Officer's requirements for subsequent fire seasons.

As per previous fire seasons the points that need to be at the front of your mind when responding to fires over summer are:

- weight of attack – hit fires hard and fast
- do your part to ensure information and warnings are issued to our community members so they can make informed decisions about their safety
- be ready, both physically and mentally, for a long season. Take advantage of the quiet times and support services on offer to all members, manage your and your crew's fatigue
- engage and communicate with your community to ensure they are ready
- confidently make decisions at all levels – back your training and knowledge
- work together with all agencies and at all levels: state, region, district, group, brigade and, most importantly, the community.

Safety shares

Safety shares are a new type of communication we are implementing in CFA. A safety share is a short one-page document that has been developed to communicate lessons learned and outcomes from safety issues experienced in CFA. In this quarterly update, there are six key investigations with important lessons that members should focus on as part of pre-season preparation. These include working alone, signal 55, pump casing failure and hazardous material incident response. I encourage members to familiarise themselves with the key messages from each of these safety shares.

Finally, there are two basic but important principles I would encourage every member to consider and take forward, not just for the upcoming season but always:

1. Look after your people and those around you
2. Always be ready.

Look after yourself, your families and your teams and be ready for the challenges our environment presents.

While I know that many of our members do what they do for their communities for the want of nothing, I would like to simply say thank you and stay safe.

Use this QR code to access the Quarterly Operational Update or go to cfa.vic.gov.au/quarterlyoperationupdates



Safety shares

Safety Shares from CFA investigations will now be shared to ensure the entire organisation benefits from the investigations being carried out. There are six key investigations, described below, with important lessons to focus on as part of pre-season preparation. We encourage members to familiarise themselves with the key messages from each of these safety shares.

Use this QR code to read more about the investigations below and the actions implemented, or go to cfa.vic.gov.au/quarterlyoperationupdates/safety



Working alone

- All CFA members must ensure their whereabouts is communicated to their crew leader or incident controller before undertaking their task.
- Crew leaders must always maintain communication with their crew to understand their whereabouts and if the situation has changed. Clear tasking is vital to ensure crews are aware of what is required and expected of them.
- Avoid working alone due to the safety risks posed. In the event that you find yourself working alone, ensure you are equipped with sufficient communication equipment and knowledge of communications plans to be able to maintain contact with your crew leader and the incident controller.
- Run through this situation with your brigade to ensure all members have sufficient understanding of hazard awareness, risk control, radio use, command and escalation arrangements and working with aircraft to be able to handle a similar incident safely.

Pump casing failure

- Training in how to operate tanker pumps is vital, including communication with the respective branch operators and pump operators.
- Understanding local water supply characteristics helps to predict the number and size of branches that can be used.
- Be aware that not having a compound gauge on the tanker inlet makes this task even more difficult as the pump operator will not be informed of inlet pressures. Discuss with your brigade how you would manage a similar situation.
- Always ensure you know the limitations of your brigade's equipment. Even though this pump was operating within the designed range, it was near the limit of its performance expectations which increased the risk of cavitation.

FCV rollover

- Be proactive in sharing your knowledge and experiences with others to increase the safety of all CFA members.
- All items in the cabin or rollover protective structure of a CFA vehicle should be secured while the vehicle is in motion as per Chief Officer's SOP 12.03.
- When navigating difficult tracks, use a spotter wherever possible to assist.
- Always ensure any driver training is provided by members with driving instructor qualifications.

Signal 55

- Brigades should always ensure that their safety is of utmost importance when attending incidents. Avoid dealing with agitated members of the community if they pose a risk to your safety.
- Ensure your CFA vehicles have the signal sticker on the dashboard so you can easily identify the call sign required to get the support you need to an incident. Contact your district if your appliance does not have a sticker.
- Do not hesitate to use Signal 55 or Signal 40 wherever necessary and ensure you know what each of these mean.

Chemical drum explosions hazardous materials

- CFA members must operate within their competence and that of the responding crew. Remember that your safety is the number one priority.
- Request advice for a Scientific Officer from FIRECOM or via the Roster Duty Coordinator (RDC)/ State Duty Officer (SDO) as soon as practicable.
- CFA members must ensure clear identification and labelling of any recovery drums used in hazmat response.
- No CFA member is to transport or relocate hazardous materials or recovery drums using CFA appliances to CFA locations or CFA members property.
- No hazardous materials or recovery drums are to be left unattended awaiting pick up. Seek guidance from RDC/SDO for supervision or transportation requirements.

Tanker valve failure

- If your tanker is operating in an area where the temperature drops to near or below zero, it is important that you understand that the valves are susceptible to cracking during sub-zero conditions. Take all necessary steps to avoid exposure to such conditions.
- This incident has occurred across the state, with at least three other brigades reporting similar incidents, where the delivery valves have split due to trapped water freezing and cracking the valve.
- To minimise the risk of valve failure occurring store vehicles under shelter. If this is not possible remove water from the valves and leave valve cracked open to prevent failure due to water freezing.

New tree hazard awareness

The current hazardous tree marking system used in Victoria is being replaced this fire season with a new nationally agreed system set by the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC). All emergency services agencies across Australia and New Zealand will transition to a new tree marking system in 2021 and it's crucial for CFA members to be aware of these changes.

It is intended to use these new nationally accepted markings. Ensure you are all familiar with the markings and use them.

To support the introduction of the new nationally recognised hazard tree marking system, the Tree Hazard Awareness online training course is being amended.

The new online Tree Hazard Awareness course will be available on the Learning Hub and the Brigade Activity version will be issued to all brigades soon. This transition to the new marking system will be formalised by the issue of an Operations Bulletin to all brigades.

For more information and resources use the QR code or go to

cfa.vic.gov.au/quarterlyoperationupdates/trees



Tree hazard class	Description	Old marking	New marking
Potential Clear and Present Danger (CPD) (protection assured)	A potential CPD tree (protection assured) – also known as a circle tree – is a tree which in its current state is not a CPD tree but may become a CPD tree if it catches alight or is impacted by another disturbance. It has a high probability of surviving the fire intact based on the proposed protection measures and likely response resources available.	DOT TREE	CIRCLE TREE
Potential CPD (protection not assured)	A potential CPD tree (protection not assured) – also known as a slash tree – is a tree which in its current state is not a CPD tree but may become a CPD tree if it catches alight or is impacted by another disturbance. It does not have a high probability of surviving the fire intact based on the proposed protection measures and likely response resources available.	X TREE	SLASH TREE
Clear and Present Danger	A CPD tree or branch that is expected to fall within the time frame of the current operation and impact personnel in its potential impact zone.	KILLER TREE	CROSS TREE
Trees with hangers	Trees with hangers have an arrow above a slash or cross tree symbol. The arrow indicates a widow maker or hanger and allows for more deliberate risk mitigation actions, such as an exclusion zone underneath the hanger, rather than two tree lengths, or falling of a sound tree to remove widow maker.	or	or
Indicator tree	Indicator trees have an arrow and distance to tree below a slash or cross tree symbol. Indicator trees are used to indicate the presence of a tree hazard when the symbol on the hazard tree itself is obscured by vegetation, difficult to see from control line, or the tree is too dangerous to mark.	No previous symbol and 	or

The table outlines the old and new markings. As you can see, the marking and symbols are different but the definitions are similar.

Cultural heritage

Aboriginal people have a deep, interconnected relationship with the land. This relationship holds physical, emotional, social, spiritual and cultural significance with responsibilities for caring for Country.

Aboriginal people continue to maintain cultural links and an affinity with landscapes across Victoria. Aboriginal heritage places are landscapes, sites and areas that are particularly important to Aboriginal people as part of their customary law and traditions. It includes tangible and intangible expressions of culture.

It's important that brigades understand cultural heritage sites and sensitivities. Being able to identify potential significant cultural sites is a vital skill for our members to ensure they follow the CFA Statewide Contingency Plan for Discovery of Aboriginal Heritage and ensure we meet our obligations to appropriately manage such sites.

The key messages for our members about cultural heritage awareness are:

- Ensure you and your brigade have spoken to your district or region to identify the resources offered if there is an incident involving a cultural heritage site
- Understand how to identify cultural significant sites – Parks Victoria Cultural Heritage Site Identification Guide is a useful resource
- Know how to identify a scarred tree and understand what to do if you find one (see page 32 for more about scarred trees)
- Wherever possible, engage with local Indigenous leaders because they hold a wealth of knowledge in culture fire management and burns. Developing relationships with the key personnel in your area can help combat fires as you have existing connections you can draw upon.



For more information and resources, including an in-depth information sheet on these topics, the contingency plan, site identification guide, and a case study from the 2019-20 campaign fires in Budj Bim, use this QR code or go to cfa.vic.gov.au/quarterlyoperationupdates/heritage



Transfer of control

Establishing effective control arrangements in the early stages of an incident is critical. Observations from agency personnel indicate it's being done well in some parts of the state but still requires focus to ensure this key function is effectively embedded into normal operations.

If there is potential the incident will not be contained by first attack, control should be transferred as early as possible to an incident controller in an incident control centre (ICC).



Knowing when to transfer control is not easy. Using trigger points, such as when a fire crosses a road or other relevant cue, can be a useful indicator of when to transfer control. It may even be recognised en route to the incident by observing the smoke column or before the incident starts because of the severity of the day and expected fire behaviour. You can find considerations and questions in the resources on Members Online using the QR code below.

Remember that transferring control is about supporting members on the fireground with the activities difficult to achieve in the field – it's not about taking command of the fireground away from those people who are in the best place to exercise tactical decision making.

Do you know the key indicators of when a transfer of control may be needed? Are you aware of the processes that need to be followed when transferring control?

What you can do

- In your brigade, district or region include regular training and exercises about transfer of control.
- Discuss with others who have transferred control what they did and how it worked.
- Using the triggers in the Members Online resources, consider the location, type of fire and conditions where you would immediately consider transferring control in your area.

Use this QR code to familiarise yourself with the information sheet and further resources, including a case study on a complex structure fire where transfer of control was managed effectively. Alternatively, go to cfa.vic.gov.au/quarterlyoperationupdates/transfer



How climate change will impact

Scientific evidence for human-induced climate change is now regarded as unequivocal by the peak international body overseeing climate research. The Bureau of Meteorology's State of the Climate report shows the local facts and figures around these changes. This includes that Australia has warmed on average 1.44°C since national records began in 1910.

This is leading to an increase in the number of hot days and the occurrence of extreme heatwaves. More recently, records for Victoria show that winter rainfall has fallen by about 12 per cent in less than 30 years. These climate changes are likely to cause more extreme weather and alter the frequency and intensity of storms, floods, heatwaves and fires.

Scientists in CFA's Research and Development team have been working to better understand how fire weather has changed over the past 40 years and how it might change in the future. This work is important for CFA because it will help us adapt the ways we operate and improve the services we offer to members and communities in response to climate change.

The team has found that climate change is increasing the frequency, severity and timing of dangerous bushfire weather conditions in south-east Australia, especially during spring and summer. Also, on average, the fire season nowadays starts a month earlier than it did in the 1990s. Back then, there were only

two-thirds the number of days that had 'Very High' fire danger (those with an FFDI (Forest Fire Danger Index) greater than 25) compared with today. In short, fire seasons are now longer and more extreme than they were a few decades ago.

Models of future climate show that this pattern is likely to continue – conditions will be hotter, drier and with more extreme weather events. This is expected to lead to worse fire seasons, including more frequent large fires like the 2019-20 season and more extreme fire behaviour (including an increase in fire-generated thunderstorms). This will have flow-on effects on the safety of community members and firefighters.

According to the worst-case climate change scenario, average summer fire danger will increase across Victoria between 10 and 20 per cent in FFDI by 2100. This means the current highest average FFDI of approximately 75 in the west and north-west will become 100 and in the south-east the current highest average FFDI will increase from mid-to high 30s to above 50. Along with this, we expect to see a doubling of the number of days with 'Very High' fire danger in the north-west and central areas of the state, and a tripling in the number of days in the east of the state.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ON FIRE RISK AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

It's clear that CFA will have to deal with more extreme, more frequent and longer fire seasons in the future. This will have flow-on impacts on firefighter safety and the services we deliver unless we adapt and respond to the changes.

A recent report from AFAC described many ways climate change is likely to impact fire and other emergency services including:

- increasing exposure and vulnerabilities of communities to hazards, including multiple stressors and shocks at the same time (which can become disasters)
- increasing costs of disasters, impacts on infrastructure
- increasing pressure on resourcing, responders and capabilities due to more frequent and severe weather events
- increasing health and safety risks for staff and volunteers, including heat stress, fatigue and mental health
- increasing risk of emergency services being sued
- failure of building codes and land use planning to respond to what's needed to keep the community safe and happy
- supply chain vulnerabilities preventing emergency services from getting the equipment and support when needed
- damage to ecosystems through more frequent incidents and the need to manage fire risk.

Some of the ways CFA may need to adapt include:

- increasing our firefighting capability and capacity
- ensuring our members are equipped and safe to endure more extreme conditions
- inventing improved ways to deliver our services so we continue to effectively protect lives and properties
- increasing our focus on mitigating the risk through community actions and fuel management.

Increasingly, both the private and public sectors are looking for leadership, knowledge and advice regarding climate change risk.



CFA operations



NEXT STEPS

CFA recognises that the changing climate is a major risk to Victorian communities and the organisation. It needs to understand the possible impacts on operations, services, infrastructure and our members. In response, CFA is conducting a risk assessment to identify challenges and ways to solve them through adaptation and mitigation. This process will also help decisions about CFA climate change policies and associated business rules.

Additionally, the Research and Development team is leading two major projects:

1. How will bushfire management need to adapt to climate change in terms of resourcing?

This project will combine historic Victorian fire response data with weather information to determine likely resource requirements for different levels of fire danger. It will then use projections of fire weather under climate change to understand future requirements. The outcomes of this research will help determine the future operational capacity and capability required to continue to deliver CFA services.

2. How will the Victoria fire regimes change as a result of climate change?

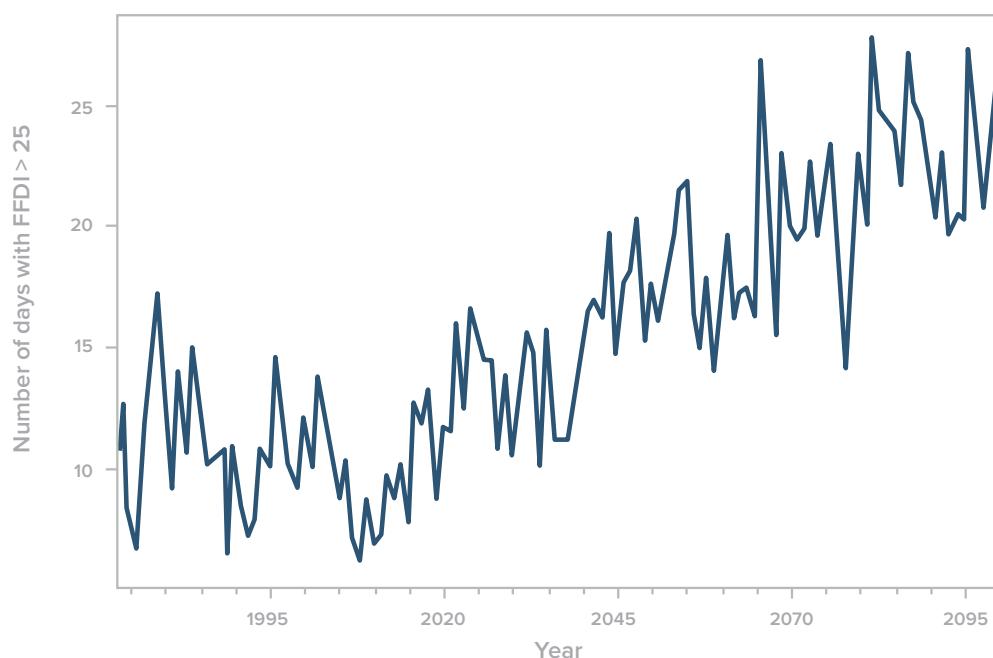
This project will combine current knowledge, dynamic vegetation modelling and climate change projections specific to Victoria to understand the relationships between fire, climate and vegetation. It will look at how forests and grasslands are expected to change under hotter and drier conditions, and then couple this with models of fire. This will help us to understand what frequency, size and severity of fires to expect in the future. The project's findings and outputs will be used to make longer-term strategic decisions around:

- fuel reduction practices due to a better understanding of how fuel, fire risk and weather are linked
- identification and management of ecosystems and threatened species that are at risk of extinction
- planning for resources and infrastructure to be prepared for the fire danger of the future.

If you have any questions about climate change and the research presented here, contact bushfire-research@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY SARAH HARRIS

Multi-model mean of the projected increase in the number of days FFDI>25 for Melbourne Airport to 2100 for the high emission scenario



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Turning up to turn out

For teacher Matt Lucas and student Jordyn Polderman, completing their General Firefighter training was an important next step in being able to give back to their community. Through General Firefighter, CFA is preparing new members to safely perform their firefighting roles with passion, enthusiasm and commitment.

General Firefighter has replaced Minimum Skills Wildfire as the foundation training for operational members, ensuring they develop the essential knowledge and skills required to safely and effectively participate in their first turnout.

A member at both Upwey and Bayswater brigades, 18-year-old Jordyn (pictured on the left in the photo) completed his General Firefighter training in late May 2021. He has already turned out with both brigades.

"I've been to four jobs so far," Jordyn said. "It's amazing to get on the truck and keep learning."

"My first call-out after completing General Firefighter was a massive highlight. I was in an English class when the pager message came through. I'll never forget going past my school [Upwey High School] knowing my classmates were inside and here I am on the way to fight my first fire."

"It was the final tick to me being an operational firefighter and it was a great moment."

Coming from a CFA volunteer family, Jordyn said joining the operational ranks wasn't a question of whether, but a question of when.

"I was hooked from a young age. My family joined CFA after the 2009 bushfires. Having that exposure to volunteering and seeing what my parents and brothers and sisters were able to achieve was all the inspiration I needed."

"I joined CFA at 11 – the youngest age you can join. CFA quickly became a second family. There was never a doubt that I would move from the Juniors to Seniors and become operational."

Like Jordyn, Belgrave Fire Brigade volunteer and Upwey High School teacher Matt (pictured on the right in the photo)

has completed General Firefighter, but he has one final assessment before he's ready to turn out.

He has lived and worked in the Hills for 20 years and has been a volunteer with CFA for two years. Like Jordyn's family, he was inspired to join after the 2009 bushfires, but it took some time to convince his wife to support his decision.

"I spent nine years as a reservist in the Army and we missed a lot of time together with the commitment for my Army training," Matt said. "The great thing about General Firefighter and CFA training in general is that it's an achievable level of training, and because of that I was able to allay her concerns."

"I was enrolled in the Minimum Skills program originally but because of COVID-19 restrictions I was unable to finish the course as planned so I elected to move across to the General Firefighter program."

"I had completed some of the skills training in the Army Reserves but the components on fire behaviour and theory were new to me and just so helpful in terms of developing my understanding."

Matt said the highlights of the training for him were the hands-on skills development on site at his station and the consolidation day.

"You're learning with the people you will turn out with and using the equipment you will use when you turn out," Matt said.

"I feel confident to get on the truck and look forward to ticking that final box and being able to support my brigade as an operational member."

Matt and Jordyn were in the same General Firefighter course and completed some of their training together along with several other teachers and students from Upwey High School.

"The first time Matt and I saw each other at a training night was a bit strange because it was a different dynamic, but it meant we were able to support each other," Jordyn said. "Living in a small community, it's not uncommon to see a familiar face

About General Firefighter

Replacing Minimum Skills, General Firefighter (GFF) standardises training for all new operational volunteers at CFA, meaning we'll all be on the same page. This is important, not just for our volunteers but our instructors, trainers and brigade captains.

The program includes theoretical and practical training, delivered in smaller modules and through a variety of learning methods and technologies. This streamlines a member's training and learning, meaning there is less risk of losing a prospective volunteer during the training phase.

Members can choose the learning mode that best suits their needs and the needs of their brigade, including

traditional face-to-face classrooms, virtual classrooms and eLearning modules. As each mode features a common syllabus, this flexibility has enabled many participants to continue progressing through the program during COVID-19 restrictions.

More than 670 new operational members have completed their General Firefighter training since the program began in October 2020. When the magazine went to press, a further 1,955 members were currently completing the program.

For more information about GFF, including how brigades and groups can support members going through the program, visit the Training page on Members Online.



and our brigades work together a lot."

Matt said it was fantastic to see students like Jordyn giving back. "Some of the trainers on the course were people I taught as well. It is certainly a bit strange to have the shoe on the other foot," he added, laughing.

"That's the great thing about living here and with being a teacher – I get to see all the amazing things our students do and the inspirational people they become."

Matt said there was a real sense of community in the Hills and teaching and living there was like nothing else.

"I am proud to live here; we support each other and there's a real sense of pride and camaraderie."

"It's a big part of why I'm a teacher and why I joined CFA – aside from the skills I have to offer, it allows me to give back to my community."

Jordyn agreed: "You're giving back to your community, learning new skills and bettering yourself as a person. To do all of that at the same time – there's nothing else like it."

"The more you put in, the more you get out as well. Completing General Firefighter is the first step in our operational learning, but the learning won't stop."

"I'm prepared for the challenges that may come and am ready to get out there and do my bit."

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN

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Queen's Birthday 2021 Honours

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

Alen Slijepcevic

It was an interest in trees, not fires that set CFA Deputy Chief Officer Alen Slijepcevic on a path that led him around the world where he is now leading CFA's bushfire and emergency management portfolio.

"I wanted to spend my working life being outdoors and forestry was giving me that option," Alen said about his choice to study for a Master of Science in Forestry in Croatia.

"We applied for permanent residency in New Zealand and made a move. My first job was a fire management officer with Forestry Corporation."

After a role with Forestry Tasmania, Alen joined Victoria's Department of Sustainability and Environment and rose through the ranks to assistant chief fire officer. In the days following 7 February 2009, Alen and two other ACFOs coordinated suppression activities to ensure DSE's response addressed the immediate needs of communities and the natural environment and undertook work to ensure Melbourne's water catchments were not significantly impacted by bushfires.

"There were some very tough years while I was at DSE, with several hard fire seasons including Black Saturday and the subsequent Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, but I was fortunate to work alongside some extremely capable people."

In 2012, Alen joined CFA taking up the role as Deputy Chief Officer – Capability and Infrastructure. Under his leadership – at both DSE and CFA – several resources and technologies were developed and implemented including automating Phoenix Rapid Fire bushfire prediction tool, the resource management and tracking systems used today, the online grassland curing application and the award-winning multi-agency system eMap.

Alen prides himself on promoting diversity. As president and chairman of the International Association of Wildland Fire Achievements he not only facilitated valuable exchanges of information and knowledge between international members of the wildfire community, but he also coordinated the creation of a Fairness and Inclusion Policy and managed to increase female participation on the Board to over 40 per cent.



Garry Cook

Garry has been involved in and around the fire service all his life. From a volunteer firefighting family, he joined Edi Fire Brigade in north-east Victoria in 1981 at the age of 16.

He became a staff member in 1986 as an assistant regional officer based at headquarters. In 1995 he was appointed operations manager of District 23, and during his time in the role he helped establish Mount Buller Fire Brigade and led some of the largest multi-agency exercises in the district. He was also involved in the response to the devastating 2002-3 alpine fires.

In 2005 he was appointed to lead the Integrated Fire Management Planning Project, established to act on recommendations from a report into the alpine fires. The foundations set by Garry through this project influenced change for the betterment of the community and led to the development of programs such as Safer Together, where agencies and the community work closely together to manage fire risk and community safety.

He became Assistant Chief Officer for North East Region in 2014 and in 2018 he was appointed Acting Executive Director People, Safety and Culture, a role he held for almost two years.

Garry's exceptional strategic leadership skills, operational knowledge and commitment to CFA has seen him entrusted with the role of Acting Chief Officer on several occasions, including in 2020 at the beginning of Fire Services Reform – a critical time for CFA and its people.

He is currently Deputy Chief Officer Specialist Services responsible for areas including operational communications, specialist response, structural fire planning, fire investigation and marine and technical rescue.

"No matter what role I have held, my goal has always been to help people do their work as safely and efficiently as possible so they can go home to their families and loved ones," Garry said.

Garry has been able to do "some pretty special things" over his 35 years as a career officer.

"I have seen some wonderful highs and naturally some terrible lows over my time, but the one constant has been that I have had the honour and privilege to work alongside some of the greatest people that have walked this planet."





Peter Baker

With 50 years of dedicated service to CFA as a volunteer and senior staff member, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Peter Baker has helped change the way we operate in multi-agency and large-scale emergencies. Peter first joined CFA as a volunteer with Belmont Fire Brigade in 1971.

"The great thing about my history with CFA is it's been about providing for the community and making the community a safer place – always was, always is," Peter said. "I've never forgotten the impact of every decision I've made. I've always thought 'what does it mean to the people on the ground and how they can provide service to the community?'"

Peter started as a full-time employee with CFA in 1983 as an assistant regional officer, but one of his highlights was working in South West Region. "I learned a lot from the people in that area. They had CFA and community spirit embedded in them. Many of them remain close friends."

Peter also lived and worked at CFA's former training college from 1990 to 1995 as an instructor.

"It was a fantastic experience which gave me an opportunity to learn a whole lot of new skills such as Hazmat training," Peter said. "It also exposed me to other emergency service agencies such as Victoria Police and we worked in a multi-agency training environment."

Following this, Peter was promoted to operations manager at Melton in District 14 which at the time had one of the fastest-growing populations in the state. From there, he undertook a variety of roles at Burwood HQ including one where he was instrumental in setting up the foundation work to create the Integrated Emergency Coordination Centre (IECC) which has since developed into the State Control Centre (SCC).

"I was the first CFA person to work in the IECC, so a big part of my role was to align our language and align our protocols, procedures and operational cultures. The SCC is a really great facility for the state and I'm very proud of what we originally had and how it's grown."



Peter Solly

Peter Solly has given more than half a decade of service to CFA. He's currently a firefighter with Werrap Fire Brigade and much of his exceptional service to Wimmera communities has been in the role of group officer of the Rainbow Group.

"There are hundreds, if not thousands, of others who deserve this award as much as I do, so this is on behalf of lots of others who are equally deserving but may fly under the radar," Peter said.

"I grew up on a farm and joined Werrap brigade because that's just what everyone did when they were living and working on farms," Peter said. "I then went to university and ended up teaching in Lake Bolac in 1977 when the fires went through Streatham so I saw the impact of a major fire."

"When I moved back to Rainbow a few years later, I was asked to help manage the group, so I became the communications officer and then the group officer."

Peter was group officer for 28 years, and has played significant roles in several major incidents, both on the ground and in incident management teams.

"We had a fairly major fire in Big Desert National Park in 2014 which was quite challenging. I was also the planning officer for the first of the big fires on Black Saturday at Horsham, and I remember thinking we'd had a hard day, then we heard the news and realised others had been through even harder days."

"It's very satisfying to work with an amazing team of people including CFA volunteers and staff, and DELWP and FFMVic crews in the Horsham ICCs."

"When you're in a situation where someone else is in strife, you get a lot of satisfaction in helping people out."

He is known among his community as an outstanding leader and team builder who is highly respected for his wisdom, his strategic approach and his technical knowledge. His incident management abilities have been recognised and valued across the emergency services sector.



Lesley Read

Lesley became a member of Hilldene Fire Brigade in 2002 and has served as firefighter, secretary, treasurer, and VFBV delegate. She has also been the peer support coordinator for District 12 since 2010 and spends most of her personal time providing 24/7 wellbeing support to CFA members and their families.

Lesley first joined CFA's Peer Support Team in 2006 and has first-hand experience of how members can be affected by some situations and circumstances they have to deal with. She provides a sympathetic ear to listen to anyone who needs to share, a shoulder to lean on and a source of comfort at times of tragedy.

Lesley has been deployed as a peer to campaign fires including the 2009 fires, St Patrick's Day fires, and most recently the 2019-20 summer fires. She has also been interstate to support those who have been deployed.

Lesley has completed the Certificate III in Community Services and is trained in Psychological First Aid, facilitation training to deliver the Wellbeing Services Awareness Package and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training.

"I am truly humbled to even be nominated for this award," Lesley said. "There are so many people in CFA who do such an incredible job so to even be considered is truly surreal. I'm blown away."

"The best part of my role is being able to support people at the darkest times. Sometimes all members need is a good cup of coffee at a staging area, and if I can do that and be the support then I'm happy with that. Sometimes members just need to know that someone is there and cares."



Stephen Walls

"It's a great honour to be recognised for something that I enjoy doing. There are a lot of people who do great things in the fire services and the bar's pretty high," Stephen said.

Stephen joined CFA as a 17-year-old volunteer initially to run in the State Championships. "I then got involved with the operational side of things and really enjoyed the camaraderie and range of things to do."

Commencing his staff career with CFA five years later, Stephen has since become a highly qualified and highly experienced officer, specialising in command and control structures and incident management.

He developed the accreditation process for CFA Level 3 Incident Controllers, helped standardise training and accreditation for key incident management team roles across Victorian fire agencies, and contributed significantly to the revision of Victoria's Command and Control Structure for Bushfire.

"As an incident controller I have a whole lot of people around me, and the expertise that they bring – whether that's on the back of a truck or the end of a rake-hoe – it's quite awe inspiring and I'm very proud to be part of that system."

Brian Petrie

"Receiving this award was a bit of a surprise," Brian said. "We go about doing our work and don't really think about medals. My real reward is seeing the people I've trained perform well, whether on the fireground or in incident management teams."

Brian's operational skills and knowledge about bushfire behaviour and suppression are highly regarded, and he is endorsed as a Level 3 operations officer and a Level 3 safety officer. His passion for more effective training and exercises has clearly contributed to raising the standard of training, particularly in bushfire behaviour and suppression and crew safety.

He is a great advocate for succession planning and emphasises during the leadership training he conducts that one of the primary duties of any leader is to train and develop the knowledge and skills of those who will replace you. Brian has also played a critical role in the development of Cardinia Group's officers for at least the past 20 years, helping to broaden their knowledge and skills.

"Before becoming a staff member, I travelled around District 8 giving sessions to brigades about wildfire safety, suppression and behaviour. After Ash Wednesday, I wanted to train people to be safer around fire than they had been in the past."

"When working full-time as an instructor, I was always looking for people who I believed would make good leaders and encouraged them to get the training to become strike team leaders. People who would make good leaders don't always put themselves forward and they need encouragement."



Looking to the future of predictive services

Bushfire simulation models and other predictive tools are increasingly used to inform operational and planning decisions and trained fire behaviour analysts (FBANs) provide a range of operational decision-makers with expert guidance by validating and communicating their predictions.

In Victoria, the planning and operational use of predictive services has evolved as a response to the 2003, 2006 and 2007 bushfires and related government policies, and a formal training course for FBANs was established in 2007. Since then, FBANs have provided advice to operations staff during several significant fire seasons.

There's a range of products to support operational decision-making, such as PHOENIX RapidFire developed by Kevin Tolhurst and his team at University of Melbourne. In addition, Potential Impact Zone maps show how fires might move through the landscape, including the worst-case scenario.

These products are used in a variety of situations by a range of users including the planning and implementation of vegetation management, the presentation of intelligence and scenarios before first attack, as well as predictions of fire spread during an extended attack to inform the decisions of incident controllers and public warning officers. For example, during the 2019-20 season, by using Potential Impact Zone maps, predictive services guided the response to the 'blow-up' days in late December including the declaration of a state of disaster in eastern Victoria.

There's growing support for predictive services because of the inquiries following the 2019-20 season and the public release of predictive fire spread maps in NSW, ACT and SA. So it's timely to find out what users think about predictive services outputs, learn from their experiences, and ensure these outputs are ready for the next big fire season.

This is where social research is useful so that we can ensure the needs of operations staff are identified and met. The Research and Development (R&D) team at CFA consists of trained scientists with expertise in fire weather, fire behaviour, climate variability, fuel assessment, remote sensing, GIS (geographic information system) and social research. This combination of physical and social science



strengthens our ability to translate scientific evidence into CFA practice.

Regarding current use of FBAN products by operations staff, existing social research suggests that the use of predictive services is strongly influenced by users' values and experiences – for example, if the user knows an FBAN or has had a positive experience working with one, or if they think an FBAN has sufficient personal experience of fire or the region. We need to find out more about how trust in predictive services products and the advice provided by FBANs can be supported to ensure it remains effective and relevant.

The R&D team is currently doing a six-month collaborative project with Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Deakin and Swinburne universities. This builds on a national online survey of predictive services users conducted in late 2020. To gain a more in-depth understanding, we carried out interviews with five FBANs and 20 operational predictive services users. This will inform the future design and use



PHOTOS: TIMOTHY NEALE

of predictive services, leading to better operational fire management outcomes for the sector and community.

This research is also a stepping stone towards future research which will investigate community understanding and expectations and how predictive services products can be designed for and disseminated to communities.

STORY CHLOE BEGG

1st



2021 CFA Photo Competition winners

2nd



A CFA volunteer who snapped a quick pic while attending a planned burn has won the annual National Volunteer Week Photo Competition. The image shows the controlled flames in long grass at Mernda, while volunteers can be seen in the back of the fire truck via the vehicle's rear vision mirror.

Epping Fire Brigade volunteer Deb Azzopardi said she took the image on her phone during a quiet moment of the burn.

"The fire had been lit and while we were waiting for further instructions, I saw the crew on the back and thought it looked amazing, so I grabbed the mobile and took a couple of photos," Deb said. "I think it really captures the anticipation of the moment."

After receiving submissions from across the state, the photos were marked against a variety of criteria, and judged to best represent the CFA values of safety, teamwork, adaptable, integrity and respect.

Chewton Fire Brigade volunteer Steve Womersley was the runner-up, with a photo of fellow brigade members amid the smoke.

"It's a photo of my mate Mouse (Barry Mounsey) who's always got a keen eye for a dangerous tree," Steve said. "A fire had broken out in the scrub outside Lexton and we'd been called there the following day to help with blacking out.

"The light was lovely and we were in a position where we weren't too pressured so I had the opportunity to step back and take a couple of good shots."

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan congratulated everyone who submitted stunning images.

"These photos are not only visually spectacular, but also capture the essence of CFA volunteers," Jason said.

3rd





CFA's Women's Reference Groups

This year CFA's Women's Reference Groups (WRG) across the state hosted several events and activities to share initiatives and support the development of women in CFA.

District 15 WRG Chair and Cardigan & Windermere Fire Brigade member Michelle Phillips said WRGs are vitally important.

"Having three daughters and a son all now in CFA, I felt it was my obligation to make CFA an even better, more inclusive place for them to volunteer," Michelle said.

"The District 15 WRG has successfully seen women volunteers formally accepted into the district planning committee and all sub-committees for our district. This is a landmark achievement because women now have the opportunity to be involved in decision-making across the district.

District 15 WRG meets quarterly to develop initiatives that foster a culture of inclusion, leading to increased opportunities for and participation by women at all levels of CFA in District 15. The team also offers advice to the District 15 Planning Committee.

"Currently the number of women in CFA doesn't reflect our wider community. We need to create interest and show how we support all memberships in CFA."

South East Region Women's Challenge Camp

Women from brigades across South East Region were invited to test their fitness, build connections and understand each other's experiences at CFA through a challenge camp.

Held in May 2021 at Camp Coonawarra in Glenaladale, it brought together 50 women volunteers to participate in a range of

activities that showcased the dynamic skill development and training opportunities for women in CFA.

Deputy Chief Officer Trevor Owen attended the weekend and participated in a number of events.

"There was a whole range of activities happening, including wellbeing, leadership, information about IMT roles and a panel discussion that included CEO Natalie MacDonald and Emergency Management Commissioner Andrew Crisp," Trevor said.

Golden Beach Fire Brigade Captain Paula Grosveld said there were a range of networks in place to support women in CFA.

"I'm really proud to be part of the Challenge Camp and I hope that some of the women who attended got some really relevant and encouraging ideas to take back to their brigades."

District 15 WRG's International Women's Day event

On Sunday 14 March the District 15 WRG hosted the first CFA statewide International Women's Day event. The idea for this event was created and developed by the District 15 WRG and was the first of its kind in CFA. It was developed and delivered by volunteers for volunteers.

More than 260 volunteers and staff from around the state attended, including 57 who opted to attend online. A face-to-face event was held in most districts which provided an opportunity for networking and discussion after the event.

District 15 WRG opened the event addressing the theme of 'Choose to challenge' and how they have challenged the status



quo from the development of the group to their representation on the DPC and DPC subcommittees. They talked about their successes, their training initiatives and their plans for 2021.

Guest speaker CFA CEO Natalie MacDonald shared her experiences about how she has 'chosen to challenge' in her career and how she has said "why not?" when taking on new challenges.

Cape Clear, Colac and Malmsbury fire brigades all shared initiatives that increased women's participation in CFA, and the District 14 Learning and Development team spoke about their female driver education program.

Participants also heard from the District 24 WRG who spoke about their achievements and the future of their group.

The online event was closed by guest speaker Chief Officer Jason Heffernan. He accepted Daylesford Fire Brigade volunteer and WRG member Indre Kisonas's challenge for CFA to source a narrow boot for women, and he announced that the next tender for a fire boot would include the requirement for an alternate boot.

Jess Bettess from the Volunteer Sustainability Team, who helped organise the event, said the day was a success.

"The day was a great opportunity for members across the state to share successful initiatives they have introduced to increase female participation," Jess said.

"97 per cent of participants statewide said they would attend an event like this in the future. They enjoyed the opportunity to network with fellow volunteers and the initiatives presented were relevant to their brigades."

Far left and top left: South East Region Women's Challenge Camp

Above: District 15 Women's Reference Group with Chief Officer Jason Heffernan

Top right: District 15 WRG's International Women's Day event

District 24 WRG empowers women

District 24's WRG hosted an online event featuring guest speakers Australian mining engineer, athlete, motivational speaker and author Turia Pitt and Australian lawyer and Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick. It was attended by 100 people. The event aimed to empower CFA members to live with more confidence, overcome adversity, reach goals, challenge gender inequality and be a champion for change.

Volunteer Sustainability Team member Elissa Rossiter planned the session and said she received wonderful feedback from the event.

"It was fantastic to hear from Turia and Elizabeth as well as CFA's Chief Officer Jason Heffernan and CEO Natalie MacDonald," Elissa said.

"We had many CFA members attend as well as members of the community. It was great to see so many people empowered."

STORY HOLLY PENKETH

CFA remembers its fallen firefighters



CFA held its annual memorial service for fallen members on Sunday 2 May 2021 at the Sofitel Hotel in Melbourne's CBD.

CFA Board members and Executive, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria members and Victorian Government representatives joined family and friends of the fallen to lay wreaths, light candles, remember lives and honour the personal sacrifices and commitment firefighters make each and every day.

Following the service, attendees visited the new Emergency Services Memorial in Treasury Gardens.

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said it was an important day to remember the 80 CFA members who had died in the line of duty since the organisation's inception 76 years ago.

"Every day across Victoria, our firefighters selflessly give their time to serve and protect their communities," Jason said.

"Tragically, too many members have lost their lives doing so, and today we pause to remember them. They are forever in the hearts and minds of everyone at CFA and the Victorian community."

"We honour them today and every day by continuing their vital firefighting work, and learning, innovating and constantly improving the safety of our members."

CFA Chair Greg Wilson gave the official welcome to about 170 attendees.

"Today's event is an important date in our calendar to recognise the selfless sacrifice that our members have made in service to their communities, and I would especially like to add my acknowledgements to the families and friends of those we have lost," Greg said.

"You know more than any of us the bravery and contribution that your loved ones have made, and it is my privilege to be with you in remembering and celebrating them today."

"I don't doubt that for many here last year's fires would have been a painful reminder of your own loss, because regardless of the passing years the shadow of that tragedy stays with us. It stays with the



mothers, fathers, siblings, partners and children who are left behind. And I assure you, it stays with CFA too."

During the service, Tod Strike, one of the original members of The Ten Tenors, sang three songs – The National Anthem, Amazing Grace and The Lord is my Shepherd.

Paul Edbrooke, Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, was invited to give one of the readings,

CFA CEO Natalie MacDonald said the new memorial in Treasury Gardens was a fitting tribute to emergency services personnel who had lost their lives.

"CFA and the families of our fallen members contributed to the design and development of the new site," Natalie said. "It's a beautiful, public tribute to those we have lost, which all Victorians can visit and pay their respects."

Norma Sumner, whose father Norman John Robinson died in the Tarrawingee fire in 1943, attended the service.

"Thank you so much for the beautiful service. I have no memory of my father and the circumstances in which he died, but our mother kept his memory alive each year and made sure we knew of his sacrifice," Norma said. "We now live in Canberra and made the journey here."

"Thank you for keeping alive the memories of the 80. We are so honoured and proud that we are a piece of Victoria's history and that CFA continues to recognise these brave firefighters for their sacrifice after so many years."

The CFA memorial service was cancelled in 2020 because of COVID-19, so Sunday's event also paid tribute to the firefighters lost in the devastating 2019-20 fires where we tragically lost three of our colleagues from Forest Fire Management, three members from New South Wales Rural Fire Service and three firefighter colleagues from the US.

Understanding fire-generated weather

Have you experienced fire-generated weather? Fires can generate their own lightning, create outflow winds and downbursts, black rain and hail, and sometimes tornadoes. These weather phenomena have been known to occur in some of our worst bushfires, and occasionally by surprise when conditions don't seem that severe. How much is known about these fire-generated thunderstorms?

The atmospheric conditions for predicting fire-generated thunderstorms are increasingly well understood thanks to work done by the Bureau of Meteorology. However, the critical triggers in fire behaviour for fires to create their own weather is poorly understood. By collecting more observations from controlled situations such as planned burns, knowledge of these triggers will be refined over time.

Throughout autumn 2021, the CFA Research and Development team in collaboration with Forest Fire Management Victoria established a new 'testbed' project to collect data during planned burns. This data allows us to study the conditions that lead to fire-generated thunderstorms.

The technology employed (such as weather balloons, radars and lidars) has been successfully tested and continues to be applied using different methods to establish the most effective observation strategies. In other words, launching sensors into fire-generated weather (such as plumes) allows us to collect data that describes exactly how much the fire is modifying the local atmospheric conditions.

Current insights from the early data are promising. For example, we've been able to directly observe a column updraft rising at speeds of over 60 km/hour. The implications for these sorts of results are relevant for understanding and predicting long distance spot fires and dangerous wind conditions, which can be used to inform training and operational decision-making for how to respond



to these conditions. Better prediction of these conditions will also lead to improved warnings to firegrounds and to the public.

Fire-generated thunderstorms are one example of the sort of datasets fire agencies like CFA are in a unique position to collect. The testbed project model can be applied to better quantify other fireground hazards in a controlled fire environment, and new experiments are currently being designed that can leverage these unique lessons and data collection opportunities.

To find out more about CFA's field research email bushfire-research@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY NICK MCCARTHY

Fraud and corruption

As a public sector agency, CFA is committed to preventing fraud and corruption that could result in financial loss and negatively impact our reputation. If known or suspected, it must be dealt with swiftly to protect public funds and property. But to do that, it's important to understand what fraud and corruption are and how to report them.

In simple terms, fraud is the use of deceit over a person or organisation to obtain a financial or non-financial advantage. Defrauding people or organisations of money is the most common type of fraud. Scams are also a type of fraud that have become increasingly common through the internet, social media and mobile phones, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. While not an exhaustive list, common examples of the types of conduct that may result in fraud or corruption include:

- theft of money or equipment by various deceitful means
- unlawful use of CFA property or services for personal gain
- disclosure of confidential or commercially sensitive information
- corruption of a tender or quotation process or of a recruitment process
- text messages or telephone calls from scammers (eg claiming to be from the ATO, PayPal or Australia Post)
- identity theft.

CFA employees, volunteers and secondees who believe they have evidence of fraud or corrupt activity must report it immediately by emailing complaints@cfa.vic.gov.au. This includes any fraudulent or corrupt activity by CFA members, contractors or suppliers.

Reports of fraud or suspected fraud or corruption will be treated as confidential and you can report anonymously. Any CFA member making a report will also be afforded privacy as necessary and as required by privacy legislation and CFA policy.

Always be alert and ensure you take appropriate steps to protect yourself and CFA against fraud and corruption.

For more information about fraud and corruption, you can consult a range of sources such as:

- CFA's Fraud, Corruption and Other Losses Business Rule
- Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC)
- Scamwatch
- Stay Smart Online
- IDCARE
- Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

STORY STEVE SAGAR

Donations rollout update

Thanks to the generous donations from the community to the CFA Public Fund and CFA & Brigades Donations Fund following the 2019-20 fires, CFA is delivering programs to further enhance volunteer safety and capabilities when responding to incidents, equip brigades, and help transform the capability of our volunteers.

Volunteer digital training program

This program improves the capacity of CFA's volunteer trainers and assessors (TAs) by purchasing 320 4G-enabled Samsung tablets for use in training, delivery and assessment. Following the success of the pilot group, phase one will be rolled out in August 2021 and will allow our TAs to deliver and assess operational training effectively and efficiently. It will also increase efficiencies in assessment and data management through real-time access to all online materials and systems. Phase two will be rolled out in early 2022.

Mobile education units (MEU)

The MEU project will provide CFA with a fleet of 10 vehicles (two for each CFA region) to support community development and resilience activities, including volunteer support and engagement activities. We will be able to use the vehicles to engage with community members at festivals, fairs and brigade open days, and use them at campaign fires or other prolonged events to give information to the public. After extensive consultation, the first five vehicles have been commissioned but will not be available to volunteers until the middle of next year due to procurement challenges caused by COVID-19.

Defibrillator program

Just over \$1 million was allocated to the Defibrillator Program to buy 426 defibrillators. This brought CFA's total to more than 1,700 units across the state. The rollout was completed in July 2021 and ensures every group vehicle will have a defibrillator and every brigade will have at least one vehicle with a defibrillator.

District Picklist Program

The \$4.8 million District Pick List Program supported brigades with practical items at a local level. More than 12,000 practical items were distributed to 95 per cent of brigades. Items allocated through the program ranged from brigade amenities such as washing machines and TVs, to training for medium rigid licences, as well as additional operational equipment such as torches, thermal imaging cameras and chainsaws.

Big impact on smaller brigade

District 2 BASO Angela Barnes coordinated the Pick List Program for the Eppalock Group.

"It allowed smaller brigades to access items they wouldn't have otherwise been able to afford," Angela said. "Many of the brigades are in small rural communities with limited infrastructure around them and limited ability to fundraise."

"It was like Christmas and a real highlight for brigades to have an opportunity to specifically pick items from the list that could build their capabilities."

Mt Camel Fire Brigade, a small rural brigade near Heathcote, received a mobile phone for their tanker to improve communication, reversing camera to improve safety and a mussel that helps pump water from a dam or river.

"The mussel is a real winner," Secretary and Treasurer Fiona Tranter said. "In the past we've used a one-way foot valve covered by a yabby net to draught water from dams to fill our tanker, but when the water level is low it's not practical. Whereas the mussel is easy to use in all types of dams."

Mosquito Creek Fire Brigade on the edge of Lake Eppalock is another happy beneficiary of the program, receiving two LED light bars for tanker 1 and tanker 2 (pictured).

"We cover all the club sites and camping areas around Twin Rivers which attract around 6,500 visitors over the Christmas period," 2nd Lieutenant Mark Forder said. "There is little lighting around, so the LED light bars let us see where we're going and what we are up against."

Knowsley Fire Brigade Secretary and Firefighter Denis Crouch said his brigade selected two medium rigid licences, a truck-mounted hose winder, drip torch and some hand-held torches.

"The licences are always appreciated," Denis said. "When everyone is at work in Bendigo or in the back paddock of their farm during the day not everyone is available, so having more members able to drive the truck builds our response capabilities."



Volunteer Succession Planning Framework



Earlier this year CFA launched the Succession Planning Framework which will support CFA members to take on leadership and other key roles in brigades or groups.

The Volunteer Sustainability Team in partnership with North West Region created a framework that's easy to use and guides CFA members through six foundational areas including:

- Structure review
- Skills review
- Membership and roles review
- Developing our members
- Retaining and recruiting members
- Preparing for elections.

The framework acknowledges that succession planning may be different for every brigade and group and each brigade must determine the best approach to meet local needs. There's no right or wrong way to proceed and a brigade or group can cover all sections of this framework or just a few.

Since its launch in February 2021, members of the Volunteer Sustainability Team have trialled two workshops about the framework in District 2, which were attended by leaders from seven brigades.

Overall, the workshops were well received.

"As a member about to join a leadership group I found the workshop very informative and helpful," one leader said. "The facilitators were fantastic and had wonderful knowledge to support members."

Participants acknowledged how the tools and resources offered in the Succession Planning Framework could be used to address brigade sustainability challenges, as one participant stated.

"It was a very valuable introduction to a process for solving issues that have been around for a long time," they said.

The succession planning workshop is offered under the Volunteering for Leadership Program.

Recently, a Volunteer Sustainability Team member supported the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade leadership team using resources from the Succession Planning Framework website. Important discussions were held to address role gaps for their upcoming elections.

As Christmas Hills Captain Di Simmons explained, "It can be a really challenging process to get people into roles, but we were able to come up with a plan to put in

a couple of new lieutenants and put the experienced members in support roles.

"There's a good mood in the brigade and we're in a good position for the future."

Members of the Volunteer Sustainability Team have been supporting brigades in this space for some years. The team acknowledges that filling role gaps is a challenge for many brigades and groups and encourages leaders to be transparent about their intentions leading up to elections. VST's Kirsten Dudink believes that brigades and groups should have open and honest discussions.

"It's important for brigades to be open about their future intentions and this should be done well before elections," Kirsten said. "All members should have a clear understanding of who is intending to nominate to continue in their role, change roles, retire, etc."

Members can find the new Succession Planning Framework on Members Online by typing 'succession planning' into the search tab.

If you have any feedback or questions email successionplanning@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY HOLLY PENKETH

Recognising scarred trees

Aboriginal people caused scars on trees by removing bark for various purposes. The scars, which vary in size, expose the sapwood on the trunk or branch of a tree. The bark removed was traditionally used to build canoes, coolamons, shields and shelter. As wood is susceptible to rotting, museums across Victoria house only a small number of artefacts that have been built from scarred trees.

Culturally significant trees provide valuable clues about where and how Aboriginal people used to live and the use of perishable materials. They are often located near other important archaeological sites. Scarred trees provide Aboriginal people today with an important link to their culture and their past.

Characteristics of a scarred tree

- The tree is usually over 150 years old and is a native species endemic to particular regions.
- Species range within the localised forest type.
- The scar is reasonably regular in shape, often with parallel sides and slightly pointed or rounded ends and usually stops above ground level.
- The exposed sapwood at the base and occasionally at the top of the scar may show stone or steel axe marks.
- The exposed sapwood is free of tree knots, branches or evidence of a branch having been at the top of the scar.
- Scarred trees often have epicormic stem regrowth at the base of the scar.

Some tree scars were made by other human activities. European settlers removed bark from trees to build huts. Boundary or survey markers made by settlers also caused scars. In addition, some scars are created through natural processes such as fire, lightning, storms and floods.

Identification of scarred trees

Scars can be produced by a range of different means. If you think you've found a scarred tree, ask yourself these questions to eliminate other causes.

- Is the scar caused by disease?
- Is it caused by rubbing from other branches?
- Is it caused by a limb tear, a fire or lightning?
- Is it caused by wildlife such as birds or possums?
- Is it caused by bulldozing or the creation of tracks?
- Is it caused by European Historical Heritage, such as, slab hut construction, mining, tanning or other industries?
- Is it an early boundary marker? Look for a large bolt or tag.
- How thick is the regrowth around the scar?
- Is it old enough?

Actions to take if you find a scarred tree on the fireground

- Report the location to your fireground supervisor.
- Establish a 50-metre 'no machine work' buffer either side of the tree.
- Protect the tree from fire if safe to do so.
- If the scarred tree is also a Clear and Present Danger tree, establish an exclusion zone.

STORY KIRSTY WAUGH AND MICHAEL SHERWEN



The development of burn camps



Burn camps have been an important part of CFA for a number of years, delivering crucial training opportunities for volunteers throughout the state.

An idea in 2011 to develop an exercise where participants could build knowledge, skills, and confidence in a controlled and safe planned burning environment, led to the first burn training camp in Brucknell in 2012. The success of this initiative paved the way for further camps based at Cape Otway, Mallacoota, Adekate, Cann River, Crib Point and Shelley.

Shelley Burn Camp

Vegetation Management Officers (VMO) Phil Browne and Phil Hawkey launched North East Region's Shelley burn camp in 2014, and more than 280 CFA members have attended over the years. Held in HVP's Shelley Plantation, small-scale burns are carried out on tracts of native vegetation within the estate. Participants operate in teams for the duration of the camp and are assigned different tasks each day. This allows them to gain experience in all aspects of planned burning including:

- fuel moisture readings
- overall fuel hazard assessments
- establishing and marking points of reference
- identification and protection of environmental values and critical infrastructure
- developing a burn plan
- weather monitoring.

In the burn phase, teams develop appropriate lighting patterns for each site and everyone is involved in the various burn operation tasks. If weather is unfavourable, a suite of supplemental activities and topics have been designed to support the lessons learned from the camp and each day participants attend a debriefing to reinforce what was learned. Unfortunately, because of the 2019-20 fires and COVID-19, burn camps were suspended in North-East Region in April 2019.

Little Desert Burn Camp

Over three days in March 2021, West Region VMO Ian Morrison led a team of CFA members to complete five small burns in heathlands and grasslands in the Little Desert (pictured). This needed extensive planning and collaboration with Little Desert Nature Lodge, Bank Australia and Greening Australia. A major positive outcome of this burn camp was that several members gained the necessary skills for the Suppress Wildfire module and two participants successfully completed the national standard of Burn Controller.

Ian is continuously looking for new ways to evolve and improve the camps with an aim to incorporate the use of portable automatic weather stations (PAWS) and drones to support the documentation of planned burns. Training instructors will continue to be an integral part of assessing skills and the burn controller endorsement process. Ian also invites guest speakers to pass on their experience and to inspire participants so that they leave the burn camp with excellent knowledge of all aspects of planned burning.

Cape Clear Burn Day and Women's Mentoring Day

The annual Cape Clear Women's Burn Day in District 15, an initiative of Cape Clear Fire Brigade, encourages women to get involved with planned burning in a safe, positive and relaxed environment. Now in its fourth year, interest in the event has continued to grow and many participants travel long distances to attend. It started as a one-day event, but is now an informal and fun weekend of skills maintenance and, weather permitting, roadside burning.

April 2021 also marked the first Women's Mentoring Day held in District 4, where all female firefighters in the South West Region were invited to participate in a planned burn to experience live fire. The day was a success and generated a lot of interest from volunteers. Planning is underway to make the next sessions bigger and better.

STORY MICHELLE DICKSON

More updates to SAS app

Further releases of the Supplementary Alerting Service (SAS) app are planned this year, following the release of version four in July.

Developed by CFA, SES and Ambulance Victoria in conjunction with EMV, the SAS application works alongside the existing EAS paging system to give members increased functionality and enhanced communication during incident response.

Available free to all members, with the SAS you can set availability, view response times, chat with fellow members and view responding members' qualifications and competencies. More than 14,000 CFA members are now using the SAS.

ACFO Operational Communications Jason Lawrence said future releases would include key improvements to the app for both individual members and those using the app's dashboard functionality.

"We've collated all the feedback from our members and put forward a priority list of work to EMV that we believe is vital for the next stages of app development," Jason said. "A number of key priorities and issues will be addressed in future releases."

"We're planning to include the addition of water points to map layers and make improvements to the app's availability and chat functionality, as well as address issues with logging out."

Jason said that changes were also planned for the SAS User Guide, which would be updated to reflect the additional functionality and improvements made since the app was released.

"We look forward to sharing the next iterations of the app with members and increasing its use in the lead-up to the 2021-22 fire season," he said.



"The app will continue to evolve and be enhanced over time to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our members."

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

For more information about the app, the User Guide, training videos, FAQs and more, go to cfa.vic.gov.au/sas.

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN

A bright future for CFA's FEM work

CFA's fire equipment maintenance (FEM) work has been a part of brigade activity for many decades. By supplying and servicing fire protection equipment, CFA brigades are providing fire safety services that reduce risk and boost the safety of our communities.

More than 260 brigades participate in FEM, which includes maintaining fire extinguishers, fire blankets, layflat hose, fire hose reels and fire safety training for more 24,000 customers across the state. This includes small businesses, local councils, state government agencies, water authorities, schools, aged care and other healthcare facilities. These interactions with local businesses are also an opportunity to develop meaningful relationships where fire safety messaging is welcomed.

CFA will soon be launching new technology which will modernise FEM operations and reduce the administrative workload on volunteers. We will also ask

FEM brigades for their ideas about how we can build on the services we already provide to further enhance fire safety in industry.

Funds raised through FEM work have helped brigades buy critical equipment such as branches, helmet torches, thermal imaging cameras, breathing apparatus sets and specialist tools. Over the past five years, 70 field command vehicles have been funded through FEM work, plus the Scoresby Hose Layer and light tankers.

We're in the process of rolling out an updated FEM manual, moving away from hard copy documents in favour of digital versions. The FEM manual, for example, is available on USB and SharePoint (accessible via Members Online). To support this change, we've created an FEM Servicing Field Guide which will support your existing knowledge for field-based tasks.

We're also working closely with CFA's digital training team to modernise the



FEM qualification and skills maintenance courses and expect to see big changes to improve support for volunteers over the coming six to 12 months.

To find out more or to become involved in FEM, go to Members Online or phone 1300 36 36 61.

STORY LEIGH MARSH

Hey, are you getting the info you need?

Make sure you're keeping up to date with all the information by managing your subscriptions on Members Online – members.cfa.vic.gov.au

- CFA regularly contacts volunteers and staff to keep everyone up to date with the latest CFA news.
- It's important to update your details when your email address or phone number change.
- Click on 'View my Profile' on the home page of Members Online to update your details.
- You can also manage your email subscriptions – opt in or out of emails from leaders, the weekly CFA News Update and your region/district.

Share your stories

news.cfa.vic.gov.au

- CFA volunteers and employees can upload stories and photos to the CFA News and Media website.
- Reach a wide audience.
- Write about your brigade's successes – fundraising activities, community engagement, incidents, training, recruitment or service medal presentations.
- To find out how to submit news articles login to news.cfa.vic.gov.au using your Members Online login details. There's a link to a video that explains the process at the top of the 'Submit a news article' page.



CFA Digital Library

cfa.vic.gov.au/photos

- Choose from thousands of high-quality images.
- Browse the featured albums or search the library.
- Download images free of charge and use them in your posters, social media and presentations.
- If you're new to the library click on 'Register'.
- If you have any photos that might be useful for us to store in the library email digital-media-team@cfa.vic.gov.au.



Improving community engagement outcomes

To ensure we make a positive difference every time we engage with communities and partner agencies, Community Engagement Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting (MER) helps us assess our interactions to answer some important questions: What activities are we doing? How are we engaging the community? What worked well and what didn't and what have we learned?

When we've answered the questions, we understand how we are helping the community prevent and prepare for fire and identify ways to improve our crucial community engagement work. In that way, MER informs the design and development of our community engagement programs and services.

All CFA members who engage with the community have a role to play in MER. This role varies depending on how CFA members are involved in community engagement – for some, it means using the Activity Reporting Tool (ART) to record interactions, while others may develop case studies or collect participant feedback.

A needs analysis was undertaken to understand what MER skills CFA members had and what skills they needed. The analysis also revealed what support and resources CFA members need to do MER in relation to their community engagement. The findings of this analysis will be used to target and strengthen MER skills of CFA members and improve the level of support and resources available to them, resulting in improved community engagement and enhanced fire safety knowledge and practice in communities.

For the MER needs analysis, more than 60 brigade community safety coordinators,

members of Regional Community Safety teams and Headquarters Community Engagement team members took part in an online survey, interviews and focus group discussions, and a workshop to validate the results and recommendations.

Key findings

This analysis found that MER practices are reasonably widespread in community engagement, but there are gaps. For example, although CFA members frequently take time to reflect and identify lessons, we don't always learn from the lessons.

- 61 per cent of survey respondents said they often or always reflect on the lessons learned from previous activities while 16 per cent said rarely or never.
- 29 per cent said when things don't go well, they often or always learn the lessons and share them with others. Another 29 per cent said they rarely or never do this.

Results were mixed in terms of how we measure the success of our community engagement. Only 32 per cent said they often or always have reliable ways of explaining how successful our community engagement is, and just under half said they often or always use reliable data that helps to understand the local needs and context.

Four in every five survey respondents had an appetite for professional development in MER, with up to 86 per cent stating they had at least a little to learn about topics suggested in the survey. The bar chart below shows the percentage of members who said they needed professional development in particular areas of community engagement MER.

The results show that many people who carry out community engagement activities



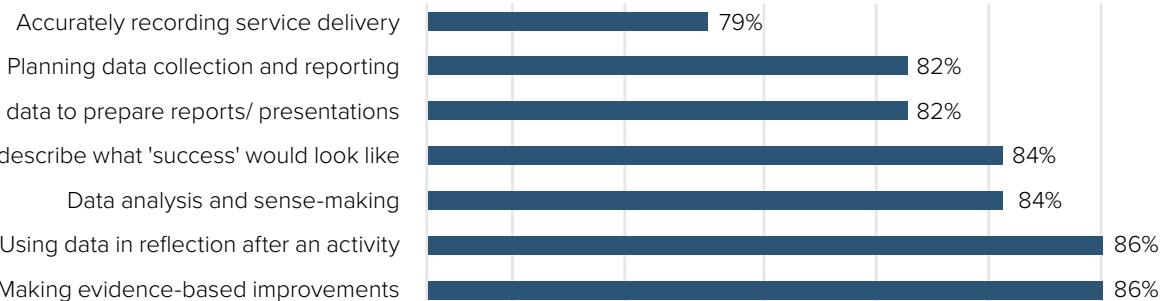
would benefit from having a clearer understanding of what MER activities they're expected to do and how these activities are relevant to them. CFA members indicated they wanted MER systems to be consistent, easy to use and well-integrated into the systems they already use. These systems also need to be flexible enough to reflect the differences across CFA areas.

We will use these findings to:

- identify and refine the MER skills needed by CFA members in various roles
- engage with CFA members to review and improve systems for activity reporting
- deliver timely, practical and relevant MER professional development in a variety of ways, including on-demand options on the CFA Learning Hub.

STORY MANOJA WICKRAMARATHNE

CFA members needing professional development in MER topics



Source: Short survey, MER needs analysis, 2021

Supporting the mental health of young volunteers

New resources have been developed through the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC to support positive mental health and wellbeing of young adult emergency services volunteers.

The research team at the University of Adelaide created a valid, practical and usable framework and several reliable resources to support positive mental health and wellbeing in volunteers aged 16 to 25 years old. These can be used at an individual, local and organisation-wide level to minimise the short- and long-term impacts of exposure to potentially traumatising events, and to maintain and promote mental health and wellbeing in volunteering more generally.

The resources, which are available at bnhcrc.com.au/resources/volunteer-mental-health, include:

- Care4Guide: a self-completed guide to positive mental health and wellbeing for young fire and emergency services

volunteers. It's designed to be used by volunteers to maintain and practise positive mental health. It can also be used by leaders and organisations to promote positive mental health and wellbeing within emergency services and other volunteer-based organisations.

- Care4Guide posters.
- Care4Guide social media assets.
- Fact sheets of key findings from the project, highlighting the research-based evidence behind the Care4Guide and other resources.
- A Young Volunteer Wellbeing Framework and an Agency Implementation Guide. These are both in the final research report, Positive mental health in young adult emergency services personnel (see bnhcrc.com.au/volunteermalthealth/report).

The project was a partnership between the CRC, AFAC, the University of Adelaide, the University of Western Australia,



Flinders University, the University of British Columbia (Canada), the Hospital Research Foundation, Military and Emergency Services Health Australia and key emergency services. The young adult members of AFAC's Young Volunteers Advisory Committee also helped to develop all the resources.

You can read more about the research in the CRC's Hazard Note 98: bnhcrc.com.au/hazardnotes/98.

STORY BETHANY PATCH
NATURAL HAZARDS RESEARCH AUSTRALIA

Using diversity and inclusion to strengthen capability

Diversity is the blend of different people in an organisation or community, each with their own identities, goals and abilities, while inclusion can only occur when those differences are valued and people are able to contribute fully.

The emergency management sector has begun to address the low representation of true diversity and inclusion in its workforce to strengthen resilience, wellbeing and community safety.

New research from the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, led by Celeste Young at Victoria University, collaborated with diversity and inclusion practitioners to develop an understanding of what effective diversity and inclusion look like in emergency management and what's needed to support more effective practice. This was examined from community, organisational and economic perspectives, with researchers developing an evidence-based Diversity and Inclusion Framework for Emergency Management Policy and Practice, with materials to support its implementation. The Framework and supporting documentation are available on the CRC website: bnhcrc.com.au/driving-change/future-workforce

This research effectively broadens and strengthens



HAZARD NOTE 99

Using diversity and inclusion to strengthen capability in emergency management

[Learn more at bnhcrc.com.au/hazardnotes/99](http://bnhcrc.com.au/hazardnotes/99)

the conversation about diversity and inclusion in the emergency management sector, in particular the need to humanise risk using a deeper understanding of what diversity and inclusion look like in practice.

You can read more about the research behind these resources in the CRC's Hazard Note 99: bnhcrc.com.au/hazardnotes/99.

STORY BETHANY PATCH
NATURAL HAZARDS RESEARCH AUSTRALIA

Community promotes bushfire resilience

Last year a group of Nillumbik residents who were concerned about bushfire preparedness in their local area, came together to form a not-for-profit incorporated association to provide information about bushfire risk, safety and preparedness to the local community.

This group, called Bushfire Resilience Inc (BRI) aims to create best-practice webinars which include important topics that are practical, helpful and relevant. BRI uses the best presenters and panel members in Australia – people who can provide information based on science, experience and best practice. BRI webinars will enable households to acquire the right knowledge so they are better informed and can make better decisions. They also encourage robust audience engagement.

BRI was formed following the widespread destruction caused by the 2019-20 fires. During this time, a North Warrandyte resident who listening to the media was shocked to learn that about 30 per cent of those impacted by the fires were underinsured and a further 30 per cent had no insurance at all.

Spurred on by what he learned, this resident joined forces with other concerned residents to organise a public meeting in Panton Hill in March 2020 to discuss insurance and other bushfire-related matters. Unfortunately, as a result of the restrictions during 2020, the meeting was rescheduled and moved to an online forum, along with four other bushfire preparedness webinars.

The five webinars were immensely successful and featured world-leading experts including CSIRO's Justin Leonard, Research Leader – Bushfire Adaptation, and Associate Professor Kevin Tolhurst, School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences, University of Melbourne. Recordings of all five webinars can be viewed on the BRI website – bushfireresilience.org.au.

Following the success of the 2020 series, BRI hosted another five webinars, which began in July 2021, with Justin Leonard discussing how to reduce house and property risk. There were also talks from Dr Rob Gordon (recent recipient of an Order of Australia Medal), Danielle Clode (Flinders University) and Jim McClellan (La Trobe University) who discussed



Gain knowledge from industry experts in five 90-minute sessions.

Featuring representatives from CSIRO, CFA, Flinders University, University of Melbourne, University of Wollongong, La Trobe University, and clinical psychologist Dr Rob Gordon OAM.

You have the opportunity to send questions before each session or ask our subject matter experts live during Q&A.

When you register we'll also send you a link to the recording.

Presenters information br.org.au/presenters

Supporters and Sponsors:



About Bushfire Resilience Inc. br.org.au/about

1 WEBINAR 1

Reduce your house and property risk
7.30pm Wednesday 21 July

- Justin Leonard, CSIRO

2 WEBINAR 2

Get water ready: tanks, pumps and sprinklers
7.30pm Wednesday 4 August

- Justin Leonard, CSIRO

3 WEBINAR 3

Your physical and emotional preparation
7.30pm Thursday 19 August

- Danielle Clode, Flinders University
- Rob Gordon OAM, Clinical Psychologist
- Jim McLennan, La Trobe University

4 WEBINAR 4

Triggers to take action
7.30pm Wednesday 1 September

- Kevin Tolhurst AM, University of Melbourne
- Katherine Haynes, University of Wollongong
- Danielle Clode, Resident, Smiths Gully Black Saturday 2009 and Adelaide Hills 2021
- Raphaele Bianchi, CSIRO

5 WEBINAR 5

Your sheltering options
7.30pm Wednesday 15 September

- Raphaele Bianchi, CSIRO
- Katherine Haynes, University of Wollongong
- Chloe Boag, CFA

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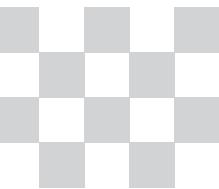
physical and emotional preparedness, and Raphaele Bianchi from CSIRO who discussed triggers to take action. Recordings of these webinars are also on the BRI website.

Although BRI is a small, community-led association, it already has a strong community following. As a CFA member, you are likely to be interested in the topics BRI presented this year, so head to the BRI website to view the webinar recordings. You could also share the BRI website on social media and let your local

communities know about these webinars. Let's support this great community-led group as they endeavour to make all Victorian communities safer and more resilient.

This initiative is supported by Valley Community Financial Services Limited (operator of five Bendigo Bank Community Bank branches in Nillumbik), Safer Together, Nillumbik Shire Council, CFA and numerous private supporters.

STORY FIONA MACKEN



Puckapunyal Primary School fire

Summary

CFA attended a structure fire on 6 December 2020 at the Department of Defence military base in Puckapunyal. The incident was complex because of the location and the number of agencies involved. CFA, Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV), Military Police, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, State Emergency Service (SES), Defence Command and contracted fire services operated by Ventia were all on scene.

The site

Puckapunyal is like any other small country town, except it is secured by fencing around the 43,000-hectare military base and people must pass through a security access control point before entering. At any given time, it's home to 3,000 soldiers and about 280 families of the ADF. It comprises three key areas: Puckapunyal training area (a 30,000-hectare area of bushland used for training and exercise); Proof and Experimental Establishment Graytown; and Puckapunyal Cantonment, a 5,000-hectare area of containing residential living, operational areas, a public primary school, daycare centres, shops, post office, a public museum, a variety of sporting facilities and a theatre.

The land that the military base is situated on is owned by the Commonwealth which added a level of complexity to the incident. However, this was further complicated because the school is situated on land leased by the Department of Education and the school buildings are owned by the Department of Education. Further to this, numerous firefighting services are contracted to Defence

by Ventia, and different staff carry out the services in the Puckapunyal Cantonment and the training area, with an overall manager of the two services. CFA and Local Defence leadership on site have a strong working relationship that is maintained year round. CFA offers a lot of support to the personnel working in the training area, particularly in summer.

Incident overview

On 6 December 2020, CFA and Defence were notified of an incident at 1.15pm at the Puckapunyal military base. It was reported that the western wing of the site's primary school was on fire. Within two minutes of this notification, the Defence's Puckapunyal pumper 1 and tanker turned out to the school. During transit to the incident, smoke could be seen issuing from the location of the school.

As a Defence member who lives on base, Hilldene Fire Brigade's Communications Officer and 2nd Lieutenant Jake Kociancic was the first on scene in a private vehicle, alongside a couple of American soldiers who were on base. Around the same time, the Defence pumper and tanker arrived four minutes after receiving the initial pager message.

Defence's fire service commenced the primary attack and took initial incident control. A control point was established which was referred to as Military Control. The Mutual Aid Agreement between CFA and Defence facilitates the transfer of control to CFA for complex or significant incidents, so control was handed over from Defence's Station Officer to Jake Kociancic who became incident controller. Jake called into FIRECOM operations





line and requested two pumbers, an aerial pumper, a breathing apparatus (BA) van and four tankers attend the fire because part of the building was fully alight and flames could already be seen coming from the roof.

The response to the incident was further escalated and CFA and FRV resources were dispatched to assist with the firefight, including FRV Station 73 (Bendigo) ladder platform and BA van and FRV Station 7 (Thomastown) teleboom. In addition, Ambulance Victoria and Mernda Fire Brigade's rehab unit were requested to be on-site for firefighter welfare, and Victoria Police was requested to assist Military Police for scene control. SES also assisted later in the evening with lighting towers.

After initial escalation and notification to the RDC, District 12 Assistant Chief Fire Officer Rob Van dorsser and Commander Justin Dally responded very early on to assist with incident management because of the scale and complexity of the incident. The Mitchell Shire group officer and two deputy group officers also provided support to incident control.

The contractor's primary truck, Puckapunyal pumper, was sited at the western end of the school and the tanker was sited to back the main truck. The crew of four was tasked with its roles. One 38mm line was positioned to attack where it appeared the seat of the fire was located at the western end. A second 38mm line by three lengths was brought around to the southern side of the building to further assist with suppression.

After conducting a further assessment (size-up) of the school, it became obvious that the strong winds were spreading the fire at a quicker rate than anticipated and the second line of 38mm was redirected to move further to the eastern end of the building to help reduce the rate of spread. A third line was tasked, 65mm by two lengths, where the fire was continuing to burn heavily.

After 12 minutes the first CFA units arrived on scene. Shortly thereafter, a request was made via the Defence Communications Centre to recall back-up Defence fire service personnel to assist those already on site.

Defence established its own Operational Command to manage base operations which included water supply, food, access control including the media, and passage of information to chain of command. They worked adjacent to the Emergency Management Team that was established.

After an hour, the fire was still not under control and its intensity caused the roof on the western end of the building to collapse.

Prior to the arrival of FRV's Thomastown teleboom, heavy pumper and Bendigo ladder platform, there was concern that the principal of the school may have been inside the building because his bicycle was near the foyer of the building and he couldn't be contacted. CFA units began fighting the fire from the administration section of the building. Other units were responded and assisted CFA crews on the southern side of the facility. By 4.45pm, the teleboom was working on extinguishing the fire. The ladder platform was sited on the southern site of the building and started to remove collapsed roofing. About an hour later, non-essential units were released, though Broadford and Hilldene brigade crews remained to continue to support Defence crews monitoring the site and suppressing hot spots.

With the number of vehicles responding, it was identified that it was difficult to follow the agreement between Defence and CFA/FRV which states that CFA and FRV vehicles must follow escorts for security reasons. When a vehicle arrived at the security point on Code 1, it was automatically allowed through. However, following an escort meant vehicles were restricted to the posted speed limit as the escort didn't exceed the speed limit. In addition, at times there were not enough escorts so some vehicles proceeded without an escort. This was brought to Defence's attention throughout the after-action review process where they identified the need to refine this process. This has been actioned by Defence.

The spread of the fire was halted at the eastern end of the west wing just before it took hold of the offices and eastern wing. At 9.45pm, incident control was handed over to Defence for overnight monitoring and the CFA truck from Broadford and Hilldene were released. Despite the building being destroyed, many resources were salvaged which enabled continuity of learning for the students.

What worked well

Relationships: The strong working relationships between the agencies involved, particularly CFA members, Victoria Police, Defence and on-site personnel, significantly contributed to the success of the incident. These relationships had been maintained throughout the COVID-19 restrictions and enabled members to work together effectively and efficiently by knowing the roles each played. In addition, a key part of the strong relationships was the strong communication and ability to interpret key messages back into the terminologies of the individual agencies and communicate these to the respective staff.



Equipment: There was a large variety of equipment involved in the incident supplied by various agencies. By understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the resources being provided, crews and the EMT were able to effectively plan what was needed to support each resource. For example, while the ladder platform was on its way from Bendigo, crews were aware that they would need to supply water to it, whereas the teleboom from Thomastown would come with a pumper that would need a water source. Having a strong understanding of the resources and their individual capabilities meant fewer issues arose. It was identified, however, that the bulk water tanker from the Puckapunyal training area couldn't connect with CFA fittings and Defence is working to rectify this.

Emergency Management Team: The multi-agency approach worked very well within the EMT. There was representation from Victoria Police, Defence, Department of Education, CFA, FRV, SES and Ambulance Victoria, and most of the personnel involved already had well established relationships with each other. There was a strong level of trust between CFA and Defence. They were happy to help each other and felt comfortable asking questions. For example, a building surveyor would normally be arranged by the local council, but because the fire was on Commonwealth land, the council wasn't involved. Instead, the EMT collectively problem-solved and members proactively contributed.

Mutual Aid Agreement: The Mutual Aid Agreement between Defence and CFA ensures there are clear arrangements between the two agencies in the event of an incident. There is a high level of specificity in this agreement that outlines control and command arrangements. Thanks to this agreement, all personnel knew how the incident control would be managed and had a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each agency. This comprehensive agreement contributed greatly to the success of fighting the fire.

Lessons identified

Escalation tables: Emergency Services

Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) does not have escalation tables for Puckapunyal (PUKA1).

Recognition: Throughout the firefight, it was difficult to identify the Defence Fire Service's Officer in Charge. At one point there were four Ventia personnel on

scene with red helmets. This made it difficult for personnel from other agencies to identify the OIC because although they have the same rank structure as FRV, the way they are recognised is different. This is something that CFA members should consider when working with firefighting personnel from different agencies.

Communication between EMT and the field: Defence's first response vehicle had two handheld CFA radios, which were of great benefit during the initial response. However, they had a limited capacity which caused difficulties when communicating with the EMT and responding brigades. Communications would have been more effective if Defence had vehicle-mounted radios in some, if not all, of their vehicles. To enable better communications, a request has been made to CFA to supply two vehicle-mounted radios. Defence is currently working with CFA to complete this request.

Familiarity with the site: Crews attending the incident from other agencies were not familiar with the area. As a result, support agencies in the area are attending site visits to familiarise themselves with the site. However, it was recognised that Hilldene brigade and the other supporting brigades around the perimeter of the base were familiar with the base because they drive around the site annually to gain deeper knowledge of the layout. The Mutual Aid Agreement states that brigades surrounding the base in Districts 2, 12 and 22 can undertake drive-throughs, and all nearby brigades are encouraged to undertake similar site familiarisation. Furthermore, it has been recognised that the opportunity for CFA and Defence to do joint training and exercises would be beneficial to improve capability and inter-agency operability when responding to similar incidents.

Discussion points for your brigade

1. Consider the complexity of this incident. How would you have managed the transfer of control from Defence to CFA?
2. Are you aware of any Mutual Aid Agreements in your patch?
3. How would you have handled the communication between EMT and the field?

Thank you to all CFA, Defence and Ventia personnel who participated in this after-action review process and helped to develop this case study.

Balgownie Estate structure fire

Summary

A structure fire at Balgownie Estate Vineyard Resort and Spa in Yarra Glen Victoria caused significant property loss and a range of challenges for responding firefighters. This incident provided several lessons for consideration and showed the commitment, skill and adaptability of CFA crews.

Incident overview

On 25 June 2020 a structure fire occurred at the Balgownie Estate Winery in District 13. The fire started in the kitchen inside a commercial range hood and spread rapidly into the roof space. The occupants called Triple Zero (000) at 10.49am and evacuated the premises with all people accounted for by the chief fire warden.

CFA fire investigators later concluded that the fire spread was driven by strong northerly winds and the structural design of the roof space which allowed for rapid fire progression.

Dixons Creek Fire Brigade's tanker 1 was first on scene and reported that the building was well alight, with fire throughout the restaurant. With everyone accounted for, the crew identified the exposures. A day spa and an office area were under threat and the crew got to work protecting them. Electricity and gas supplies were isolated by initial fire crews and on-site maintenance staff.

Yarra Glen Fire Brigade pumper arrived soon after and a wordback was given of a structure fire not yet under

control with breathing apparatus (BA) operators and an unspecified number of additional pumpers required. Bayswater BA support vehicle was also requested. Coldstream Fire Brigade pumper and Christmas Hills Fire Brigade tanker 2 arrived on scene shortly after.

Through FIRECOM, the North-East RDC was notified and two CFA commanders from District 13 attended.

While establishing a water supply on the property, it was identified that the hydrant pumps had shut down when the power was isolated and the diesel backup pump had failed to operate. The Yarra Glen pumper crew quickly re-established the water supply and the Coldstream pumper crew connected it to the boost point on the property.

A responding CFA commander queried whether an aerial firefighting vehicle was required. Following discussions between the incident controller and officers on scene, an MFB teleboom and pumper were requested to attend via normal escalation CAD tables. The Scoresby Hose Layer, Lilydale Fire Brigade's pumper and Healesville Fire Brigade's pumper were also required. To supply the teleboom the hose layer, with Lilydale as a base pumper, established a 286-metre water supply line using 100mm hose from an offsite dam through a vineyard.

The fire was sectorised to support incident management and an IMT was established consisting of the incident controller, operations officer and a safety officer.



During this incident three transfers of control occurred because of the escalating dynamics and complexities of managing this fire. The first transfer of control was from a lieutenant to an experienced ex-captain. A second transfer of control occurred later to an experienced support brigade captain and, finally, there was a third transfer of control to a CFA commander. The transfers of control were in line with capabilities of the personnel and to ensure optimal operational management and the best outcome in the circumstances.

To look after firefighter welfare, the Yellingbo Fire Brigade's Rehabilitation Unit was responded by the fire service communications officer after difficulties communicating with the fireground. Incident communications was supported by Yarra Glen Fire Brigade's FOV. Victoria Police asked VicRoads to publish an alert for traffic because of heavy smoke over the highway creating a hazard. The Yarra Ranges Council building surveyor attended the incident, along with Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria. A formal fire investigation was conducted by CFA.

What worked well

Size-up: On arrival at an incident it's essential that a 360-degree size-up is performed to support the incident controller in their decision-making. The size-up process should also be ongoing as the incident progresses. Size-up at this incident allowed for the establishment of early priorities following RECEO.

Early use of RECEO: The initial response crews carried out their tasks in an efficient way consistent with the use of RECEO – rescue, exposure, confine, extinguish, overhaul. They identified there was no requirement for rescue because all people were accounted for. They then prioritised the protection of exposures. Additional priorities included isolating electricity and gas and providing information to oncoming crews.

Identifying the water supply issue: Crews quickly identified the cause of the water supply problem and restored it to support firefighting operations and reduce the potential impact of an immediate water shortage.

Incident management: Tasking by incident management personnel was planned and concise. For example, the hose layer was immediately tasked on arrival and established a dedicated water supply for the aerial firefighting vehicle with help from several firefighters. Tasking oncoming crews over the radio reduced delays on scene and contributed to seamless transition to task on arrival.

Placement of vehicles: Response of the appropriate vehicles and their placement at the scene contributed to organised firefighting operations. The Bayswater BA van and Yellingbo Rehabilitation Unit were co-located at the front of the incident in a good position to support BA operators. Although the teleboom was eventually not used, its response was consistent with an approach to the type of structure fire encountered and formed a part of sound operational management.

Transfer of control: Transfer of control at this incident occurred three times to ensure that incident management was conducted by the most suitable people taking into account their experience, the changing incident dynamics and challenges that were encountered. Transfer of control is an important consideration when an incident controller believes an incident is beyond their skill level. Furthermore, the application of AIIMS principles allowed the operations officer to effectively manage fireground operations.

Effective IMT: An incident management team comprising the incident controller, operations officer and safety officer was established, and this contributed to informed and organised incident management. The IMT also allowed for effective liaison with emergency management partners such as Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria, and for dialogue with the Balgownie Estate maintenance personnel when required.

Sectorisation: Sectorising the incident under the command of an appointed sector commander contributed to effective fireground communication and operational management. Radio communication on the fireground was disciplined and the traffic was managed effectively with appropriate channels and resources including the FOV.





Lessons identified

Requesting more resources: To effectively combat and resolve an incident, it's important to quickly identify what additional resources are required and make specific requests. For example, when requesting additional pumper trucks be specific about the number needed. Consider and request resources as required, such as pumper trucks, tankers, ladder platform or telebooms, BA support and rehab, and tell FIRECOM how many you need. Consider how you will manage incoming resources, including their placement and water supply needs.

Establish a BA control point: When Stage 2 BA is in operation, establish a BA control point. If BA is required for a long time and/or more than two BA teams operate simultaneously, a BA control must be established. Stage 2 BA control requires a BA control/entry officer (BACO), BA tally tags, BA control board and an emergency BA crew or rapid intervention team (RIT) on standby for firefighter emergencies.

BA operator procedure: BA operators must follow established entry and exit procedures when BA control is in operation. Prior to entry they must report to the BACO, be briefed, be provided completed tally tags, confirm radio channels and do a final PPC/E check. On exit BA operators should report to the BACO, undergo a decontamination wash down before removing BA suit and undergo health monitoring when asked to do so.

Communicate chain of command: When transfer of control occurs and an IMT is established, it's important that the transfer of control and current IMT personnel

are communicated to crews on the fireground and en-route to ensure that all personnel are aware of their chain of command and who they need to contact when required.

Pre-incident plans: If available, using pre-incident plans can provide critical information to the incident controller and other personnel. Pre-incident plans include information about potential occupied areas, access and egress, hydrants and fire suppression systems, on-site hazards, contact details and other relevant information.

Skills maintenance training: This is an important component of preparedness in order to effectively combat an incident. The maintenance and further development of structural firefighting skills including hose management, flow rates, nozzle patterns all contribute to an effective and safe incident response from CFA firefighters. It's acknowledged that the 2020 COVID-19 restrictions limited the opportunities to conduct skills maintenance training.

Discussion points for your brigade

1. What indicators were present in this incident that suggested transfer of control was necessary?
2. What steps would have been taken to transfer control each time?
3. If your brigade attended a similar incident, at what point would you have transferred control? Why?
4. What SOPs and JSOPs need to be considered when transferring control?

Thank you to all the CFA members who participated in the after-action review of this incident.

HEALTH MATTERS



Mental Health Continuum Model

Equipment only works properly when it's well maintained. CFA's Fire Equipment Maintenance team (FEM) ensures fire equipment in the community is serviced and ready to respond at a moment's notice. They do this through regular visits to complete checklists and provide certificates of service. This can also be applied to the most important part of our roles at CFA – our mental wellness.

The World Health Report (2001) states, "Mental health is a state of wellbeing when an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to contribute to his or her community".

The Mental Health Continuum, shown below, allows us to check in on ourselves. How is our self-maintenance going? Are we looking after ourselves physically, emotionally, mentally and socially so that we can respond at a moment's notice? The continuum is colour coded – green (healthy), yellow (reacting), orange (injured), and red (ill) – and is a quick check-in to allow



someone to identify how they are at that moment.

Everyone sits on the continuum. Some days we will be in the green area and other days we can find ourselves in the yellow, orange or red areas. This is OK. If you find yourself in the orange area, check out the action ideas to help get back into the green. The actions are the ways that we can 'service' our mental health. They are tools to help you be at your best psychologically for the important work you do at CFA.

The Mental Health Continuum Model is a part of The Working Mind First Responders training course that Organisational Wellbeing runs for CFA. The goals of the program are to:

- reduce stigma and negative attitudes towards those struggling with poor mental health
- improve resilience
- promote healthy mental health and wellness
- recognise the stresses that move us along the continuum
- give people the tools, resources and confidence to support people (and themselves) and help us to move towards the healthy end of the continuum.

If you're interested in attending The Working Mind First Responders training, talk to a member of your brigade management team, your line manager or contact the CFA Wellbeing Support Line (**1800 959 232**) and choose option four to speak with a member of the Organisational Wellbeing Team. We are running online and face-to-face courses until the end of October.

STORY CATHY SOSOLI

MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL

HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal fluctuations in mood • Normal sleep patterns • Physically well, full of energy • Consistent performance • Socially active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nervousness, irritability, sadness • Trouble sleeping • Tired/low energy, muscle tension, headaches • Procrastination • Decreased social activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness • Restless or disturbed sleep • Fatigue, aches and pains • Decreased performance, presenteeism • Social avoidance or withdrawal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive anxiety, easily enraged, depressed mood • Unable to fall or stay asleep • Exhaustion, physical illness • Unable to perform duties, absenteeism • Isolation, avoiding social events
Actions to take at each phase of the continuum			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on task at hand • Break problems into manageable chunks • Identify and nurture support systems • Maintain healthy lifestyle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise limits • Get adequate rest, food, and exercise • Engage in healthy coping strategies • Identify and minimise stressors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and understand own signs or distress • Talk with someone • Seek help • Seek social support instead of withdrawing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek consultation as needed • Follow health care provider recommendation • Regain physical and mental health

New Pocket Safety app

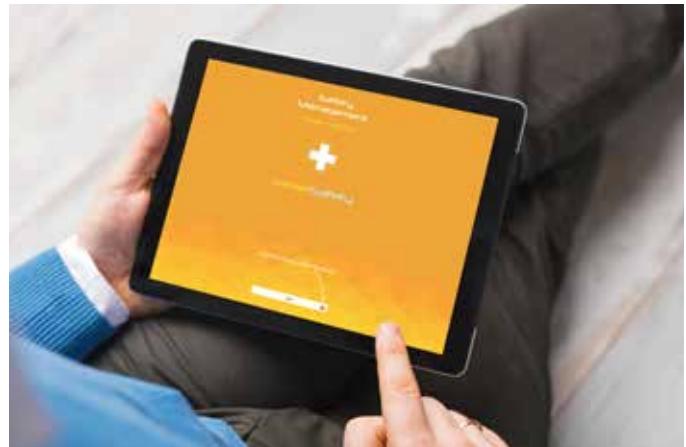
Over the past five years, an average of 1,200 incident and 479 hazard reports were entered into the CFASafe online reporting system each year. These reports can be put into the system either directly by the person affected or by submitting a form for a district office to action.

CFASafe currently relies on desktop computer access to enter reports which can limit its availability to volunteers. This creates problems when prompt reporting is required to quickly and effectively reduce risk to all CFA members. Timely reporting also allows CFA to inform governing bodies such as Worksafe and the EPA.

Currently, almost two-thirds of all reporting is made by someone other than the person who was the subject of the report, which suggests that many reports are being recorded using a hard copy form that is then entered into CFASafe by a staff member. The average time taken between an incident occurring or hazard being noticed and a report being entered into CFASafe is five days, which means there's the potential for hazards to go untreated for some time.

To make this reporting process easier and quicker, some CFA members are trialling a new app on their phone. The Pocket Safety app is designed to be a mobile entry point for reporting incidents and hazards. This means it will be possible to make reports directly from the fireground and can be used to supplement Salmon Card reporting.

The app can use your smartphone's camera to take photos so you can attach them to the report. This gives the person



responsible for the report more information to help rectify the issue. You can also use your device's GPS to enter the location, which is helpful for reporting incidents or hazards that are off site.

The app is compatible with both iOS (version 10.0 or later) and Android (version 5.0 or later) devices.

The Pocket Safety app is currently being trialled in North East Region and if the feedback from participants is positive the app, plus instructions for downloading and using it, will be made available to all CFA members.

STORY JUSTIN TILSON

Uncoupling accidents can be dangerous

Hose uncoupling incidents can occur when a hose line is deployed incorrectly with a twist or kink and the hose line is charged with water. A charged hose line has a lot of energy and if it uncouples there will be an uncontrolled line with a heavy metal weight that has the potential to cause severe injuries.

For example, there was an incident at CFA caused by a twist in the hose line. When the mill cock was opened the twist travelled along the line to the tanker. The water pressure behind the

twist caused the storz coupling to rotate and undo and the hose line snaked around dangerously and just missed the pump operator.

On other occasions, a kinked or twisted hose has caused the joined external lugs coupling to undo, resulting in cuts and fractures to our firefighters.

Before charging the hose line it's important to carefully check that the hose is flat without any kinking or twisting.

STORY DAVID GARRETT



Member Wellbeing Advisors Team

Welcome to the Member Wellbeing Advisors (MWA) team, part of Organisational Wellbeing. The MWAs, who are based in our regions, offer wellbeing services to all CFA members and their families. They provide support, coaching, education and training to all staff, secondees and volunteers in CFA.

MWA services can be one-to-one, in groups and as facilitated training events for single brigades, catchments and district staff. Our focus is on creating and maintaining good mental health and wellbeing through support, awareness, education, resourcing and by helping people create strategies to improve their own wellbeing and their brigade's functioning. MWAs can also connect CFA members to additional support such as our Peer

Program, Member Assistance Program, chaplaincy and other external agencies.

In the first five months of 2021, despite having two staff vacancies, the team conducted 37 training events, engaged with 1,566 individuals and 703 groups. In mid-May we welcomed our two newest members, Jesse Hinch and Bill Boyer, and are looking forward to the growing relationships they will forge.

If your team or brigade want training or support in the areas of wellbeing and mental health, contact your member wellbeing advisor or ring **1800 959 232** and choose option four to speak to a member of the Organisational Wellbeing Team.

STORY CATHY SOSOLI



Team lead

Cathy Sosoli joined CFA 12 months ago with a background in creating and leading cohesive and collaborative multi-disciplinary teams in the therapeutic and wellbeing sector. Cathy has 17 years' experience working in social services and hospice/palliative care supporting clients, their families and staff working with domestic violence, abuse, grief, loss, bereavement, death and dying.



Districts 12, 13, 22, 23, 24

Bill Boyer joined CFA in May. He has a background in community service, counselling (with a focus on educational), not-for-profit organisations and local government.

"Being a Shepparton local, it's great to be able to continue working in the regional area where I have strong connections," Bill said.



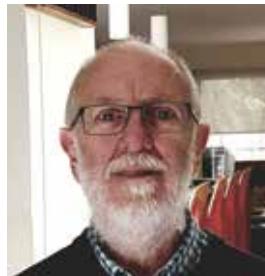
Districts 16, 17, 18

Jesse Hinch joined CFA in May following 12 years working with not-for-profit organisations and local government in community outreach and community development roles. Jesse has worked in rural areas with farming families and small businesses. He is skilled in child, youth and family engagement, case management, community outreach, program development, mental health and alcohol and other drugs education.



Districts 8, 9, 10, 11, 27

Anne has been working in the mental health sector for 10 years and completed her Master of Counselling and Psychotherapy in 2012. She has worked with everyone from 4-year-olds to people in their 90s, in the community, schools, and clinical environments. Since joining CFA a few years ago, Anne has worked with CFA members to support mental health wellness and has worked with leaders to support the wellbeing of their people.



Districts 2, 14, 15, 20

For the past seven years, Chris has worked in North West Region and supported other regions as required. His main area of support is to help develop expected behaviours and create a safe and respectful environment. Chris facilitates training and education to strengthen mental health and wellbeing. His focus for district staff and BMTs is providing wellbeing support for teams experiencing conflict resolution, mental health training, and individual support as required.



Districts 4, 5, 6, 7

Sabina comes to CFA with 20 years' experience working in local, state and not-for-profit community organisations in inner metro, the south-east and south-west Victoria. Sabina has a background working with children, families and safety planning.

"I'm the owner of two pets that will often photo bomb online team meetings, so beware," Sabina said.

Hygiene still matters

With little community spread, Victoria has been able to enjoy a COVID-normal state for a few months. Although this is good news, it's easy to become complacent and stop doing our good hygiene practices.

When you are well:

- wash your hands often with soap and water. This includes before and after eating, blowing your nose and after going to the toilet. Wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds
- cough or sneeze into a clothed elbow and dispose of any tissues in the bin
- use alcohol-based hand sanitisers when you can't use soap and water
- clean and disinfect surfaces you use often such as benchtops, desks and doorknobs. In a fire station you might extend this to frequently-touched parts of your brigade vehicles – steering wheel, gear stick, door handles, mirrors, and any equipment you use



- clean and disinfect objects you use often such as mobile phones, keys, wallet and work access passes
- increase the amount of fresh air by opening windows or changing air conditioning. But remember to secure the premises before leaving.

When you are sick:

- it's important that you stay at home. You should also continue to practise good hygiene using the tips above.
- if you have cold or flu-like symptoms, even if those symptoms are mild, get tested for COVID-19 and follow the directions given until you receive the all-clear. Even if your results are negative, maintain your good hygiene habits and keep your distance from others.

STORY KATIE WILLIAMS

Eat well and stay healthy

The food we eat has a big effect on our health and quality of life. Although eating healthily can be fairly simple, the rise in popular 'diets' and dieting trends, and conflicting information understandably causes confusion. Making positive health changes and living a healthier lifestyle improves your chances of staying healthy as you get older.

The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, which you can read on the eatforhealth.gov.au website, provides up-to-date advice about the types and amount of foods that we need to eat for our health. Eating a variety of foods from the five major food groups will give your body a range of nutrients that can help reduce the risk of diseases and keep your diet interesting and varied.

Recommendations for healthy eating:

- Eat a wide variety of foods from the five major food groups including:
 - at least two serves of fruit every day
 - at least five serves of vegetables, pulses or beans every day
 - grains and cereals, preferably whole grains such as wholemeal bread, brown rice, oats and barley



- lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, tofu, nuts, seeds
- milk, cheese, yoghurt or alternatives
- Limit discretionary or junk foods and beverages – these are typically high in added salt or sugars, saturated fats and have low levels of important nutrients

- Include unsaturated (healthy) fats such as fish, nuts and avocados
- Stay hydrated and choose water as your main drink.

The Eat For Health government website has a lot of useful information including healthy recipes and how to understand food labels.

Understanding PTSD

CFA members are regularly first on scene at very serious incidents and potentially traumatic events, helping people through some of the most frightening moments of their lives. We are amazingly resilient but sometimes a trauma response can occur. It could be after one incident or after multiple exposures and can be a standalone event or in combination with other life stressors. But it's important to know that a trauma response is normal and treatable.

In the first days and weeks after a traumatic event, people may experience strong feelings of fear, sadness, guilt, anger or grief. Generally, these feelings will resolve on their own, and with the support of family and friends the person recovers. However, if the distress continues, it may mean that the person has developed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or another mental health condition.

On 27 June, which was PTSD Awareness Day, CFA volunteer and staff member John Parnell (pictured) shared his personal story of PTSD on the CFA Wellbeing Podcast to increase knowledge of the condition. John shared the layers of events that led to PTSD and how it impacted his life, work and relationships. John was affected most by turning out to car accidents that involved children and fatalities.

"I would get frustrated and angry at the drop of a hat," John said. He wanted people to know that seeking professional help and

building strategies is "all about managing the illness, not letting the illness manage you, and that's what it was doing to me. It was managing me."

You can listen to John's podcast on Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa>Show?pageId=wellbeingPodcasts. By sharing his story, John hopes to help others. Sharing stories reduces stigma and shame by hearing people speak of similar experiences, and helps people feel they are not alone. Storytelling can encourage hope of a better way to live.

In Australia, we know that emergency services personnel and police have a higher incidence of PTSD than the general adult population. A 2018 Beyond Blue survey found that an average of 10 per cent have probable PTSD compared to 4.4 per cent of the general public.

The same report indicated that on top of the higher prevalence, emergency services personnel are reluctant to seek professional help. Just over 10 per cent knew good mental health was important but didn't recognise the symptoms, and a further 28 per cent recognised the symptoms but refused to get professional help because they preferred to deal with the issues alone or were worried people would treat them differently.

A person with PTSD has four main types of difficulties:

- Re-living the traumatic event. Examples are unwanted memories, vivid nightmares and flashbacks.
- Feeling wound up – having trouble sleeping or concentrating, feeling angry or irritable, taking risks, becoming easily startled.
- Avoiding any reminders of the event.
- Negative thoughts and feelings – feeling afraid, angry, guilty, flat, or numb a lot of the time, losing interest in day-to-day activities, feeling cut off from friends and family.

If you know someone diagnosed with PTSD, support from friends and family is important. You can:

- plan enjoyable activities
- check in regularly and provide emotional support.
- offer practical support such as going to the doctor with them, collecting groceries or babysitting
- make a crisis plan together. You can't always prevent a crisis, but you can learn to recognise triggers and take steps to help them cope. Talk with them ahead of time about what to do during a nightmare, flashback, or panic attack, and encourage them to limit their exposure to media coverage of the event.

Thank you to John for sharing his story and experience with PTSD. While not everyone who experiences trauma will develop post-traumatic stress disorder, having PTSD is not a sign of weakness and no one should feel ashamed to seek help.

You can find out more about PTSD on the Phoenix Australia website, phoenixaustralia.org. Phoenix Australia is the national centre of excellence in post-traumatic mental health.

If you feel you're not OK and would like to talk to someone, contact CFA's Wellbeing Support Line on **1800 959 232**. It's free, confidential and available to all members and their families 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



STORY CARA MCINTYRE



Faces of CFA

SHAUN WILLIAMS, TORRUMBARRY FIRE BRIGADE, DISTRICT 20

What is your CFA role?

I'm the 1st lieutenant and secretary of the brigade and the 1st deputy group officer of Northern Campaspe Group.

Why did you join?

I was dragged along by the old boy when I was big enough to hold a hose and follow instructions. Our house was one of the five on the old phone alerting system and I haven't left the brigade since joining even though I've moved out of the brigade area. I'm still close enough to get to incidents and as it's only a small community with a changing demographic from a farming community to more holiday homes, gaining new members is getting more difficult.

What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

One of my first trips away was to the Grampians and it sticks in my mind for a few reasons. I travelled most of the way down on the back of a single cab tanker after only an hour or so notice, and I was involved in a burnover while on the back of a tanker, so it was a big day. Also, at the time of our burnover we heard a mayday call from another tanker in a different strike team situated not far away. We didn't hear the outcome for a few hours so it was full-on for a while.

Other Incidents that come to mind are a few car accident fatalities on the highway, with a triple fatality being probably the worst.

Who have been your mentors in CFA?

My old boy as he was the one who got me involved in the brigade in the first place. At the time he was the 1st lieutenant and then he became captain.

I've also tried to learn from the more experienced members in the brigade like my first captain, Chas Hall, by observing the way they go about things.

What have been the highlights of your time in CFA?

Being able to help the local community when things are not going right and seeing the appreciation on their faces. It's the same with going away on strike teams and being able to help others in their time of need.

For a country boy, driving with lights and sirens through Melbourne also sticks out as a highlight because it's not something I ever thought I would do.

How do you motivate your brigade members?

I try to motivate my fellow brigade members by being a good leader and hopefully setting a good example for them to follow. Also, I won't ask other members to do something that I wouldn't do.

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

Think things through before going into a situation and if you don't feel comfortable then speak up so we can discuss a new plan. Safety is the most important thing to consider and it's up to all of us to look out for safety issues because someone might see something that others have missed.

What interests do you have outside CFA?

I'm a keen water skier and I represented Australia at the 2009 World Water Ski Racing Championships in Belgium and won a bronze medal as part of the Australia F2 team. I also enjoy watching most motorsport.



New equipment for road rescue brigades

CFA is the first emergency services organisation in Australia to buy the very latest battery-operated road rescue equipment, and rescue teams at Nar Nar Goon (our busiest team in 2020), Langwarrin, Dromana and Werribee brigades were the first to use it.

This new line of equipment made by Holmatro has an increased battery capacity compared with the older versions, can be immersed in water – so can be used in drains and waterways – and has higher speed and power. Each set includes a hydraulic cutter, a spreader and a ram for pushing large objects out of the way.

ACFO and Specialist Response Officer Rick Owen was excited to organise the purchase and distribution of this class-leading technology, which was jointly funded by CFA and the Transport Accident Commission (TAC).

"Last year we rescued 83 people from car accidents and most importantly meant 83 families saw their loved ones again," Rick said.

"I'd also like to acknowledge the funds the TAC provides CFA to sponsor our road rescue teams."

By August 2021, 19 of CFA's 21 road crash rescue brigades received this new equipment, and all brigades received safety glasses and gloves and portable LED lighting units.

"All the new equipment we've provided is an important way for us to look after our members who in turn look after their communities," Rick said.

Nar Nar Goon Fire Brigade had a special handover event at the beginning of May attended by brigade members, Rick Owen, District 8 Commander Andrew Turner, President of CFA's Rescue Association Kevin Chisholm and Cardinia Shire Councillor



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF STAR NEWS GROUP

Graeme Moore, who passed on the council's gratitude for the work the brigade does to keep the community safe.

"We're really pleased to receive this state-of-the-art kit," Captain Justin Seddon said. "It's very similar to our existing equipment, but we had to learn about charging and changing the batteries."

"We cover a large area, including the Princes Highway, Princes Freeway and the South Gippsland Highway. We also attend a lot of accidents on Koo Wee Rup Road, which seems to be getting worse."

As well as attending accidents, this experienced road rescue team is involved in driver awareness programs and gave road safety talks in schools to Years 10 to 12 before COVID-19 struck last year.

"We're looking forward to educating the community once again and hope it helps to reduce road trauma."

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

FAMILY SUPPORT IS CRUCIAL

Family and friends play a huge role in supporting CFA volunteers so that they can protect their communities. We talked to three volunteers about how their families help them. Stories by Holly Penketh

Brendan King, Maffra Fire Brigade

Brendan King is the captain of Maffra Fire Brigade in District 10 and his family has been in CFA for many generations.

"I first joined CFA when I was 16 years old," Brendan said. "I was home-schooled so I wanted to get out in the community, learn things and volunteer.

"I've now been with CFA for more than 25 years alongside my dad, brothers, partner and grandparents.

"I've recently stepped into the captain role at Maffra and I really couldn't have done it without the experience and support of my family," he added. "My dad has previously been captain at Stratford and my brothers all hold different roles in the brigade management team, so I'm able to turn to them all for advice and bounce ideas off them."

Since first joining in 1995 Brendan has been a member of seven brigades.

"The local brigades and captains were really supportive of me staying in CFA. I've moved around quite a lot for university and to be close to family, so being able to continue volunteering at CFA has been amazing.

"I first joined at Stratford and have moved to Ballarat, Sale, Plenty, Macalister, Riverslea and now Maffra. I may not still be in CFA if it wasn't for that support and flexibility."

Brendan said it would be extremely hard to volunteer without family support.

"You've got to have someone there to keep things going at home so you can do these things," he said.

"We go away on deployments where we could be away for days and this wouldn't be possible with a family if you didn't have someone to look after them."

Brendan also mentioned that support from employers is also important.

"There are a fair few members at the brigade whose employers are supportive of them turning out during the day. Call-outs don't just happen after-hours, so this is vital to be able to respond and keep the community safe.

"Whatever support a volunteer receives, it's often behind closed doors and it's sometimes something the community doesn't think about. I know I couldn't have stayed volunteering my whole life without it."



Fiona Macken, Diamond Creek Fire Brigade

For Diamond Creek Fire Brigade 2nd Lieutenant Fiona Macken, CFA is a huge part of her life because she's currently both a volunteer and staff member.

"It's a real team effort in our household," Fiona said. "My partner is 1st lieutenant and I am 2nd lieutenant – we couldn't do those roles without support around us."

"My dad and my partner's parents often step in to look after the kids when we are paged to jobs, strike teams or have brigade meetings."

"There are also times when we attend long or emotionally challenging jobs and we maybe don't want to go straight home. We may want a bit of time to process what's happened and have a debrief," Fiona added. "It's amazing to be able to take that opportunity and I'm really grateful for that."

"My dad is a non-operational member, so he understands the brigade and what's required of us as firefighters. He lives with us too, so when we go on a call-out and are running out the door he's able to step in and look after things at home."

"I remember when I first had my daughter and I was asked to host the Volunteer Community Safety Forum. Both my mum and dad came with me as they were CFA members and looked after her while I was on stage."

"I was even out walking with my mother's group once and the pager went off and the other mums all looked at me and said 'go!', " she added. "The support is amazing. They were all more than willing to help."

"Recently, both my partner and I had a weekend training course planned in Wangaratta and there is no way both parents could go away for a whole weekend of training without the support of our awesome families."



Ally Smith, Bittern Fire Brigade

Firefighter Ally Smith first joined Bittern Fire Brigade in District 8 in January 2014 which is where she met her partner.

"My partner and I are both still in the brigade so we understand what's required of us and are able to share the responsibilities," Ally said. "Shane is a driver and a crew leader, so we always assess call-outs together to see who's needed."

"If there's strike team rostering that needs to happen then we decide who goes based on what they are looking for."

Ally said the support for one another is so important, but the support of her friends is also crucial.

"We've got a lot of friends in the brigade who support us," she said. "There's always someone in the brigade who can step in as we are like one big family."

"The brigade's response to the Crib Point fires is a great example of this," she added. "We really needed as many people on the ground as possible. Many family members of brigade members stepped in to take care of each other's children so we could all attend call-outs."

"This support often goes unnoticed but we couldn't volunteer without it."



New fire station in Coldstream

Coldstream's new fire station may have been built just a few doors down from the old station, but it's streets ahead in what it offers the brigade and its local community. It was due to be finished as the magazine went to press.

The new three engine bay station – the first of 16 replacement CFA stations to be built as part of a \$126 million Victorian Government funding package designed to boost CFA's capabilities – provides Coldstream brigade members with a large meeting room for training and brigade meetings and better amenities including men and women change rooms, on-site parking, workshop, storage and other operational support areas.

Coldstream Captain Sean Bethell said it was a significant upgrade on the old station, which was built by members in 1966 after the land was donated to the brigade.

"For the brigade, it's a big improvement to our capacity to support our own and neighbouring communities," Sean said.

"We put in quite a bit of funding to enlarge the meeting, kitchen, and office areas as we do a fair bit of group training and the extra space will be great."

"The Bendigo Bank donated the shed at the back and we'd like to thank them for that."



In late March, CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan joined Sean, Member of Parliament for Eastern Victoria Harriett Shing, Executive Director Infrastructure Services Anthony Ramsay and District 13 Assistant Chief Fire Officer Colin Brown at the turning of the sod as construction began on the new \$1.5 million station in Killara Road.

"Coldstream is a really busy brigade that attends fires, motor vehicle accidents and many other emergency incidents on the urban fringe and throughout the Yarra

Valley and indeed in support of other regions and states, and I'm really pleased to see this new station come to fruition," Jason said.

"As CFA moves forward as a volunteer-only firefighting organisation, we are committed to providing our firefighters with the best infrastructure, equipment and support that we can so we can continue to fulfil our mission of saving lives and property."

STORY LISELOTTE GEARY

Dederang volunteer turns 100

Lyle Briggs's contribution to Dederang Fire Brigade and the wider community has been recognised following celebrations of his 100th birthday. As a founding member of the brigade, and long-serving captain, Lyle was presented with the Dederang Fire Brigade Life Jewel in March 2021, three months after his incredible milestone birthday.

The life membership and 75-year service award were presented by Assistant Chief Fire Officer Paul King.

"Dating from the early 1930s to the late 1990s I have been involved in many kinds of fires," Lyle said. "Huge bushfires were the greatest threat, many caused by steam trains near Barnawartha when red hot coals dropped from the engines."

"Firefighting has come a long way and is a lot different to how it was done in the mid-1920s when I was a young boy."

The terrifying and widespread bushfires of 1939 led to the formation of the Dederang Fire Brigade that year. When CFA was established in 1945, Lyle joined the brigade as one of the

first members under the new system. He held several positions over the years including becoming captain in 1977.

The site of the current Dederang Fire Station was donated by the Briggs family in the mid-1960s, and Lyle and his wife Mary 'Bessie' Schultz were honoured by being asked to officially open Dederang's satellite station at Kancoona in 2014.

Paul King said many of Lyle's stories still resonate today. "He reflected on his captaincy, saying whenever he asked for help people would step up and do the job which was and still is a hallmark of a good brigade," Paul said.

For Lyle the night was a truly special celebration.

"I felt honoured and proud to be back at the Dederang shed with all the CFA members and supporters who came along for the special presentation," he said. "I shall always treasure these medals and the memories of the days with Dederang CFA."



STORY MARK BLACKMAN

Commendations for saving captain's life



PHOTO: ASHLEY KRIVE

Firefighters who saved their captain's life after he went into cardiac arrest at a recent fire have been recognised by CFA's Chief Officer with a special commendation.

Spring Hill Fire Brigade Captain Scott Selle was attending a caravan fire in Glenlyon in February 2021 when he collapsed. His fellow firefighters immediately took action to save his life by using the defibrillator which was on their fire truck.

The firefighters, including his partner Kath who was also at the incident, did an incredible job to not only fight the fire but also save Scott who was unconscious.

Scott said he probably would have died if it wasn't for his fellow firefighters and the defibrillators on scene.

"I'm a farmer so I'm mostly working on my own. If this had happened while I was working on the farm, I wouldn't be here today," Scott said.

"We actually had a number of defibrillators on scene that day which was great. Defibrillators save lives, it's that simple. The defibrillator brought me back to life within two minutes and I'm so grateful they were available to us."

"I honestly can't thank my teammates and paramedics enough for everything they did that day to save my life."

CFA's defibrillators play an important role in the safety and protection of firefighters and community members at incidents. As a result of the firefighters' and paramedics' remarkable efforts, CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan awarded them a CFA Commendation.

"Those firefighters were put under extreme pressure that day and I am so proud of what they achieved," Jason said. "A life-

threatening event at any incident is tough, but it's even tougher when it's someone in your team."

"The firefighters acted quickly and used their first-aid skills to save Scott's life. The paramedics who then took over kept Scott conscious and safe on the way to hospital. It was a huge team effort from firefighters and paramedics that day and it's my great honour to present them with commendations."

Thanks to donations from the public following the 2019-20 fire season, CFA allocated \$1.04 million to buy 426 additional defibrillators in June 2021, bringing the total number across the state to more than 1,700. This ensures that every group vehicle has a defibrillator and every brigade has at least one vehicle with a defibrillator.

Ambulance Victoria MICA Paramedic Simon James who attended the incident said Scott was one of the lucky ones, with only one in ten people surviving a cardiac arrest.

"Scott's case shows just how important those first few minutes are. We know that if you receive CPR and a defibrillator is used, the patient's chance of surviving increases by almost 70 per cent," Simon said. "We encourage everyone to become familiar with CPR and to find out where their closest automated external defibrillator (AED) is located."

There are more than 6,500 AEDs registered across Victoria. To find your closest AED or register a device, visit registermyaed.ambulance.vic.gov.au.

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER



Wayne's cooking legacy

First lieutenant Wayne Watts (pictured right) was a dedicated volunteer with Junortoun Fire Brigade for more than ten years before he sadly passed away from a heart attack in 2015. His daughter, Jorja (pictured above), was keen to find a way to continue to support the brigade while also continuing Wayne's passion for cooking.

"Through lockdown I was spending more time in the kitchen and always texting mum for dad's recipes," Jorja said. "Initially I thought a recipe book would make a nice family Christmas present.

"When I started doing the maths for the number of books and the quality, I realised that it would be a significant undertaking, so I thought why not promote it further and raise money for CFA."

Jorja's efforts resulted in a 65-recipe cookbook called *Watts Cooking?* which includes desserts, roasts, curries and stir fries. All profits from the book are given to Junortoun Fire Brigade.

Jorja said it was still sinking in that her dad's love for cooking would live on and continue to support the organisation he loved.

"Dad was, and my entire family are, involved in CFA. After his passing, the brigade named one of the tankers after him," she added. "Even five years later, they still refer to the truck as Wattsy, rather

than tanker two. We've sold over 260 books already and I've just given the first donation of \$3,000 to the brigade and I'm looking forward to making more."

Jorja and her mum personally deliver the books around the Bendigo area but customers around the world have also shown their support.

"We've had people purchase books from Australia, New Zealand and even Europe," she said. "The support has been overwhelming. So many people have made donations to the brigade on top of their purchase which is incredible."

Junortoun brigade Captain Heath Martin said the Watts family has made a huge impact on the brigade.

"Wattsy was described as the big friendly giant," Heath said. "He was nearly seven feet tall, a friendly and warm person who slotted into the brigade perfectly."

"Working his way through the ranks, he was never one to stand at the front, but he was always there to support and was passionate about fundraising, so to see Jorja carry this on is truly fantastic."

"When Jorja first told us about the book, we really wanted to support her and make sure she wasn't going to be out of pocket," he added. "All the profits she makes go directly to the brigade."



"We're about to turn the soil on our new station site and there will be a lot of costs along the way. We'll be able to use the funds raised from *Watts Cooking?* to help get the station started."

"It's a fantastic book. The daughter of another one of our brigade members did a lot of the artwork for it so it's been a real brigade effort."

Health said the book is a credit to Jorja.

"Jorja is a true inspiration, I don't know many people who have achieved what she has at such a young age."

To find out more or to buy a book head to wattscooking.com.au

STORY HOLLY PENKETH

Making it easier to recruit volunteers

Work is continuing to develop the new Volunteer Recruitment Hub. This recruitment hub is one of the major projects in the Volunteer Recruitment and Retention program and aims to streamline the volunteer recruitment process from expression of interest through to registration.

Recently the project team has been working on the planning and development of Release 3 of the project. This will be a move away from the existing paper-based registration process to an online one for new and transferring members. Working With Children Checks, Member Registration forms, Police Check forms and medical report forms can be completed online. It will be a new and exciting change in the way we manage new member applications.

Release 3 will also allow brigades and new members to track the progress of membership applications through the existing platform dashboard. This means the brigades will know what stage an application is at, every step of the way. Access to the dashboard is based on brigade role – for example, secretary or captain.

Keeping the end user in mind is still at the core of our design and development of the platform. We've continued to engage with VFBV, regions and departments to get valuable feedback as the project progresses.

We have also recently brought together a group of volunteer testers, who will evaluate Release 3 before it goes live. This team will put the platform through its paces to ensure it works as it is meant to make sure it's easy to use.

To complement this recruitment system, we've also created and strengthened volunteer recruitment policies and procedures.

To keep up to date with the progress of this platform, check out the Members Online page: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa>Show?projectId=recruitRetainProject. You'll also find resources that show the platform's functions, user guides, quick reference guides, FAQs and demonstration videos.

If you have any questions email volrecruithub@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY NIKI HABIBIS

Welcome relief for Darlington

Darlington Fire Brigade in District 6 recently became the proud owner of a sanitary trailer following a generous donation from Yallourn North Fire Brigade.

A year ago, Darlington brigade Secretary Trish Wynd saw the article in Brigade magazine about Yallourn North's new sanitary trailer and contacted Yallourn North Fire Brigade Captain Mark King to find out the cost to build a trailer for Darlington brigade and its community. Mark said their original sanitary trailer, which was donated by CFA, hasn't been used much since they received the new one last year. After discussing it with his brigade, Mark contacted the District 27

assistant chief fire officer to ask whether the brigade could donate the old trailer to Darlington brigade. The ACFO agreed and Mark delivered it to Darlington in person (pictured fifth from the left), which was much appreciated by Darlington brigade members.

"The trailer will be a valuable asset for Darlington and the Lismore Group for roadside burns and incidents, because trees and privacy can be hard to find on the open plains," Darlington Fire Brigade Captain Tony Wynd said.

"We really appreciate this generous donation from Yallourn North brigade. The trailer will be put to good use."



PHOTO: COURTESY OF DARLINGTON BRIGADE



1



C F A C O M M E M O R A T E S



4



**6**

- 1** Corryong Fire Brigade
- 2** Buxton Fire Brigade
- 3** Sorrento Fire Brigade
- 4** Tatura Fire Brigade
- 5** Shoreham and Flinders fire brigades
- 6** Traralgon West Fire Brigade Captain Brian Soall and Tyers Fire Brigade Captain Ross Wisewould
- 7** Buxton Fire Brigade
- 8** Keysborough Fire Brigade Captain Paul Townsend

Phillip Island station build continues

Construction has continued for the new Phillip Island Fire Station and the brigade is keenly looking forward to its completion.

This new state-of-the-art facility features four motor room bays for firefighting vehicles, a breathing apparatus (BA) maintenance room, meeting rooms, kitchen and offices.

The \$2.9 million build on Ventnor Road started in February 2021 and is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Phillip Island Captain Gary Grace said the new station will allow brigade volunteers to more efficiently serve and protect the Phillip Island community.

"The concrete is down, steel framing has been put up and now they're working on the wood frame," Gary said.

"The new station will allow for future growth of the brigade and improve operational capability.

"Our members are active within the community and often manage large scale events with lots of tourists, so these new facilities will help us meet these needs."

Phillip Island Fire Brigade has provided a vital service to the community since it was established in 1937.

STORY MITCHELL GASTIN



Updated Member Quick Reference Guide

The 2021 edition of CFA's Member Quick Reference Guide is now available to members in print and digital formats.

We've produced this guide for many years as a handy resource for members to refer to when engaging with their communities about fire safety. It has been designed as a pocket-sized guide so that you have essential fire safety information at your fingertips.

The guide is useful for new members at the start of their journey with CFA as well as longstanding members wanting to keep their knowledge up to date. It combines all the key information needed in one place, such as tips and resources for effective engagement, home fire safety, bushfire and grassfire key messaging and how the community can stay informed.

The 2021 edition includes four new pages on resources and tools to support your community engagement. This includes guidance on:

- accessing the Community Engagement Content Portal
- reporting your engagement using the Activity Reporting Tool
- engaging communities online
- accessing new resources for filming and live streaming.

Also included are revisions to the home fire safety key messaging, publications and programs pages to ensure all information is current.

You can access and download a digital version on the Community Engagement Content Portal or on Members Online.

Copies of the print version will be distributed to every CFA brigade.

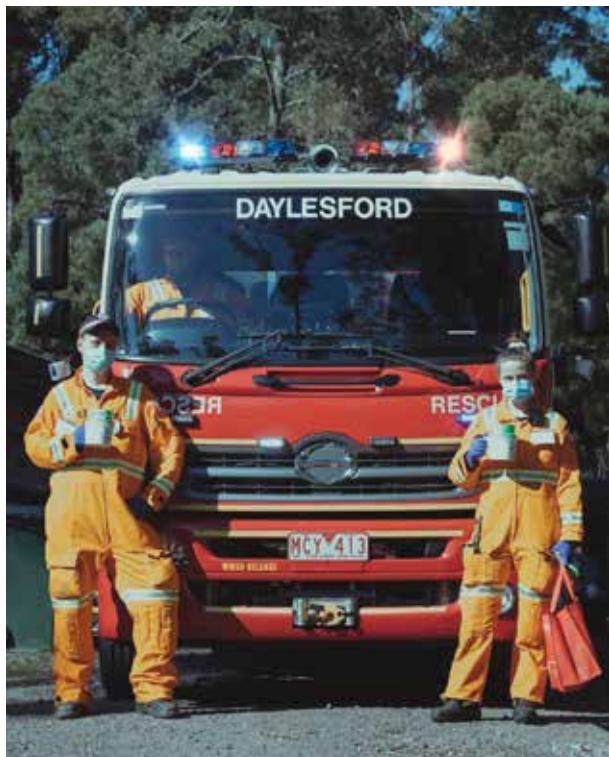
STORY DEANNA SIMMONS



June 2021

Good Friday Appeal

THIS YEAR OUR VOLUNTEERS WERE BACK ON THE STREETS RATTLING TINS



VITAL EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS BRIGADES

STORY BY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHIN

The Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) is a Victorian Government-funded initiative to ensure volunteers are well supported and have access to the best equipment and facilities.

Under VESEP, the government contributes \$2 for every \$1 contributed by volunteers from organisations such as the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association, CFA, Life Saving Victoria, SES and any eligible

volunteer emergency services group. CFA shared in \$10.2 million across 145 projects under VESEP in 2020-21, with funding provided for a range of vital equipment. We talked to four brigades about their important purchases thanks to VESEP funding.

Successful applications under the 2021-22 VESEP funding round are expected to be announced in late September 2021.

Wangaratta's special FCV

Wangaratta Fire Brigade's new one-of-a-kind FCV was designed by brigade Captain Jason Allisey and former Killawarra Fire Brigade Captain Travis Ledger.

Designed to support a range of response needs, the vehicle boasts an interchangeable pod system that allows members to easily switch out a breathing apparatus (BA), gas flare-off or an FCV module depending on the incident. The vehicle also has its own computer system.

With matching funding courtesy of the brigade's fire equipment maintenance (FEM) work, Jason said the vehicle allowed members to better support their community and fellow brigades.

"The modular nature of the FCV means we can get out the door more frequently and easily provide support at different types of incidents," Jason said.

"We're a BA brigade so for structure fires we can slot in the BA module within minutes and provide that additional support at incidents and to neighbouring brigades.

"The field command pod includes tabards, whiteboards and a computer which allows us to effectively support incident control at grass and scrub fires during the fire danger period."



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM

New computers for Narrawong and Calligee

Narrawong Fire Brigade's "old and tired" desktop PC has been replaced with a new laptop, printer and software thanks to this year's round of VESEP funding.

"Our previous computer could no longer support Windows upgrades due to its age, which made it vulnerable to hackers and viruses," brigade Secretary and Treasurer Graeme Tivey said.

"The grant allowed us to upgrade to the latest hardware and we now have a faster, safer system that can be updated when required."

Graeme said the portability also meant members could use the laptop in their station office or meeting room as well as display information on the brigade's TV screen.

"With the growth in digital and online information and training we can do a lot from home now, but for our less tech-savvy members sometimes watching things as a group at the station creates a complementary discussion that adds value," he said.

"This laptop and equipment are also vital now with CFA processes such as FIRS moving online."

Like Narrawong, Calligee Fire Brigade applied for a grant for new computer equipment under this year's funding round. With matching funding provided through



the brigade's FEM work, Captain Ian Ewart said the new laptop created camaraderie for the brigade.

"Our existing computer was outdated and didn't allow us to keep up with current apps," Ian said. "Now if we want to do any training at the station, we can use online sources and run group sessions in the public hall adjoining the station."

"We were heavily impacted by the 2009 bushfires and one of our goals is to compile and digitally archive our brigade history and information."

"The laptop also allows us to display our turnout information as well as easily access and print important information such as Chief Officer's Directions and Operations Bulletins so it's available for everyone."

District 24 support vehicle

District 24's Headquarters Brigade secured a new support vehicle through the 2020-21 VESEP funding with a little help from residents at a local aged care home who raise money for the brigade every year.

"It's our brigade's responsibility to take equipment to and support the brigades in our district when they respond to incidents," District 24 Captain Mark Slater said.

"With our rehab unit only able to fit four people and up to seven support members needed at most incidents, this additional all-purpose vehicle is a critical piece of equipment for us."

"It will be a godsend to have a dedicated vehicle available during the fire season to support the brigades in our district for any need that may arise, including getting equipment and personnel to the fireground."



Daniel's challenge at State Championships

Chiltern Fire Brigade member Daniel Neilson has been part of the brigade since he was 12 years old and doesn't let his disability stop him from being an active brigade member. Daniel has Autism Spectrum Disorder, which is a developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to people around them.

Daniel competed in this year's Senior State Championships alongside his Chiltern team mates.

"I generally love everything about the Champs," Daniel said. "It's all about being competitive, racing, getting it right on the track and it requires teamwork just like firefighting does."

"I train twice a week for the Champs and have definitely got a lot better over time."

"CFA is all about working with the community and teamwork and this is definitely something I feel I'm good at," he said.

"I would encourage anyone with a disability to join their local brigade if they want to as everyone should be included. If you have dreams go for it."

Chiltern Fire Brigade Member and Junior Leader Elizabeth Gill has known Daniel for a long time and helped him in first joining the brigade.

"I have worked closely with Daniel since he started as a Junior member, making sure his family were aware of what his role would be in the brigade and that he was supported," Elizabeth said.

"It was a bit of a challenge when we started talking about competitions as we wanted to make sure Daniel was included but received the right help."

"We were committed to making sure Daniel had the same opportunities as the other kids, so initially I ran with him," Elizabeth added. "We had so much support from the running committee, the brigade and the other kids. It was amazing."

"Gradually we've been able to step back more as Daniel knows so much of what he's doing. This year I took a further step back and Daniel is now able to compete completely on his own."

"The barriers we've faced are just around nervousness from some people about what his disability is and how people can cope with it if he gets upset. But we have



PHOTO: ELIZABETH GILL

processes in place to support Daniel and we know how to calm him down.

"He's just part of the crew now and it's a really beautiful thing. He's a valued member of the brigade attending regular training sessions, meetings and generally helping out around the station. He also plays an important leadership role in helping develop the Junior brigade and is currently learning new skills to prepare him for the General Firefighter course which he hopes to complete next year." Chiltern Fire Brigade Junior Coordinator Steve Hayes said he's really pleased to have Daniel as part of the brigade.

"He's a great asset to the brigade and it's been remarkable to see just how much he's grown throughout his five years in both the Juniors and as a senior member."

"The Championships are a great opportunity for Daniel to really show how much hard work he puts into volunteering," Steve added.

"We have the opportunity to encourage and include all people in CFA and I think Daniel is a great example for all that with a little support a lot can happen."

STORY HOLLY PENKETH



PHOTO: ELISSA ROSSITER

Breathing new life into Wodonga West

Speaking about a recent recruitment drive following the devastating fires in 2019-20, Wodonga West Fire Brigade 2nd Lieutenant Dave Rossiter was well aware of the hurdles.

"Our biggest issue was there was no formal process for how people joined and integrated into the brigade," Dave said.

"The historical process was to pair a new recruit with a senior member who became their mentor and their role was to answer questions and help them work out their training needs.

"This may have been suitable when there were only one or two new recruits at a time, and these senior members didn't really have a consistent structure to work to and the attrition rate was high."

To make matters worse, about half the brigade members on the books hadn't been seen for two or more years and only about 12 people turned out regularly. Dave knew things had to change. Before becoming the training officer, he was the recruitment officer for four-and-a-half years and the 2019-20 fire season gave him the opportunity he was hoping for.

"After the really bad fire season our district office had significant interest from people wanting to join brigades," Dave continued. But the brigade was too busy with the fire session to follow up the enquiries until halfway through the year.

"I contacted all of them and interviewed most of them and we initially had 24 new recruits. These members had to do their General Firefighter training, and I used this opportunity as a catalyst for something else I was keen to achieve.

"We didn't have enough individual mentors for 24 new people, so I contacted some of the senior members who were disengaged from the brigade and requested them to take on a new responsibility. I formed five new recruit 'crews' which included two senior members as their crew leaders/mentors and four to five new recruits, similar to a strike team formation.

My aim was to re-engage the senior members, and fortunately I found that some of them got back their passion to lead and be involved with the brigade."

Kris Dykes was one of those who'd become disengaged mainly because of a busy life and believing that he didn't have a place in the brigade.

"My skill set wasn't being used by the brigade, so I didn't prioritise my involvement in brigade activities," Kris said.

Since taking on the role of new recruit mentor/crew leader, Kris has regained his passion to lead within the brigade, and he was elected as 1st lieutenant in the recent brigade elections.

Following the successful completion of her General Firefighter training, new member Janelle Beach said doing the training with a small group of people and a senior member as a mentor was an effective way to transition into the brigade.

"It helped create faster connections with members and created a team 'feel' right from the beginning," Janelle said. "We not only wanted to be successful in our training for ourselves, but also wanted that success for everyone in our group, without being lost as 'just a number' among recruits."

"This approach really brought out a close-knit team environment within the broader team of 24 new recruits. We encouraged each other at every step of the training and assessment process which ensured we all passed together."

At the end the recruitment process, the brigade gained 13 new operational members who completed their General Firefighter training in February, and two new non-operational members.

"Our new members have continued to breathe life into the brigade and weekly training is attended by an average of 16 new and senior members," Dave said.

"The whole process has revitalised the culture in the brigade."

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

New station at Port Fairy

Port Fairy brigade members are looking forward with excitement to moving into their new station in the next few months. More than half of the new Port Fairy Fire Station had been completed when the magazine went to press. It should be completed by October and be operational by the end of November.

The original station, built to accommodate the brigade when it was formed in 1861, was sold in 1940 and replaced by the current station which no longer meets the needs of the brigade. The new station is being built at 116 Princess Highway, Port Fairy – an architect's drawing is shown below.

It will feature updated facilities including change rooms for women to cater for the increase in female volunteers, a kitchen, brigade office, multi-purpose room and three-bay motor room.

Just under \$2 million of the total cost to build the station was funded through CFA's Base Capital Works Program, while the brigade contributed \$72,700.

The brigade also successfully applied for additional VESEP grant funding so that the station could have bifold doors instead of the standard roller doors at the front of the motor room.

State Emergency Service (SES) contributed \$150,000 for shared services and facilities because it will construct a separate SES building on the site following a Victorian Government funding announcement earlier this year.

Port Fairy captain Hugh Worrall said it was exciting to see the project coming to fruition.

"It's a very nice building and will meet the requirements of the brigade for at least the next 20 to 30 years," Hugh said.

With members needing to reverse the fire trucks across traffic to get into the current station, Hugh said the biggest improvement would be the three drive-through bays. He also welcomed change rooms for both women and men firefighters, who currently have to get changed into turnout gear in the motor room.



"We're also getting a nice new meeting room that will also be available for the community to use. As a brigade we can't wait to get in and furnish it and make sure it's an inviting place for members and the community," he said.

Hugh was previously a CFA member at Port Campbell before moving to Port Fairy and joining the local brigade seven years ago. He said Port Fairy was a close-knit brigade of dedicated members who protect the small seaside community which swells to five times the population over summer.

"The camaraderie is great – we're all volunteers of course and the local people really appreciate the work we do," Hugh said. "We're really lucky that our employers support us to respond to incidents."

STORY LISELOTTE GEARY





Following in the family's footsteps

Sophie Maher is currently 1st Lieutenant at Red Cliffs Fire Brigade and also a DELWP firey. She spoke about how her passion for CFA first started and why she continues to keep volunteering.

"I first joined CFA in 2009 as a Junior member," Sophie said. "My dad was a real CFA supporter and was with the brigade for over 48 years."

"I have 10 siblings and we have all been part of the brigade at some point in our lives, and it's really because of the passion my dad had."

Sophie (pictured, right, with her dad Glenn) spent two years in the Junior brigade before stepping up to seniors.

"I've stayed with CFA for over 10 years now and I guess it's because I love being a part of the community and helping. A lot of people play sports, but I fight fires. Volunteering with CFA is different, it's really about giving back."

"My husband and I actually first met at CFA," she added. "He was a DELWP firey at the time as well and he encouraged me to apply for a job there as I loved firefighting, so I thought why not."

"When I first got the job, DELWP and CFA were quite separate. Now there are a fair few volunteers who also work at DELWP so we have a few points of contact. Our brigade and DELWP have a really great relationship and we often work alongside each other."

"Having experience in CFA definitely helped me when I first started in my role at DELWP. Although they are quite different, I was able to pick things up quite easily."

"My job now actually helps me as a volunteer too," she added. "As we deal with a lot of wildfires in DELWP, I'm able to bring this knowledge back to the brigade."

While on a call-out Sophie saw the perfect composition for a photo – a sunset, a big red truck and her siblings – and couldn't resist taking a beautiful shot (see above).



"The photo is actually of my little brother Lockie and also Joel and Rhianna. We were responding to a fire at a local water treatment facility. There were a lot of hazardous trees so we weren't able to do much. That's why I took the shot, and I'm glad I did. It's awesome."

"Joel and Rhianna are siblings too who have also followed in their dad's footsteps by joining the brigade."

"The passion for CFA is really past down through generations; it becomes part of your family. I'm really thankful for CFA and what it's given me and I hope that I've been able to give back too."

STORY HOLLY PENKETH

CLOTHING AND UNIFORMS THROUGH

1860s



1890s



1900s



1940s



1940s



1950s



1960s



1960s



1970s



1980s



1990s



THE AGES FROM 1861 TO 2010



1920s



1930s



1930s



1950s



1960s



1980s



1980s



1990



2000s



2010s

Using engineering skills to protect the community

Kinglake and its immediate neighbours don't have a reticulated water supply, but need to rely on a relatively sparse network of static water tanks, dams, creeks and rivers for firefighting water. CFA's Kinglake District Fire Brigade has called on the ingenuity of its volunteers to bolster the brigade's ability to protect its growing community.

After receiving a big-fill trailer (pictured below) from neighbouring brigade St Andrews, Kinglake District member and fire engineer Chris Lloyd led a group of dedicated volunteers to transform the piece of equipment.

"We've undertaken a lot of work to upgrade the structural integrity of the trailer, the hydraulic capability of the pump, and about 810 metres of large-diameter layflat supply hose," Chris said.

"Now the big-fill trailer gives us the ability to draft water from various water supply points, so we've got a chance of putting water in the areas where we need it. It also means we can fill up to four trucks without them having to be right next to the dam or creek which can prevent the area becoming boggy."

"We would be typically looking at flowing 2,500 to 3,000 litres per minute over a maximum distance of 1,000 metres, which in a non-reticulated world is quite a respectable volume of water to move."



Several adaptors are included in the front locker so that the pump can be connected to dry fire hydrants and static water storage tanks to protect premises or connected to municipal council tanks with large diameter Storz outlet connections. These adaptors also allow DN100 hose to connect to a pumper, other big-fill pumps or tanker suction inlets.

In addition to the trailer, the brigade in conjunction with Murrindindi Shire Council, has installed a dry hydrant (an unpressurised outlet pipe that allows firefighters to pump from Number 1 Creek) in town and has been working with council through its Fire Advisory Committee to replace ageing concrete water tanks in the area.

"Most of the tanks around Murrindindi are 22,500-litre tanks that are getting to the end of their serviceable lives and the water outlets are too small for the effective water flows we need for many fire events," Chris said.

"We've been working with council to replace the concrete tanks with 100,000-litre steel tanks. One was installed in Yea and another in Flowerdale some time ago, and another two new tanks were recently installed in Kinglake."

Chris is pictured, above, with one of the Kinglake tanks.

Kinglake District Captain Linda Craske said it's important that the brigade's capability reflects the community's needs.

"Kinglake is growing and there are more structures in the community, so we need to be able to protect all the new infrastructure," Linda said. "The big-fill is a great piece of kit because up here we need something that has the capacity to get water in a timely manner."

"The work with council to standardise new water tanks is also important, as there are a few built-up areas we've identified that would benefit."

"The measures that have been implemented are all about protecting our community."

STORY MARK BLACKMAN



New station for Tatura

Tatura Fire Brigade members celebrated the opening of their new station in mid-May, which also marked the brigade's 126th year. The \$2 million building replaced the 50-year-old former station.

The new station features three motor room bays, a large brigade meeting room and a local command facility for use by the Greater Shepparton City catchment of brigades.

CFA Deputy Chief Officer Peter O'Keefe and District 22 Assistant Chief Fire Officer Tony Owen joined brigade members as local MP Mark Gepp officially opened the new building.

Tatura Fire Brigade Captain Trevor Franklin, who led the brigade as it marched into its new station, said the new facility will help the brigade better serve and protect the community.

"It's exciting to have a new fit-for-purpose facility to help us serve the growing Tatura community," Trevor said. "Not only does the brigade now have better meeting and member facilities, but the new station also features a local command facility that can be activated to manage large incidents in the area, including major fires."

"It also provides an improved training area that can be used by our own brigade as well as visiting brigades from the area."

"Some of the funding has come from community donations and we'd like to thank everyone who has supported this project."



From left to right, ACFO Tony Owen, Tatura Fire Brigade Captain Trevor Franklin, Greater Shepparton City Councillor Rob Priestly, MP Mark Gepp, DCO Peter O'Keefe

PHOTO: COURTESY OF TATURA BRIGADE

Tony Owen said Tatura brigade has been involved in many significant fires throughout its 126-year history, both locally and further afield on interstate deployments.

"During the most recent fire season, the brigade was called to several significant grassfires in the local area after higher-than-average rainfall led to heavy fuel loads in pastures and crops," Tony said.

"After missing out on celebrating the brigade's 125th anniversary because of

the 2019-20 fire season and then the COVID-19 pandemic, it's great to be able to celebrate the brigade's rich history and bright future where these new facilities will allow the volunteers to continue doing what they do best – protecting lives and property."

"I would like to thank the brigade for their invaluable service to their local community and beyond."

STORY LISELOTTE GEARY

Safer Together work continues to flourish

STORY BY FIONA MACKEN

Despite all the challenges that the past 18 months have thrown at the Safer Together's Community Based Bushfire Management (CBBM) project, the statewide project team continues to work feverishly with 22 diverse communities around Victoria, driven by the desire to see community values and priorities put front and centre in preparedness work undertaken by CFA and DELWP.

CBBM is a community development project which aims to promote relationships between agencies, community members and local government and get everyone working well together to determine how locals and agencies can reduce bushfire risk. Twenty one of the 22 communities in the project are place-based communities in virtually all regions of Victoria. This year, the project's first non-place-based community launched, with the addition of commercial equine studs in CFA's North East Region.

The past two years of CBBM and the Safer Together program more generally have produced many examples of tangible bushfire risk reduction activities, both through community engagement projects and collaborative multi-agency fuel management work by CFA, DELWP, local government, Parks Victoria and others. Communities have benefited greatly from the opportunity to work with land and fire management personnel to discuss how they would like to see action taken in their locality around planning and preparedness.

The preparedness and resilience benefits built as a result of CBBM are not limited to fires, as many local residents believe that CBBM helped them during COVID-19 lockdowns and recent flooding. Although CBBM is funded to reduce bushfire risk,

the fundamental core of the projects – relationships – builds community resilience whatever the emergency.

CBBM also has significant benefits in other areas of emergency management such as response and recovery. Research has found that communities previously impacted by fire will have improved community responses when faced with another fire if they worked with a place-based facilitator, such as that offered by CBBM.

CBBM and the wider Safer Together program are attempting to change how we all view fire safety and our individual responsibility. Basing agency decisions on the values and priorities of community or, perhaps going as far as to give decision-making power to community (for example, in relation to planned burning) is a mindset shift for CFA, DELWP and other stakeholders. Changes in longstanding models of power will bring challenges, as CBBM does, but the engagement the community has in the process is exceptional and strikes at the heart of the community's desire to be involved in determining the outcomes of decisions that affect them, rather than being informed of the outcomes after the fact.

CBBM has received a further four years funding from the Victorian Government. This is a fantastic outcome for the communities currently involved in the project because it means the work already undertaken can continue and be extended in ways that suit the local community.

The CBBM team would like to thank all community and CFA members who have invested their time in this project – your commitment to this project is truly appreciated.

Making CBBM work well

Several evaluations of CBBM have been carried out since it began in 2016. The most recent one in 2021 focused on lessons learned since 2019. Valuable lessons for CBBM projects included:

- Community development approaches need an investment of time over a number of years, supported by appropriate skills, experience, resources and commitment from relevant stakeholders
- Building and maintaining strong, authentic relationships is not only an important aspect of the CBBM approach, but also an outcome of CBBM work with agencies and communities
- Flexible, adaptive and place-based approaches are essential to the success of CBBM
- It's important to value community members' diverse contributions and investment of time
- Community and agency involvement are both essential for CBBM, reflecting the community-centred and multi-agency partnership approach of CBBM
- The role of the CBBM facilitator and their approach is critical for the success of CBBM
- A range of external factors influence the practice of CBBM within communities—including time and financial resources available, and a community's experiences of bushfire.



FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS FROM CFA VOLUNTEERS

To demonstrate the benefits of the CBBM project, four videos have been created that feature community members (including three CFA volunteers) from Mallacoota, Peterborough, Tolmie and the Cann Valley area (Tamboon). They discuss the time they've invested in working with other stakeholders, such as CFA, DELWP and local government and why they found the process so worthwhile.

They also discuss the benefits they've achieved as a result of taking a community development, long-term approach to reducing bushfire risk and doing it in a way that suits their local area and the needs of their local community. Locals, including CFA members, know their community best and projects such as CBBM want to work with that local knowledge to reduce risk and build resilience in the most suitable ways possible.

To watch the videos, go to safertogether.vic.gov.au/community-engagement.

Lyn Harwood, Mallacoota

Lyn Harwood is a CFA volunteer with Mallacoota Fire Brigade and is featured in a video called Building resilience through recovery. For several years, she has been instrumental in driving a fuel management project in Mallacoota, working with Gail Cumming, the CBBM facilitator with CFA in South East Region, and Michelle Kearns, the previous (DELWP) CBBM facilitator. Lyn described leading a multi-stakeholder process.

"I put out a call generally to the Mallacoota community, inviting anyone who's interested in talking about fuel management to come along to a meeting," Lyn said. "I got half a dozen people and we continued to work with the agency people to try to come to a greater understanding, a shared understanding, about fuel management around Mallacoota. We came up with a number of plans for edge areas on the town."

Despite the 2019-20 fires, this work is continuing and provides a positive, practical focus for the community.



Frank Herbert, Tamboon

Frank Herbert is a CFA volunteer with Cann Valley Fire Brigade and lives in Tamboon. In the video Community preparedness: putting it into practice, Frank discussed how CBBM supported the community following the 2019-20 fire.

"To live in a remote place like this and away from where you can get help, you really have to be able to do a lot of things yourself," Frank said.

"After the 2019-20 fire season we got together as a community and had a meeting in May and we formed an association," Frank said. "The Safer Together team has really been very supportive to get things going. Our specific purpose that we identified was to protect life, property and the environment. I've been busy since this association was formed."



"As a community we've come together more so than ever before. Since the fires, the project has brought us even closer together."

In October 2021, the Cann Valley community plans to hold a 'Cann Be Ready Day'. Frank and other local CFA volunteers will join forces with the SES to put on a demonstration of rescuing someone from a car wreck. CFA will also have preparedness material and experienced volunteers on hand to chat to locals about their household plans.

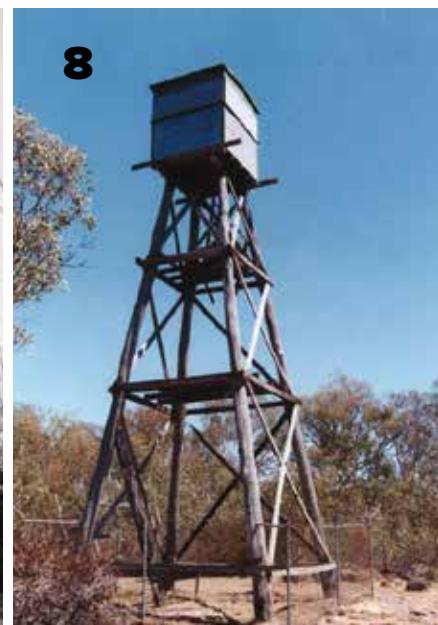
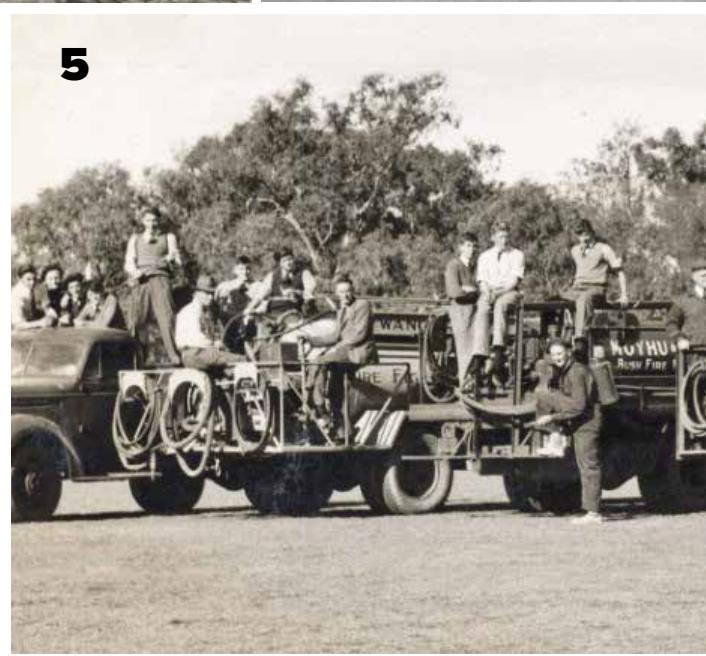
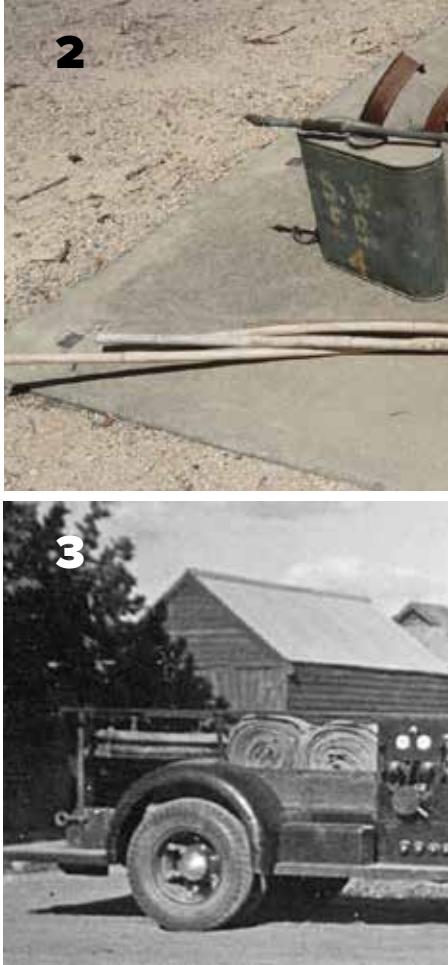
Cathy Marsh, Peterborough

Cathy Marsh, a volunteer with Peterborough Fire Brigade, used CBBM as an opportunity to focus on the preparedness of vulnerable people in the local community and develop ways to support them. Cathy worked with Sharon Mifsud, the CFA CBBM facilitator in South West Region and is featured in the video Supporting locals to address local needs.



"The Safer Together team was incredibly supportive and through relationship building, strategies have been put in place in the local community to ensure that older residents are safe on days of high risk, particularly those who don't access information or warnings using the VicEmergency app," Cathy said.







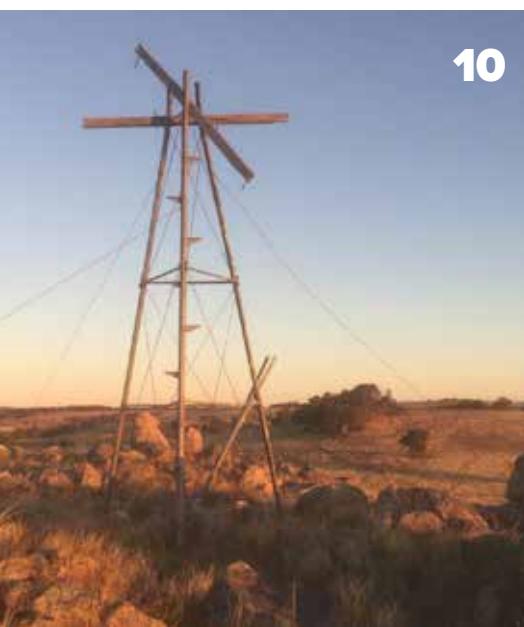
THROUGH THE AGES WANGARATTA GROUP

- 1 1949 Demonstration Squad Wangaratta Showgrounds
- 2 Early beaters, Watering can and knapsacks
- 3 La France pumper photographed in the early 1960s
- 4 1949 Demonstration Squad Wangaratta Showgrounds
- 5 1949 Demonstration Squad Wangaratta Showgrounds
- 6 Truck burned December 1943 in Wangaratta district
- 7 Wangaratta Fire Station opened 1896
- 8 Mt Warby fire tower
- 9 Horse-drawn fire extinguisher, Bowman-Murmungee
- 10 1940s Moore's Private Fire Tower, Springhurst
- 11 Current Wangaratta Group FCVs

These images are taken from the forthcoming book Make Tankers Ten. If you have any history or images relating to the Wangaratta Group, contact David Salau on 0408 387 582 or email dsal37@gmail.com

COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM

10



11



New Juniors sign up across the state

STORY BY JEN CLEMENT

The launch of new Juniors recruitment material earlier in 2021 has bolstered recruitment across the state. Despite a tough 12 months of COVID-19 restrictions, many Junior brigades are now getting back into things and recruitment campaigns are proving successful.

DCO Operational Performance and Capability Peter O'Keefe urged young people to think about joining CFA.

"It gives them a chance to learn leadership skills, appreciate the value of teamwork and be part of an organisation that's part of the community," Peter said. "I'd encourage any young person to join CFA, whether it's to run in competitions or perhaps end up becoming the brigade captain in the future. It's a great opportunity to build the future."

Here are some fantastic recent success stories.

Narre Warren Junior Brigade

Narre Warren members discovered that local families were looking for something meaningful and community-minded to get involved in, so they launched a Facebook campaign to recruit Junior members.

"This resulted in an influx of new Juniors into our program, showing how much our community holds the Narre Warren Fire Brigade in the highest esteem and trusts us to mentor their children through our program," Junior Coordinator Paul Harms said.

The Juniors are keen to learn all aspects of firefighting techniques used by the senior brigade, but the Junior leaders at Narre Warren complement this by teaching skills in leadership, friendship and teamwork.

As one parent put it, "Our daughter loves her time at Narre Warren brigade, learning and developing new skills that can contribute not only to her own development but also the wider community. She has found the group to be inclusive and inviting and is something she really looks forward to doing."

Another parent explained, "Junior CFA has been fantastic for our son. Everyone was so kind and friendly right from the start. He just felt like he fitted right in, which has given him a big confidence boost. He has finally found one thing that he's passionate about. You can tell by the way his face lights up whenever he talks about the Junior CFA."

In addition to the traditional structure of captain and two lieutenants, Narre Warren Juniors have mirrored the structure of the senior brigade and have now been divided into two platoons, led by a lieutenant, to introduce the Juniors to the way the senior brigade works.

Narre Warren brigade Captain Travis Carter is impressed when he sees the Juniors training on Wednesday evenings.

"My hope is that not only will they gain great skills and build friendships in the program, but they will also come through and become senior members when they are old enough," Travis said. "Narre Warren's Junior program has developed some of our newest firefighters in Adam Williams and Bodie Hardy, who both recently began turning out with the brigade as seniors."

Modewarre Junior Brigade

A popular recruitment method is an open day, but for Modewarre brigade it was a Meet Your Neighbour Day. Organised by the Moriac Community Network, the event was designed at help the local community get to know each other better, find out what services are available and what organisations you can join.

Modewarre brigade members rose to the challenge, and in among jumping castles, face painting, scouting activities and lots of food was the brigade tanker.



"We set up hoses and had over 40 children shooting water at targets, and each one who had a go received a goody bag provided by the great staff at Geelong Headquarters," Junior Leader Mark Reeves explained. "It was a fantastic day and a great way for the community to meet the brigade."

Getting out into the community and joining in with existing events or holding your own brigade open day can be a great way to recruit new members. It can also be a good way for locals to learn more about what brigades do for their local community, and for brigades to help people prepare for the fire season.

Gapsted Junior Brigade

To recruit new Juniors, Gapsted brigade members hit the road with their competition trailer, taking it to the local school and running events to show students what Junior members get up to. This has resulted in new Junior members joining the brigade.

"Our brigade is an old brigade, a small brigade, and we need the young kids coming through," Junior Coordinator Craig Hodgetts said. "There are so many skills they can learn but the mateship and camaraderie, just being part of a family, really connects with people."



Gaining new recruits meant that Gapsted brigade for the first time in several years could enter a team into the State Championships earlier this year. They won a third place medal and the conduct award and had a great weekend away together as a Junior brigade.

"I like it because it's just like we're all one big family and we all stick together and work as a team," Junior member Zali said. "It's really fun to do it with my friends; shoot targets and connect with my friends. It's awesome."

The Gapsted brigade bus has been wrapped with photos of the Juniors and really stands out in a crowd, wherever the Juniors go. The brigade hopes this will help attract more interest and more Junior members. B

"We had nine kids last year; three boys and six girls. We aim to double that this year just through word of mouth from the kids as they have so much fun," Craig said.



Ararat Junior Brigade

Despite the hurdles of the past 12 months, Ararat Junior Brigade has bounced back by returning to a new fire station and getting back into the Juniors program. The Juniors winter program uses a combination of theory, practical learning and social events to engage young people of different ages. They have delivered sessions on hose bowling, hazmat, radio communications, team building, and ropes, knots and lines. The Junior members have also supported the local community by shaking tins for the Good Friday Appeal, delivering pamphlets for the Ararat Musical Comedy Society's production of Snow White, and setting up chairs at 4am at the cenotaph for the Anzac Day dawn service.

"We want to instil values of respect, resilience, teamwork and a sense of community, whether or not the kids decide to continue to be a part of CFA once they leave Juniors," Junior Leader Tammy Ralph said.

A recent recruitment program resulted in six new Junior members with another three interested in finding out more. The Junior leaders created a flyer and distributed it to local schools to put in their newsletters. The existing Juniors were also encouraged to bring a friend along to the training nights.

"We've found that Juniors is a good fit for kids that don't fit into the traditional sports of football and netball, etc. They may be too shy or anxious, so it's a great way to include kids that don't want to have pressure on them to win," Tammy said.



Kyabram Junior Brigade

One of the Junior leaders at Kyabram brigade works at the local high school as an aide and is a great ambassador for the Juniors program. The brigade finds that most new Juniors join through word of mouth, but having that connection with the high school means that rapport can be built and young people know that the brigade is a safe place where they will be welcomed.

Junior Leader Mick Compton explained the difference this has made.

"We have several Junior members who are on the autism spectrum, which has taught us as leaders to be inclusive no matter what the child's situation is," Mick said. "My own son, who is a current Junior member, has autism which makes it my mission to ensure everyone is treated as an equal."



Upwey Juniors learn how to save lives

Since 2002, the opportunity to complete a Level 1 first-aid course has been available to Junior brigades as part of CFA's Junior Volunteer Development Program. The course introduces Junior members to first-aid basics while providing them with important life skills that can be applied to a range of situations.

Upwey Juniors have been involved in first-aid training since 2018, after making the decision that the Juniors program should complete first-aid training every year.

"I think that first-aid training is important and if the opportunity is there to learn it they should," Junior Coordinator Karra McLeod said. "Whether the training helps a family member or a stranger, I wanted to equip our Juniors with that knowledge."

Despite being a full day's course held on the weekend, the Juniors have never grumbled because they have been genuinely interested in learning first-aid. Parents are often surprised that the course provides them with a qualification in CPR and first-aid, because they were not aware that young people can be qualified.

"We also promote our Juniors program as being a comfortable and safe place in the area we live, and the first-aid course is another way we can do that," explained Karra.

The course has something for everyone regardless of academic ability and interests. The Juniors learn new skills and are better able to help others. For some Juniors the training has been the catalyst to a career path.

"The way the course is delivered is awesome. It's so practical and hands-on," Junior member Alexis Rhodes said. "Not everyone is a visual learner and the first-aid course teacher knew that. It's great to have someone there to show us how to do it and correct our technique, while making a serious subject fun."

This training has proved invaluable for some Upwey Juniors. For example, one Junior found his diabetic father unconscious on the floor and immediately knew what to do, putting him into the recovery position and following DRSABCD – something he'd learned on the first-aid course.



While at school, another two Juniors noticed a student struggling to breath during PE. From their first-aid training, they determined the student was suffering an asthma attack, notified the teacher and, under teacher supervision, helped the student breathe normally again. The teacher was impressed with their level of ability and that they were first-aiders.

"The first-aid course was very enjoyable and it gave us the knowledge we need to help and support people in our community and beyond," Junior member Layla Gould said. "We are very lucky to have had this learning opportunity."

"I'm very grateful to have had the experience to be taught by the wonderful CFA first-aid crew about important lifesaving skills," Junior member Mabel Gould said.

First-aid training is available to Junior brigades through the Members Online Youth pages. There's a guidebook for the course and an application form to book a session.

STORY KARRA MCLEOD AND JEN CLEMENT



Excellence in youth engagement at CFA

Each week thousands of young people aged 11 to 24 years old volunteer with CFA through the Junior Volunteer Development Program or as members of a local brigade.

Young people are an essential part of CFA and make a valuable and important contribution to the organisation. Engaging successfully with our young volunteers is key to ensuring CFA remains strong. We want to develop successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

The CFA Youth Team, in partnership with the HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development, has created a set of five modules, available on the Learning Hub (learninghub.cfa.vic.gov.au), to help members explore best practice in youth engagement.

"Engaging with young people in CFA is vitally important. As we see our young people come through the CFA ranks, one day they will become senior firefighters and support members in our brigades," Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said.

Why is youth engagement important for CFA? There are several reasons. Young people have roles to play now and they are also the future. Young people can have a positive impact on our brigades, the wider CFA and the emergency services sector. All CFA members can involve and nurture youth in building stronger communities.



Generally, we all agree that it's important to engage with our younger members, but we know that members often lack the confidence or skills to do this. These online modules will help develop an understanding of young people and explore ways to make engagement easier.

The target audience for these modules is CFA volunteers of all ages, especially members who work directly with our young members such as Junior leaders, Fire

Safe Kids presenters and captains and lieutenants of brigades with 16 and 17-year-old members.

The modules are also an opportunity for brigades and individuals to book themselves into one of CFA's Engaging Youth and Young Adults as Volunteers workshops, also developed in partnership with HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development.

STORY JEN CLEMENT

Disability Inclusion Guide Part Three

Last year the CFA Youth Team launched a new Disability Inclusion Guide to help Junior brigades be as inclusive as possible regarding disability. This resource gives brigades initial guidance, advice and links to resources to build their knowledge to support the inclusion of people with disabilities in brigades.

In response to feedback from brigades, Part One: Introduction to Disability set the foundations for disability inclusion in brigades. Part Two: Autism is a supporting section focusing on autism with tips and advice on how to support someone with those needs. These resources have had positive feedback and are being used across the state.

As one member explained, who is also a parent of a Junior, "As a parent of a child with autism, it was great to be able to share the fire brigade experience together – something that was important to me that he could be a part of too."

Responding to the needs of Junior brigades, Part Three: Physical Disability is now available on the Members Online Youth pages. This resource explores the characteristics of physical disability while providing a checklist and discussion starters to help build an inclusive brigade program for all abilities.

"Juniors with a disability can bring an enthusiasm and excitement to the environment that others may not do so, as often they have had limited opportunities to be a part of social activities like this," said one Junior leader.

Support to address disability needs in your brigade, whether Juniors or seniors, is also available from both the Youth Team and the Inclusion and Fairness Team at CFA Headquarters.

STORY JEN CLEMENT

Emergency Memberlink

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

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

Details of the offers and full terms and conditions are at emergencymemberlink.com.au.

To join Memberlink phone 1800 820 037 or register online at emergencymemberlink.com.au. You can also access your Memberlink card on the website.

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



- Discounts for members and their families at **Specsavers Optometrists**.
- Save between 10% and 40% off the best rates at **Wyndham Hotels & Resorts**.
- Up to 15% off the best daily rental rates with **Europcar**.
- Save 3%-7% on pre-purchased **Gift Cards** including Woolworths, Coles, Myer, Kmart, Target, David Jones, Rebel Sport, JB Hi-Fi, Supercheap Auto and BCF.
- **Experience Oz** offers at least 10% off hot deals on a range of experiences such as day tours, attractions, zoos/aquariums, theme parks, extreme activities and skydiving.
- Discounts on home entertainment, audio, televisions, mobile phones, IT hardware, fitness trackers and whitegoods through the **JB Hi-Fi Corporate Benefits Programme**.
- 4% discount on the Emergency Memberlink Health Plan through **Bupa**.
- Commercial pricing on household appliances and electronics through **The Good Guys Commercial Division**.
- Free small soft drink, small orange juice or small McCafé coffee with any purchase over \$4 at **McDonald's** restaurants in Victoria.
- 15% discount on **Jay Leno's Garage** Advanced Vehicle Care products.
- Up to 20% discount on standard rates at the **Radisson on Flagstaff Gardens Melbourne**.
- 20% off Bath House bathing during off-peak periods (Mon-Fri outside of public and school holidays) at **Peninsula Hot Springs** on the Mornington Peninsula.
- **mycar Tyre & Auto** has 10% off servicing, mechanical repairs and TCP tyre purchases.
- 20% off flowers from **Petals Network**.
- Discounted cinema tickets, attraction tickets and gift cards through the **Memberlink Box Office**.
- 15% off the best rates of the day with **Thrifty** car rental.
- 15% discount on the best available rates at the **Quest Dandenong**.
- **RSEA Safety** offers 15% off full-priced items online.
- Up to 20% discount on the public web price on the entire range of **Lenovo** notebooks,
- desktop PCs, monitors and accessories.
- **Nissan** Partner Program pricing on a range of passenger cars, 4WDs and SUVs.
- 15% off the best available rate at **Best Western Hotels and Resorts**.
- Plants, trees and garden products at wholesale prices at **Plantmark**. Locations include Langwarrin, Thomastown, Werribee and Wantirna.
- **Searoad Ferries** has 10% discount on ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff.
- 10% off the best available rates at **The Hotel Windsor**.
- Exclusive pricing on whitegoods, kitchen appliances, audio visual, computers and mobile phones, home appliances and furniture through **Harvey Norman Groups & Associations Division**. Contact your Emergency Memberlink Team for a quote.
- 20% discount on unlimited ride tickets at **Luna Park Melbourne**.
- **Isubscribe** offers an extra 10% off the list price of any magazine subscription. Popular titles include Better Homes & Gardens, National Geographic, Gardening, Home Beautiful and New Idea.
- 20% off day admission tickets for members and their families at **Moonlit Sanctuary Wildlife Conservation Park**.
- Corporate leisure rates and reduced insurance excess on car hire with **Avis**.
- **Latrobe Health** offers a 6.5% discount on the Gold Hospital Choice Members corporate cover (direct debit premiums).
- Victorian Government rates at the **Quest Caroline Springs**.
- 10% off accommodation plus a free petrol offer with **Innkeepers Tasmania**.
- Corporate pricing on all new vehicles at **Rex Gorrell Geelong**.
- **Departure Lounge** offers savings of up to 50% on accommodation at Peppers, Mantra and BreakFree properties.
- New and existing customers have access to special offers on **Elgas** LPG bottled gas.
- Trade cash prices on the full product range at **Burson Auto Parts**.

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