

Brigade

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**WE WANT
YOUR FEEDBACK**

Contemporary Volunteer
Membership Model
(CVMM)
— see p12

**Brigades get
communities
fire ready**



**Fire Wise
Kids
launches**



**Helping
residents
through
PAVS**

Brigade magazine is published by CFA Communications & Stakeholder Relations, PO Box 701, Mt Waverley VIC

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Printer: IVE Group

Articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of CFA.

The editor reserves the right to amend articles.

You can update your address or email details or cancel Brigade magazine by clicking on 'manage my profile' on the home page of members.cfa.vic.gov.au or by calling 1800 628 844.

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We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

Useful resources

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news.cfa.vic.gov.au



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x.com/cfa_updates (Twitter)

CFA intranet:

members.cfa.vic.gov.au

Free CFA images for download:

digitallibrary.cfa.vic.gov.au

Community engagement material:

cfa.vic.gov.au/cecontentportal

CFA templates for download:

cfa.vic.gov.au/templatetoolkit



COVER PHOTO: TAKEN AT WINCHELSEA
GET FIRE READY EVENT, SUPPLIED BY
MANDY MAGLARAS



Summer 2025

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Greg Leach AFSM

As I reflect on my first year as CEO, it has felt both like coming home and stepping into an exciting new chapter. I can still see what drew me to this special organisation in 1978 when I first became a volunteer – the commitment of CFA volunteers, the support they give each other and their service to the community.



That remains the critical focus for our organisation; empowering the frontline to continue to deliver on the mission and ensuring the appropriate vehicles, equipment, training and resources are available to make this happen.

One of the most significant improvements to our operational capability was completing the Radio Replacement Program. In all, more than 9,600 portable digital radios were delivered to brigades and 4,125 mobile radios were installed in vehicles.

Across the year there has also been welcome progress in delivering fire station and fleet replacement programs. Eight new stations were completed and Serpentine Fire Station should be completed in early 2026. We've also rolled out new vehicles, with many more to come off the production line and into stations over coming months.

Improving our culture remains an ongoing commitment. Allen + Clarke was engaged to undertake an evaluation of CFA's progress since the release of the External Review of Culture and Issues Management in April 2022. The outcome of the review will be an action plan to further embed change and allow CFA to continue our critically important work to build a strong, safe and resilient organisation. We will share the final report in the new year.

CFA played an advisory role in the process of reviewing CFA Regulations, and the updated Regulations began on 31 July 2025. The changes clarify, streamline and support CFA operations and simplify processes for our volunteers.

In August, we launched the refreshed CFA Strategy 2020-2030 which sets a clear pathway for our organisation, positioning us to meet the changing needs of our members and the community.

I'd also like to thank the more than 500 brigades that hosted events at their stations or in their local community as part of our first Get Fire Ready initiative during October. Tens of thousands of Victorians have been engaged and every event has made a difference to help people prepare for the fire season.

Finally, it's been an honour to be your CEO during this 80th anniversary year of CFA. Throughout 2025 I've had the pleasure of attending many brigade events and presented awards and honours to some of our longest serving members, as well as meeting younger and newer members.

I am proud to lead our volunteers and staff who are committed to protecting lives and property across the state and beyond, and I look forward to catching up with many more members next year.

Stay safe during this summer period and look out for each other.

CHIEF OFFICER

Jason Heffernan

This year's fire season is officially upon us and as we saw in the AFAC Seasonal Bushfire Outlook for summer, a warmer than average summer is likely with above average risk in parts of the state.



Although the community may see a lot of green grass right now, much of it is superficial, with very hard dry soil beneath. Without continuous heavy rainfall every week, evaporation will remain strong and dryness will prevail across the forests. I have been reminded by many long serving members from the regions... don't be fooled.

The recent statewide Get Fire Ready initiative held across October was a great success with more than 500 brigades hosting community events. We also saw almost 500 Victorians put their hands up to join CFA during this initiative, which was pleasing to see. Well done to all those involved, you should feel proud of what you've achieved in helping prepare your communities for the current fire season.

I understand the ongoing concerns and pressures with the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF). We are constantly monitoring the situation and talking to our brigades about their status and intention as we move through our preparedness program for the fire season. This is a changing environment, but the community can be confident that we have the resources to respond and protect them.

The Victorian Government recently allocated more than \$10 million additional funds to CFA to deliver enhanced mobile and static water capabilities, and diesel fuel support for firefighting operations this summer. Mobile bulk water units holding more than 20,000 litres will be deployed from several bases, with priority given to drought-affected regions and areas with limited access to surface water. Up to five mobile contracted bulk diesel fuel vehicles and/or tankers carrying more than 10,000 litres will be positioned primarily in Western Victoria. This will reduce the time and distance vehicles need to travel to replenish water supplies and ensure fuel availability this fire season. CFA will also install static bulk water tanks holding more than 100,000 litres at strategic locations. This initiative is designed to complement local response arrangements.

We recently released the Right Lane Report into recruitment and onboarding, and soon we will also release our Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model Options Paper for member and VFBV feedback. I ask that you take the summer to consider both reports and I will make contact again in March to consolidate your feedback and provide next steps.

As we head into the festive season, please look after each other and enjoy this time with your loved ones. Stay safe and take care this fire season.

GROUP OFFICER, D13

Fiona Burns AFSM

I am currently the Yarra Valley Group Officer in District 13. Our group is made up of 11 brigades each with diverse risks that include Melbourne Water's major catchments, two community fire refuges, a new mountain bike trail and peri-urban and rural extreme at-risk bushfire communities.



Our brigades attend more than 800 calls a year with a membership turnover rate on par with the state average.

CFA groups are essential to the operational success and sustainability of brigades, but their structure, role and relevance need urgent modernisation to meet today's and future challenges.

Brigades and groups both face the challenge of declining volunteerism. Yarra Valley Group was established in 2005 following the amalgamation of its predecessors, similar to how the new Apostles Group formed. At every level we are all doing more with less. Brigade leadership is flooded with administration, training requirements and HR challenges.

Groups can and do help alleviate some of these pressures by engaging in a wide array of activities. Groups coordinate and deliver training, support and deliver community safety programs, support fuel reduction initiatives, develop future leaders, plan strike teams for fire, storm and flood response, and support brigades during initial relief and recovery phases after a range of emergencies.

Groups are not autonomous management bodies – they are there to support brigades. A central principle of a group's role is to ensure the incident is managed, rather than manage the incident. Groups provide mentoring and incident support to ensure effective command and control at incidents. They also provide local knowledge, feedback and incident information flow to brigades. Groups should proactively be involved in incident management teams to capture local knowledge.

Groups are well placed to provide a 'voice' on behalf of brigades, individually and collectively, to advocate for change.

CFA's current group standard operating procedures (SOPs) are 20 years old and do not reflect the modern emergency services environment. Arguably, some of the traditional group tasks such as communications have decreased in relevance, while others such as regional and municipal fire planning and ensuring incident control centres are ready for use, are obsolete.

We need to review the role of the group and ensure it is both contemporary and a sustainable model for the future.

It's essential that we refresh the group model including updated SOPs, clearer authority within the chain of command and recognition of the expanded roles groups now operate in.

GROUP OFFICER, D20

Jack Hewitt

Gannawarra Group consists of 13 brigades over an area to the east of Gannawarra shire irrigation farming, and to the west of Mallee farming. Its area is 100km wide and borders the Murray River. Rivers and creeks split our shire north to south.



After selling my farm and moving closer to Kerang, I was captain of Appin South before I became group officer in 2023. It was not something I had in mind at the time and it has been a bit of a learning curve. But one thing I can say about our group is we all work together well and the urban and rural brigades support each other.

The support from District 20 Headquarters has been outstanding for me as we go about helping and supporting our communities.

During my first few months as GO, we had major haystack fires that burnt 14 stacks of hay. The response included 40-plus trucks. Then two days later, eight kilometres of roadside was lit up by a trailer, which needed another 40 trucks to control the fire.

We are fortunate that the group has a road rescue team based at Cohuna Fire Brigade – a major asset to the area – and I am proud that members at Kerang Fire Brigade are qualified in Emergency Medical Response to help with cardiac arrest emergencies.

Our biggest recent threats have been flood waters – in 2010-11 and again in 2022. Both these floods surrounded the Kerang township and lasted for four weeks from the time they started to when they finished draining into the Murray River. Farmland and houses in Kerang and Murrabit were flooded after levies were breached, and a lot of the work to remove the water fell to local members, supported by the ICC in Kerang.

They say that water can divide a community, but the response from everyone in the area was fantastic. Kerang brigade organised the filling of 10,000-plus sand bags.

Regarding our fleet, we hope to take delivery of a heavy tanker and newer tankers for Leitchville and Murrabit brigades soon. We would also benefit from an extra tanker in one of our growing towns. Radio replacement in all our trucks has now been completed. In terms of stations, a complete rebuild has started at Leitchville Fire Station.

The urban brigades in our group have good numbers of members but our rural brigades are struggling with population decline, members getting older and farms getting bigger. All of this means that getting new brigade members to join is an ongoing problem.

My deputy group officers are doing an excellent job with training, infrastructure and service delivery. These groups are working well together and have achieved some better outcomes for our members. All training involving tree hazards and entrapment drills will be done before the fire season.

EMPOWERING HOMEOWNERS THROUGH PAVS

Launched in 2013, CFA's Property Advice Visit Service (PAVS) is a free, proactive, initiative that connects trained CFA members with households at risk of fire.

STORY BY STEPH DE BRUIN AND ELISSA JANS



Through tailored in-person visits to properties, CFA members help residents understand their local fire risk and offer practical, property-specific advice to improve preparedness.

The aims of PAVS are to:

- raise awareness of bushfire risk at the property
- encourage residents to take action to reduce their risk
- support informed planning and decision-making
- build trust and connection between CFA and the community
- refer residents to where they can seek further information.

Visits may be initiated by community members, through identification of high-risk properties based on CFA members' local knowledge, by following a targeted properties list on CFA's Maps Online, or from a community engagement coordinator.

CFA members can use the following ways to reach residents to promote the service in their local area.

- Use local events to promote PAVS.
- Share flyers or postcards through letterbox drops. Check the Community Engagement Content Portal for editable flyers you can use to promote PAVS in your community.
- Post on brigade or community social media sites.
- Advertise in local newspapers and newsletters.
- Offer PAVS to new residents or during community campaigns.
- Promote the service in new resident kits.
- Use your existing community networks (for example, sports teams, local Landcare groups or Neighbourhood House).

During a visit

Visits can vary depending on the property. Following the Property Assessment Form, members walk around the property with residents to help them understand how to improve access for emergency services, vegetation planning, design and planting, as well highlighting various actions to prepare their property. The visit is recorded in Survey123 and supported by the PAVS pack, which includes printed resources to prompt a bushfire planning discussion.

The purpose of the visit isn't to advise on technical details such as Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) ratings or significant vegetation removal. Instead, it's focused on generating conversations between residents and brigade members about practical ways to reduce fire risk and improve preparedness.

Benefits for community and brigades

Many factors, such as limited time, low awareness, lack of concern, or mobility challenges, can prevent community members from attending preparedness sessions or taking action. PAVS helps break down these barriers by meeting residents at their homes, at a time that works for them, and tailoring the conversation to their unique circumstances. This personalised approach can lead to stronger engagement and improved fire preparedness outcomes.

PAVS takes a strength-based and person-centred approach which means recognising individuals as experts in their own life. It's not about doing things for them but about helping them understand their risk and pointing them to tools and services that

can help. By taking a person-centred approach, you don't need to solve all problems, but you are providing the information and encouragement they need to support their own decision-making.

One of the most important benefits for members is that PAVS sessions can strengthen community connections. During the PAVS visit, brigades can also collect information to help them in operational readiness such as water points, property identification, access and egress, landscape risk, and residents at higher risk.

Training for CFA members

CFA's Community Engagement team has recently released a new eLearning module called *CFAPAVIND Delivering the Property Advice Visit Service*. It's in the Community Engagement Pathway section of the Learning Hub. This new module is also a great refresher with new content for members who've delivered PAVS in the past. It's now a recognised skill on your Learning Hub record.

The new module is designed to equip CFA members with the skills and knowledge to provide tailored and actionable advice to residents in a way that helps prevent them from feeling overwhelmed during preparedness conversations. After taking the module, members will be able to:

- explain the purpose of PAVS and promote it as a valuable community service
- describe who can deliver PAVS and what steps must be completed before getting started
- prepare for a visit by identifying properties, planning key messages and gathering resources
- apply core fire safety knowledge to provide accurate and helpful advice to residents
- engage safely and respectfully with residents, including those at higher risk
- deliver the visit, complete reporting and follow up on next steps where needed.

To deliver PAVS you must have a current Working with Children Check with CFA listed as an organisation, and complete these eLearning modules:

- CFAICEAWE Introduction to community engagement.
- CFAPYPIND Child safety – Playing your part.
- CFAIAFAWE Introduction to Australian Fire Danger Rating System.
- CFACSEIND Communicating for community engagement.
- CFAPAVIND Delivering the Property Advice Visit Service (NEW).

South East Region Community Safety Brigade member Sumit Wadhwa was impressed with the training module.

"It's a pretty amazing module and very informative," Sumit said. "Great insights all up and kudos to the team for making such an impactful training module that has stunning slides and great use of background music to create the element of enhanced learning."

Use the QR code to access PAVS training on the Learning Hub.



Strengthening PAVS evaluation

To ensure PAVS continues to deliver a meaningful impact, CFA is enhancing how we evaluate the program to help us understand what's working, where improvements are needed and how PAVS contributes to community safety. Evaluation is more than just measurement – it's about learning. It helps us reflect on what's effective, what's not and how we can evolve the program to better support communities in bushfire-prone areas.

Two key components currently under review are:

Theory of change: This outlines the evidence-based assumptions behind how and why PAVS activities lead to improved preparedness and safety planning.

Program logic: This maps the sequence of activities and intended outcomes, providing a clear framework for how PAVS is delivered and what it aims to achieve.

As part of this work, the project team has been visiting regional areas to engage with brigades, watch PAVS in action and gather insights from those delivering the program on the ground. These real-world perspectives are essential to help us shape a more robust and responsive evaluation framework.

A strong evaluation framework depends on a current and credible evidence base. Behavioural science continues to play an important role in how we evaluate PAVS, helping us understand how people perceive risk, make decisions and adopt safer practices. By ensuring our evaluation approach reflects behavioural science principles, we can more effectively assess whether PAVS is supporting meaningful and lasting behaviour change.

We'd love to hear from you

If you're planning PAVS visits in your area and would be open to a 'tag along' observer to inform this work, or if you'd like to share your experience with PAVS delivery and its impact, please get in touch. Your insights are invaluable in shaping the future of the program. To share your experience or invite an observer to your next PAVS visit, email jodi.braszell@cfa.vic.gov.au.

"I think the key outcome is empowering them to make decisions"

Phil Cuthbert, CFA Community Liaison



To watch a video about PAVS use the QR code.



Summer seasonal outlook

A warmer than average summer is likely, and despite recent rainfall there are still severe rainfall deficits across north-central, east-central, Central Highlands, and south-west Gippsland. Recent spring rainfall has temporarily boosted soil moisture in some areas, but without continued heavy rainfall, forests and grasslands will progressively dry out through December. Initially in December, damp soil and green growth may limit fire activity, but a hot, dry weather pattern may lead to a rapid switch in forest flammability, with significant bushfires a real possibility towards the end of December and into January 2026.

The effect of the long-term severe dryness remains a strong factor across those high-risk areas listed above, and will increase in December. Areas with an increased risk of summer fires for forest and heathy woodland include the far south-west, the northern slopes of the Otways, Mt Buangor State Park, Wombat State Forest and Central Highlands, the heathy woodlands of Mornington Peninsula and south-west Gippsland, as well as north-central including the Kinglake and Yarra Ranges, and parts of Elidon during January and February 2026.

Elsewhere across the state, fire potential is expected to be normal for summer, which means bushfire activity can still be expected under periods of hot, dry and windy weather. Victorians should understand their local risks, prepare their properties and plan ahead for what they will do in the event of a fire this summer. Fire safety is a shared responsibility.



Seasonal Bushfire Outlook Summer 2025



Walking to raise brigade funds

Glenlyon Fire Brigade member Shaun Gedge has completed a remarkable journey, walking 240 kilometres around the brigade's response area to raise funds for vital new firefighting equipment.

Shaun set out on his nine-day trek on 18 October, with the aim of covering the response areas of the eight brigades that make up the Glenlyon Group in District 15.

"I'm originally from the UK, and I did a 160-kilometre walk over there to raise funds for the local Air Ambulance, which is completely charity-based," Shaun said.

"When I joined Glenlyon, I asked what sort of things I could do to help, and that's where the idea for this walk came from."

Despite some challenges including an early injury, the firefighter and Junior leader walked an average of 28.5 kilometres a day, camping along the route each night before finishing his solo journey on 26 October.

His goal was to raise funds for breathing apparatus units and, eventually, an ultralight tanker – essential equipment that will strengthen Glenlyon's ability to respond to local emergencies. By the end of his trek, Shaun had surpassed his initial \$5,000 target, and donations continued to come in.

"I actually hit my fundraising goal before the walk, and I was absolutely thrilled," Shaun said.

"We respond to a wide range of calls across our area. Having the right equipment makes all the difference – not only for our safety but for how effectively we can protect our community."

For Shaun, the trek around his district was about more than just distance, it was about giving back.

"I joined the brigade just over a year ago, and I've seen how hard

everyone works to keep our community safe," he said. "This was my way of doing something extra to help out.

"It was great to walk through the Glenlyon area – not just for the physical challenge, but to get a better feel for the local area especially from a fire risk perspective.

"My fellow brigade members also joined me for stints along the way to keep me company and bring me supplies so I wasn't carrying too much. When I got up into the higher areas and could look out over the valley – those were the moments that inspired me to keep going."

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN





New summer social media resources

To complement CFA's existing community engagement social media assets, we recently launched new resources for brigades to use that address two important aspects of fire safety – reckless actions that lead to fires, and campfire safety.

All the community engagement assets can be downloaded from the Community Engagement Content Portal. Go to the campaign resources section of www.cfa.vic.gov.au/cecontentportal or use the QR code.



If you light it, you own it

CFA has created a new series of reckless fire animations that highlight the different ways bushfires can start, with a strong focus on illegal and reckless actions.

Deliberately and recklessly lit bush and grassfires are a significant threat in Victoria, leading to loss of life, destruction of livestock, and damage to communities and infrastructure. Alarming, almost half of the fires each season are attributed to deliberate actions or reckless practices, such as improperly extinguishing campfires or using equipment such as angle grinders on Total Fire Ban days.

These new animations are designed specifically for social media, showcasing how fires can start and the serious repercussions that follow. Our goal is to raise awareness about fire safety and the potential penalties involved. Each animation features the tagline 'if you light it, you own it,' emphasising that everyone is accountable for fire safety, and that there can be consequences for both careless and intentional acts.

We will be promoting these assets widely throughout the fire season in our communications and advertising campaigns.



Topics include:

- Campfires
- Cigarettes
- Vehicles on dry grass
- Outdoor cooking
- Burning off
- Farm machinery
- Angle grinding

Don't let your campfire turn into a bushfire

As CFA members we've all been frustrated by situations where campfires have been left unattended or are allowed to remain alight on Total Fire Ban days. Over the past 12 months there have been about 700 bushfires, large and small, started by campfires, including a dangerous fire in the Otways in January.

In the past, our campfire information has been contained in the 'Can I or Can't I?' brochure along with other activities. That's still important, but the risk posed by campfires needs to be teased out and provided in a way that makes sense to campers.

The rules around campfires are quite simple, and with a little help campers can better understand why they need to be more careful. Most campers would be completely unaware of the heavy penalties for not following the rules. These can include fines of more than \$40,000 or two years in prison, or both, for having a campfire on a day of Total Fire Ban.

There is now a dedicated campfire page on the CFA website, so campers can find out the rules and understand how to prevent their campfire becoming a bushfire. There is also a live action video that can be watched from the new web page or on YouTube, and two 30-second versions for social media use are available for download from the Community Engagement Content Portal.



Working from heights props

CFA is further enhancing the safety of its firefighters while working at heights with five new props recently added to its training centres across the state. The \$8 million project included the construction of Safe Work at Heights props at CFA's Victorian Emergency Management Training Centres (VEMTC) at Sunraysia, West Sale, Longerenong, Penshurst and Central Highlands.

The existing prop at Huntly VEMTC was also upgraded and plans are underway for Bangholme VEMTC to receive the new prop soon.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Training Delivery David Maxwell joined other guests to officially hand over the five new props at Central Highlands VEMTC.

"Safe Work at Heights training allows CFA members to safely access roofs that aren't already fire affected," David said. "The prop involves the use of a harness, ropes and anchoring to create a safe system for our members to access areas above two metres high.

"It allows the rigging of the system in a controlled environment under supervision, preparing our members for real-life scenarios. The training also closely aligns with other emergency services, allowing for cross agency support in multi-agency situations.

"This not only improves our safety and capability at incidents in Victoria, but also allows us to further support our interstate partners by deploying our members to emergencies interstate when required.



"We've proudly delivered more than 160 of these specialised training courses to more than 900 members across the state, which accredited 140 brigades for Safe Work at Heights operations."

Geelong West Fire Brigade volunteer Stephen Robertson said the Safe Work at Heights prop enabled members to train for a particular skill set in a safe manner.

"Each prop has been designed to have different pitches to the roof as well as different roof surfaces so we have some tin roof and some tiles, as well as some typical obstacles such as solar panels and TV antennas," Stephen said.

"Once we decide that our only way to

operate at an incident is on top of the roof, we would make sure we have at least three heights operators on scene, and then start looking for suitable anchor points and assess the building to ensure we can get up there safely."

The training prop also has the ability to conduct Low Voltage Fuse Removal training, which teaches our members how to disconnect overhead mains power to a structure at an emergency using specialist equipment.

CFA's VEMTC sites and props are also widely used by other emergency services and agencies, providing a broad range of practical skills and services to train members in a safe environment.

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER



Student builds hose scrubber

Glenlyon Group Officer and Franklinford Fire Brigade Lieutenant Dean Jones works as a systems engineering teacher at Daylesford College. He saw an old hose scrubbing machine built locally about 40 years ago, and he thought it would be a good student project to build an improved version.

Dean showed the machine to Year 11 student Beau Henderson (pictured) and he jumped at the opportunity to build a better hose cleaner.

"The old machine didn't have a scrubbing function and it used galvanised pipe," Beau said. "I was hopeful I could do better, using more modern materials, so began by making some sketches.

"I built it from scratch, getting ideas from the old machine and adding my own touches so that the hose flowed easier."

It uses off-the-shelf parts so it will be easy to maintain.

It took Beau about six months to build the hose scrubber, which uses the water pressure from a tanker to wash the hose as fast as it is dragged through.

To test how well the machine worked, Dean asked Franklinford Fire Brigade members to bring their tanker to the college.

"I was happy with the way it worked. It cleaned the hose pretty well," Beau said. "I used high pressure glue on the fittings and it was a relief when it worked well."

"While we were testing it, a group of Year 7s were more interested in looking over the truck," Dean said. "It may have turned into a brigade recruitment drive."

After the hose scrubber was finished in July, it was given to Franklinford brigade.

"I was happy to make something that will help the community," Beau said.

Whatever method a brigade uses to clean and maintain its hoses, it must comply with CFA's work instructions and SOP 5.04 Service Hose Testing. All these documents are on Members Online.

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL



Bartlett, helping your brigade stay prepared



Bartlett Flexitanks are a fantastic training tool for drafting exercises - CFA Member

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UPDATE ON CFA PROJECTS

In each issue we update members with the progress being made on some of our projects. More information about all of our projects is on Members Online: members.vic.gov.au/CFAprojects

Help to shape CFA's future membership model

The Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model (CVMM) Options Paper recommends options that explore dual and multi-brigade memberships, seasonal/reserve status, clearer pathways into specialist roles, cadet opportunities, and improved support for members moving between brigades. The paper also looks at how long-serving members can stay connected through life membership.

For brigades, options aim to create efficiencies, strengthen recruitment and retention, and help brigades build the capability both at the local and organisational level.

We want your feedback

We want to listen to your perspectives on the recommended options.

All members

- Read the Options Paper and reflect on the recommended options. Will this benefit me? Will it benefit other members?
- Speak to your BMT member or VFBV representative about any questions
- Actively promote discussion at your brigade about the Options Paper
- Click on the QR code below and complete the Individual Member Survey

Volunteer leaders

- Read the Options Paper as a representative body about how the recommended options will provide better support for brigades. Will it help brigades to better attract, support and retain volunteers?
- Actively promote discussion at your brigades and meetings about the Options Paper and ways to increase members' participation in the surveys
- Click on the QR code to complete the Volunteer Leader Survey for your representative body



Fire Medical Response (FMR)

To date, there are 39 brigades trained and delivering this potentially life-saving service across Victoria, and the full complement of 50 brigades has now been recruited. We will transition the remaining EMR brigades into the FMR program. The aim is to have all 50 brigades trained and operational by July 2026. Between July and September 2025, nine brigades undertook some or all FMR training and eight commenced FMR operations. Sixty FMR calls were responded to between 1 July and 5 September, with an approximate 39 per cent resuscitation rate achieved during workable cardiac arrests.



Tablets in trucks

More than 950 rugged Android tablets have recently been delivered to brigades across the state as part of the Mobile Data Capability Project. This will improve communication, situational awareness and enhance on-the-ground decision-making for our operational volunteers.

The tablets have been installed in primary response vehicles including pumpers, tankers and field command vehicles to give quick, on-the-go access to critical resources such as SAS, SITUATION, FIRS, HAZMAT, ANCAP and email.



BA cylinder exchange

Brigades want increased flexibility and convenience when refilling used BA cylinders. To address this, CFA is planning to introduce a BA cylinder 'swap and go' process. The system design has been finalised, including the app requirements and reporting features available through the app. Fujitsu will provide the finished product for user testing. The app will be tested in a training environment before we begin a pilot.





Our culture – a constant work in progress

We often describe the culture at CFA as the ‘way we do things around here’, and it’s timely for CFA to check in on the progress to date against the commitment to implement 10 recommendations from the 2022 Culture Review and Issues Management Program.

CFA has re-engaged Dr Helen Szoke AO, from Allen + Clarke Consulting who conducted the 2022 independent review.

“We have brought Dr Helen Szoke and her team back in to conduct an independent evaluation on the progress CFA has made against its commitment to improving CFA’s culture,” Group General Manager Support Services Matt Davis said. “This involved the team at Allen + Clarke reviewing hundreds of documents and conducting interviews and focus groups with our members and key stakeholders.”

In an interview with Chief Officer Jason Heffernan at the Wye River Volunteer Forum in late October, Helen was asked to comment on CFA’s progress to date. She confirmed the focus needs to continue building momentum about how people treat each other. Regarding professional development of our leaders, she said every level of leadership from brigades to Executives need to continue to be supported in having difficult conversations and calling out inappropriate behaviour.

Helen commented that CFA has done a lot of work on the formal complaints process. However, it now needs to place more emphasis on preventing issues before they become formal complaints by focusing on issues management and dispute resolution at all levels.

Helen stressed that communicating the progress CFA is making to all members through regular reporting and increased transparency was crucial. CFA also needs to provide a framework to rebuild a positive and safe place to work and volunteer. Ongoing work and actions need to be focused and provide a clear framework on actions that will continue to build momentum to improve how members treat each other in brigades, how they interact with the

community, and our behaviour in Burwood Headquarters and across districts and regions.

Helen said we should “think about the way you do things as much as what you do and then tell people about it. Communication is key. People need to know what CFA is doing about culture, about conflict and issues management”.

Senior Manager Resolutions Support Fiona Cadd said CFA had made significant progress to improve CFA’s issues and complaints management processes since 2022. Some key highlights include:

- establishing the Behaviour Standards Policy, which outlines clear expectations relating to bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination and victimisation
- delivering 360 two-hour behavioural standards workshops to more than 6,000 members
- refreshing the Complaints Resolution Policy that is undergoing consultation
- recruiting a dedicated team of professional and highly skilled resolutions support officers
- developing a Triage Assessment Tool and regular evaluation of the causal factors of complaints and issues management matters that informs improved operational and people management practices
- regular reporting to the VFBV Joint Consultative Committee
- refreshing Resolutions Support Toolkit
- launching a third-party hotline for anonymous reporting
- coaching for ACFOs and commanders about CFA’s resolution support processes.

STORY MICHELLE DE LIMA

For more information about culture at CFA use the QR code.





THE TWO OF US

Eddie Tichelaar and Brett Eastwood

Eddie Tichelaar and Brett Eastwood first crossed paths in the early 1980s when they were both members of Montrose Fire Brigade. Although Brett is no longer a member, their friendship has endured for more than 40 years. These days, they are now key members of the team behind Easty Fire Trucks, an organisation that restores CFA trucks and celebrates CFA's rich history.

Eddie Tichelaar

From memory I was about 19 so it would have been 1982-83. I was in Montrose Fire Brigade and still am. Brett joined the brigade as a Junior which is how I got to know him.

Back in the day there was no such terminology as a 'mentor', but a number of us in the brigade mentored Brett. We showed him the ropes. We trained him in the art of firefighting at the time.

Brett was a shy young kid. My first impression was he needed a bit of guidance. We just saw a young kid who we all needed to engage with and make him feel part of the team.

I was a driver of the truck because I was one of the first ones there. When Brett was old enough to respond he would often sit in the back of the truck.

A little bit later our brigade specialised in LPG flare-off. As Brett became a senior member he started responding to LPG incidents. One job that comes to mind was when a car had driven into a large LPG cylinder. I think they call them 'big boy' cylinders, like the ones they have at service stations. The car was on fire and subsequently the cylinder was on fire. But there were two neighbouring cylinders

that were also being impacted by the fire. When you first see it, you think, "right, how are we going to deal with that?" I looked at Brett and I reckon he'd just worked out what the colour of adrenaline was!

Brett was in the brigade for about 20 years before his life changed and he moved away from Montrose. But we've stayed connected all that time. It would've been around 2019, pre-COVID, when he moved back to Montrose and our friendship took off again.

It's best to say it this way. When you become a member of CFA there's an invisible point in time in your life when CFA is in your blood. Suddenly, it's in your blood and your life is about CFA.

So even though Brett had left the brigade after 20 years, it was still always in his blood. One day I said to him. "I'd love to do up an Austin front-mounted pumper", and three weeks later he tapped me on the shoulder and said, "I found one, we're going to do it". That to me was enough evidence that CFA was still in his blood. Then four restored trucks later, it's still in his blood and he just loves it.

In my line of work, I was very much involved in dealing with functions and events. Brett is more involved in decision-making for logistics and the people that he and his company employ. We will often get calls from brigades asking us if we can come to their open day. We tend to find that I will mostly handle those enquiries. Brett can deal with his business affairs and if enquiries come in we will always talk to each other about it.

A couple of times we've had some tough talks where one of us has said "you shouldn't have said this, or you shouldn't have said that".

Talking often fixes the problem, and being on the same page. I don't want to say it's like a marriage, but you've just got to talk and work things out.

Brett's passion blows me away – leaving an organisation for personal reasons and still having it in his blood. He has the passion to continue this journey. The one thing that he and I often say is that as young kids you don't realise the history you're creating. It's only 20, 30, 40 years down the track that you then realise that you've been part of that history. Both of us are on a similar page when it comes to maintaining that history because we've lived it.

I'd like people to know he's a very reserved person. He's reserved but loyal. He is a loyal friend to anyone that crosses his path. If they don't cross the line and create issues, he will have your back and look after you.

Brett Eastwood

I was 13 years old when I joined Montrose Fire Brigade as a Junior. Eddie was a senior member then, back in 1983. I can remember that I hit it off with Eddie and a number of other senior guys at Montrose. They had a buddy system and the brigade was very family-oriented in that era.

We had at least eight to 10 years of regularly being on the same truck. We were both always on the first truck, so our bond started there with being together so much. I lived a 10-minute walk from the station and a two-minute drive. Before I got my driver's licence Eddie would pick me up and drop me off in his little yellow car. It was the ugliest car you've ever seen.

I looked up to Eddie and a couple of others for guidance, not only at the brigade but guidance in life too. Fast forward all these years later, and we're still friends and we're still connected but now with a new bond. He was an important mentor for



us younger guys at the brigade. That journey has definitely continued with Eastey Fire Trucks. And he's also been there offering guidance in my personal life too.

Obviously you're not going to agree 100 per cent of the time, so you need a discussion. In our current roles at Eastey Fire Trucks, if we don't see eye to eye we talk about it. We come to a happy medium.

We talk daily, which might be a little bit more than what we both want. But we talk daily in relation to the best way to navigate something. Eighty per cent of our conversations are about Eastey Fire Trucks and 20 per cent about life.

Eddie's biggest strength is probably my biggest weakness – putting a lot of thought into decision-making. I'll probably make a decision a bit quicker than he would, and that's sometimes turned out to be the right decision and sometimes the wrong decision. One of the most important things I've learned from Eddie is decision-making. He gives a different perspective on things, and we'll talk it out.

I think about a decision a little bit longer now than I used to. He's taught me to slow down. He'll suggest we think about A, B and C before reaching a mutual agreement.

Eddie is the first person to drop everything to help me out. A lot of people look at Eastey Fire Trucks and think that it's all me. But I can't do it without a team of people and Eddie is a key player in that. He's not just a business partner, he's also my friend. I would say we've had a brotherly relationship through life.

I wouldn't be where I am today, both business-wise and personally, without CFA and Montrose Fire Brigade. I have probably spent more time in my life listening to mentors like Eddie and other guys at Montrose, than I did my own family. Between the ages of 13 and 31, I was in the CFA environment for 20 hours a week. During those 18 years of my life I actually learned more from those key brigade people than I did during my own upbringing, which was perfect by the way. But my 18 years with Montrose was my life. That friendship has continued with numerous Montrose members.

You can join a local footy club and fall in with the wrong crowd and do silly things, but at a brigade you're shielded from that because you're helping the community. I often wonder where my life might've gone if I hadn't joined Montrose Fire Brigade.

STORY ALISON SMIRNOFF

Left: Brett Eastwood

Above: Eddie Tichelaar (middle)





New light tanker progresses

After two years of extensive consultation, prototype development and evaluation, the next generation of light tanker design has now been finalised. It includes some significant improvements compared with the tanker offered to brigades through VESEP over the past couple of years.

A prototype was on display at the Mooroopna State Championships earlier this year and has also featured in two of the monthly Volunteer Forums, most recently in August at the State Logistics Centre where 50 cab chassis are now warehoused ready for production. These cab chassis were secured early to ensure we had enough for production.

"It's getting a bit technical," Project Manager Matthew Chick said, "but there are some significant legislative changes being introduced over the next year or so particularly around emissions standards. This will likely force design changes and slow production which we are starting to see happen in some of our other builds."

"Our primary aim for this vehicle has been to find a suitable replacement for our ageing fleet of 2.2 and 2.4D tankers," Matthew explained, "and we think we have achieved this."

"More importantly we have been able to add several critical safety and ergonomic enhancements, as well as make it easier to drive."

The deck rollover protective structure (ROPS) and rear facing seating for three firefighters has now gone. Instead, the new tanker is a crew cab with all the modern features you would expect.

The old manual transmission with gear changes has also been upgraded. The new vehicle is fitted with an automated transmission to align with the rest of our new tanker fleet.

Other new features that our volunteers will notice straight away include a dedicated locker space for crew personal protective equipment and a fridge mounted in the cabin.

In keeping with modern trends, the cabin pump and emergency response controls are now operated by using a touch screen. This gives significantly more flexibility and capability. The screen will also include introductory videos.

The stowage has been given an overhaul after considerable consultation. We've added a ground-accessed ladder, as well as

a battery-operated chainsaw. To overcome any range anxiety two spare batteries and an in-station charger will be provided.

"This should mean around two hours of continuous use without the need to recharge," Matthew said.

The prototype roadshow tour finished last year and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Comments such as "so when can we have one?" and "what a great replacement for our tired old 2.4D", were common.

"We have learned a lot from the prototype feedback and have been able to incorporate a number of good suggestions," Matthew said.

The pump capacity has increased by about 50 per cent and we've added breathing apparatus capability as well as enhancing the vehicle's overall general purpose and emergency response lighting.

Key features will include:

- 8.0T Isuzu NSP75-155 AMT 4x4 cab chassis with 114 kW/419 Nm diesel engine
- 2,000-litre water tank
- 650 litres/minute diesel engine driven pump
- 20 litres/minute ultra high pressure pump feeding an electric rewind hose reel with 60 metres of 12mm hose
- Deck-mounted crew protection awning
- Class A foam
- BA capability.

At 6.6 metres long and 2.6 metres high, it's more than one metre shorter and 50 centimetres lower than its heavy tanker cousin.

"As a light truck the vehicle drives almost like a large car," Matthew said. "It's easy to get in and out of and is surprisingly small considering all its extra features."

A contract has now been awarded for mass production, which is set to start mid next year with an initial build order of 50 trucks. The distribution is still being worked through, but don't be surprised to see some in your area in the future.

STORY ANDREW WEBB



Improving recruitment and induction

CFA is currently improving the volunteer recruitment and induction processes, with two key projects coming to fruition over the next few months. This includes a huge boost to CFA's Volunteer Recruitment Hub (VRH) capacity.

The VRH has undergone significant changes over the past year, which means the time an applicant spends in the system has been more than halved. This wasn't achieved by technology alone, but through strong collaboration with districts, brigades and regional stakeholders who helped shape and test every change.

Through the 2025 Give Us A Hand Campaign, CFA worked closely with volunteers and administrative teams across the state to identify pain points and streamline processes. District feedback was vital to improve how applications move through the system, from clearer communication to better visibility of applicant progress. Region and district engagement ensured that the VRH enhancements were practical, user-friendly and responsive to the realities of brigade operations.

Among the changes are a simplified registration process for all applicant types, clearer email communication and an updated dashboard that provides brigades and districts with faster access to key information. These changes have reduced duplication, improved transparency and allowed local teams to focus more on supporting new members rather than managing paperwork.

To support these improvements CFA also carried out a recruitment and induction review to examine our recruitment strategies and processes. The outcomes of this review will ensure the recruitment and induction experience evolves alongside the needs of CFA volunteers and the communities they serve.

The review examined customer sentiment towards the recruitment and induction processes from various groups of people including prospective applicants, current applicants, and new volunteers and staff involved in these processes. The review will be made available to CFA members before the end of 2025.

Changes to the medical component of the VRH will be made to fast-track registration into brigades for Junior applicants and transferring members. Junior applicants and transferring members will no longer be required to declare medical conditions via VRH. Instead, Junior applicants can declare any medical conditions using other processes coordinated by the Youth Pathways team. For transferring members, any new or existing medical conditions can be declared as required by the CFA Regulations 2025 and SOP 2.17.

A pivotal project that links directly to this piece of work is the Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model (CVMM) project. The CVMM project reviewed CFA's current volunteer membership model and recommended several ways the organisation could better attract, support and retain a diverse range of volunteers for future organisational sustainability.

The first step was to understand what the current model actually looked like, the opportunities it provided our volunteers, where it excelled and, of course, where it needed improvement. To achieve this, the project team worked with volunteers and staff from all levels of the organisation and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria to understand their experiences, to record the various entry and transition points and review how our legislation and policies define the model.

This work identified that one area of improvement was in recruitment and induction. There is currently a one-size-fits-all recruitment criteria and process for both new and transferring members at CFA, regardless of their role.

Ultimately, CVMM will deliver recommendations that will strengthen the foundations of the membership model, unlock new volunteer opportunities for CFA members, and enhance key areas in need of development, such as recruitment and induction processes.

STORY GOLDIE PERGL AND DHRUV MEHRA



How CFA supports cultural burning

Cultural burning, sometimes referred to as Traditional Owner burning or Cultural Fire, is performed by First Nations communities as part of their cultural responsibilities and obligations to care for Country. It is the traditional ecological knowledge of Australia's first people.

The connection Traditional Owners have to Country and their role in fire and land management in Victoria is recognised and acknowledged by CFA and partner agencies. Many First Nations communities now have dedicated staff delivering cultural burning for cultural purposes including:

- caring for Country
- promoting biodiversity
- protecting cultural and natural assets
- fuel reduction
- regeneration of flora and fauna
- maintaining spiritual connection to land and Country.

It's guided by traditional ecological knowledge and is deeply rooted in Aboriginal lore and responsibilities. Acknowledgment of this knowledge and intellectual property rights is practised across Victoria.

Traditional Owners and Victorian land and fire management agencies are working together to reintroduce cultural burning across Victoria, allowing for healing and caring for Country, and working towards the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy.

CFA has supported many cultural burns across Victoria led by Traditional Owner groups to provide operational assistance, build capacity through training and funding, and promote cultural safety and inclusion.

For CFA this means working with three key principles:

- Cultural burning is a practice performed by Aboriginal people for cultural purposes.
- Cultural burning knowledge belongs to the Traditional knowledge holders.

- Cultural burning partnerships with CFA must be led by Aboriginal people.

Cultural burning is carried out on both private and public land with the involvement of the landowner and/or manager. Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) and CFA support Traditional Owners develop objectives and outcomes that assist in the planning and delivery of burns on public and private land. FFMVic and CFA tailor support to each Traditional Owner group's cultural fire aspirations and capacity.

CFA staff and volunteers also attend and support cultural burning workshops to deepen their understanding and respect for Aboriginal fire practices.

Retired CFA Vegetation Officer Ian Morrison has been involved with cultural burning for the past 10 years.

"Aboriginal cultural heritage is the property of the Traditional Owners, and CFA can help preserve and protect it for future generations," Ian said.

"Cultural burning has a large part to play in restoring and healing Country. By reintroducing their traditional burning practices, they will be able to improve the native fauna and flora and hand down their knowledge to the next generation.

"CFA can still learn from this practice while also helping them improve their burning practices."

CFA Cultural Heritage Adviser Michael Sherwen oversaw the burn for CFA at Ryans Lagoon.

"The wetland had been degraded with weeds and biomass accumulation over time, so the objective of the burn was to reduce that mass and give opportunities for native species to come through," Michael said. "It's been a great opportunity to work at that grassroots level to enable Traditional Owners apply fire to Country."

To read the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy use the QR code.



STORY DONNA SHERWEN

Empowering our women leaders

Ilona Goswell from Milawa Fire Brigade in District 23 reflects on what makes the Women in Leadership (WIL) Mentoring Program so powerful.

“From the very beginning we showed up with honesty, openness and a willingness to listen. Some of us were strangers, yet we connected like neighbours. Together, we formed a circle of like-minded women (and men) in leadership, united by shared values and a commitment to growth.

Since September 2024, every gathering has been a testament to truth, heart and wisdom. As each voice added to the collective, it reminded us that our feelings, challenges and triumphs are shared. Throughout the program, we created space to learn out loud – for each other and for ourselves. The conversations sparked by the fires we lit were deep, raw and thought-provoking. We were reminded, time and again, that we are not alone in our journeys.

The WIL Mentoring Program asks for nothing, yet invites everything. There was no pressure to perform, no judgement – only space. Space to release what’s been heavy, to share what’s been quietly waiting and to celebrate what’s been good. That’s why we kept showing up.

Through mentorship, I found my person – a remarkable woman and leader whose strength, skill and integrity continue to inspire me. Her guidance, her patience with my endless questions, and her unwavering commitment to community and justice were nothing short of admirable. Our time together confirmed two key insights: you don’t need to know everything – you just need to know where to find it, and keep nurturing the networks that help you grow.

I’ve come to realise that community, kindness and family are profound sources of growth and nourishment – guiding values I aspire to embody in leadership. I’ve learned that kindness is never wasted even when it goes unnoticed, unreturned or misunderstood. And simply showing up is enough.

Everything about the WIL Mentoring Program reflects what CFA strives to provide women: opportunity, growth, leadership and strength.”

If you have any questions about this 12-month program, or about the expression of interest process, please email orgdev@cfa.vic.gov.au.



The balance between studying and volunteering

CFA’s youngest first lieutenant Brodie Hanks is one of the many young people in CFA who has juggled volunteering with studying.

The now 18-year-old joined Jancourt Fire Brigade when he was 16. He signed up on his birthday because he couldn’t wait any longer.

“I was elected to the role of first lieutenant in July when I was 17 and I am working hard to pursue becoming a career firefighter,” Brodie said. “CFA has given me a place to explore something I am passionate about as well as giving me lifelong friends and skills.”

Brodie recently finished year 12 and for him volunteering alongside going to school was a complementary experience.

“CFA was an outlet for me to do something outside of school that wasn’t sport,” he said.

“I learned a lot of things through CFA that helped me at school like leadership skills, resilience and communication. These things aren’t necessarily taught in a classroom setting.”

Brodie said he takes on as much as he can in his brigade including strike teams – and he didn’t miss a single callout in his first year. But he believes volunteers can work this commitment around their lives and take on what suits.

“There have been a couple of times when I have got straight off the bus and put my turnout gear over my school uniform,” he said.

“If you know you have an exam coming up, you don’t have to go to the callouts in the middle of the night, but if you’re slugged down in study turning out can provide a really good brain break.

“Training fits pretty well around a school schedule and everyone is really supportive.”

Brodie said being part of CFA is a great opportunity for all young people. “Everyone gets around each other. It’s such a supportive environment, it looks great on a resume, and you have a lot of fun,” he said

STORY BRITTANY CARLSON





Ten years on from a devastating bushfire

It is hard to believe that this December will mark 10 years since the devastating bushfires that destroyed 116 houses in the coastal towns of Wye River and Separation Creek along the Great Ocean Road.

Walking through the town now you would not suspect such damage had occurred. There remains a strong bond between the community and the brigade, and the memory is not lost to most.

The destructive fire was ignited on 19 December 2015 by a lightning strike at Jamieson Creek, six kilometres from the township, before escalating significantly on Christmas Day, and ultimately burning more than 2,500 hectares of steep terrain.

Although it wiped out a significant part of the town, Wye River Fire Brigade captain at the time Roy Moriarty said they still marvel at the orderly evacuation and no loss of life. The evacuation process has been highly praised and was a result of the proactive community engagement and preparedness activities the brigade held in the lead-up.

Current Captain Andrew Hack (pictured above with Roy) said there had not been a major fire since 1962 and every year they thought it was only a matter of time before it was their turn.

"We had planned for a big fire to come through for a long time, so we felt confident with our plan," Andrew said.

"We do a bushfire forum every Melbourne Cup weekend for the community, and ironically just six weeks before that fire we went through a Phoenix computer modelling of what it would look like if one came through and took out the township.

"The presenters returned after the fire and said, 'Oh my God, what did we do!'"

Although the yearly events often attract the same crowd, Andrew said everyone who came to the scenario changed their fire plan based on what they saw – and that was to leave early.

"Our mantra within the brigade is not to tell people what to do, but to say if I was in your situation this is what I would do – because you want to empower people to make their own decisions," Andrew said.

Roy said brigade members felt assured the community was well informed following that session.

"Even though it was quite a good turnout, it meant that everybody who was there also talked to somebody else and spread the word further," Roy said.

Most people evacuated and heeded advice but, as always, a handful of people decided they were going to stay on the roof with their hose to try to save their property.

"It's the classic situation where they have made the decision to stay and defend but realise when the fire is right on top of them that they are not in the position to be able to do that physically or psychologically," Andrew said.

While there had already been fire activity for days, the advice to residents and travellers on 23 December 2015 was to stay informed as there was no current threat.

"Along with Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic), a lot of other brigades had come out each day and night to patrol that initial fire," Roy said.

"I came back to the station at midnight on Christmas Eve and I thought there was no way the fire was getting out, but I was shocked the next day when it jumped the lines."

Andrew said in the day's prior, everyone in and around town knew there was a fire on their doorstep that hadn't been contained and could potentially break out of containment lines.

"There had been a lot of communication from CFA, and we were forewarned that Christmas Day could be a significant day," Andrew said.

"It was quite a weird situation to be in, as we often have carols at the pub on Christmas Eve, and I'd been out on the fireground that day and returned to the pub in the evening where everyone was having a fantastic time.

"You didn't really want to dampen the vibe, but there was a sense that it could all turn upside down the following day – and ultimately it did.

"Fortunately, most people were prepared to evacuate because there had been a lot of meetings that week and Victoria Police had been door knocking warning people about the potential risk."

Roy set the town evacuation siren off at 11.30am on Christmas Day and traffic was guided out of town. Roy's family had departed the day before and were unable to get back in. He left his sprinklers on before heading to the firefight and was grateful to return to his house still standing. However, four brigade members were not so lucky.



FFMVic tried to hold the fire on the upper roads and protect the caravan parks, while Wye River Fire Brigade members focused on protecting the town's greatest assets.

"Our plan for recovery for our town is keeping the areas safe that people can use after big fires have gone through, such as major infrastructure that has toilets, showers and kitchen facilities with power and water," Roy said.

"We positioned one fire truck at the fire station, two at the surf club and another two at the pub."

As a 'one road in, one road out' town, access is difficult for travellers during an emergency – both for emergency services and residents. The brigade had planned to tackle the challenge on their own.

Roy recalled the firefighters remaining calm across the day. There was no panic; everyone just did their job.

"We had always planned on not getting any support from external sources because if a fire hit us instantly we figured we could be blocked off," Andrew said.

Andrew said the incredible amount of support from a number of agencies, together with Emergency Management Victoria (EMV), ensured the effective management of the fire response, and kept the community informed.

Eighteen aircraft were used on the fire and fire breaks were strengthened into January. The fire was not fully contained until 16 January 2016.

"We felt so fortunate that there wasn't any loss of life. However, it's physically devastating to see the loss of the infrastructure, people's homes and all the memories," Andrew said.

"Soon after the event, when it was deemed safe we organised buses to bring property owners back through the hills to see what was going on.

"We hoped it would make it easier for them to be able to start the process of healing.

"A lot of people were also really impacted by the way the forest was destroyed and the loss of habitat and wildlife."

The brigade received a great deal of support during the recovery process from CFA and EMV and said it was also a learning experience for future events.

"As a brigade, we were running on adrenaline and we stayed really tight as a group," Andrew said. "It was challenging because there were people who coped better than others."

Roy said he is now more emotional since those fires took place.

"The anniversary will no doubt bring back a lot of emotions for people and I'm sure I will find some things a bit hard and awkward on the day," Roy said. "But we know recovery is much deeper than that, and it's probably still going on for a lot of people to this day.

"Some homeowners who didn't lose their house were just as traumatised as those who had lost everything."

The Otways National Park will once again become a watch zone for the current fire season because of record rainfall deficits in the region.

"It is safer up on the hills now than what it was back then. We've got concrete retaining walls rather than timber ones and a lot of the dangerous trees are gone," Roy said.

"But you do start to notice complacency and growth coming back into houses 10 years on and they've potentially forgotten about it or may be new to town and haven't gone through it."

To mark the anniversary Wye River Fire Brigade held events on 19 and 20 December at the fire station with community members and their families.

CFA's modern tanker fleet

CFA brigades rely on a diverse fleet of tankers designed to meet the unique demands of Victoria's landscapes and communities. Our five core tanker types – ultra heavy, heavy, medium, light and ultralight – each bring their own strengths, capabilities and operational advantages.

On these two pages we take you through the fleet, showcasing the key features, roles and real world performance of the tankers that keep our people equipped and our communities protected.



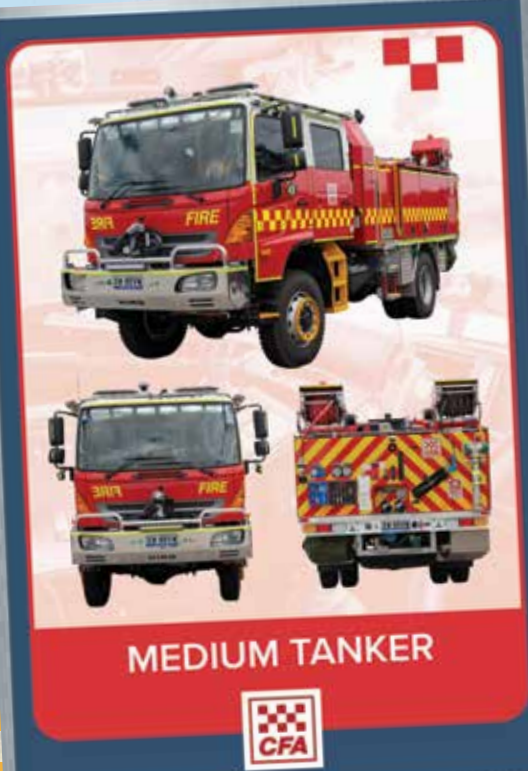
Ultra heavy tanker

- Hino FM2632 6x4 single cab
- Six-speed automatic transmission
- 10,000-litre water capacity
- 1,000 litres/min @ 700kPa main pump
- 600 litres/min @ 200kPa portable pump
- Electric primer
- Induction Class A foam system with 100-litre tank
- 9m pre-connected hard suction
- 20m 25mm electric rewind live reel
- 45m 19mm electric rewind live reel
- In-cab joystick controlled front monitor
- Crew protection
- Central tyre inflation system

Heavy tanker

- Iveco Eurocargo 4x4 crew cab
- 6 speed Allison automatic transmission with hydraulic retarder and high/low range transfer case
- 4,000-litre water capacity
- 1,200lpm @ 700kPa main pump
- Electric primer
- Direct injection Class A foam system with 50-litre tank
- 9m pre-connected hard suction
- 45m 19mm electric rewind live reel
- In-cab joystick controlled front monitor
- Crew protection



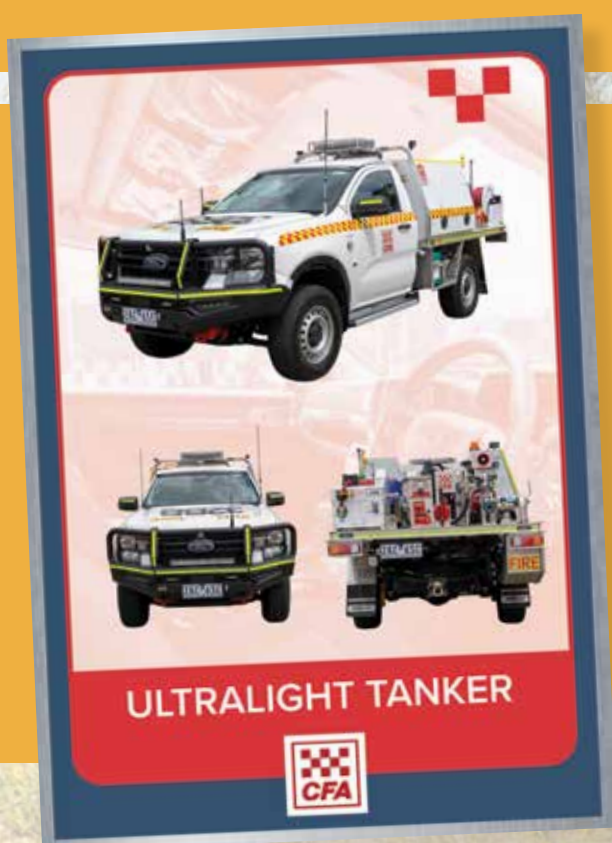
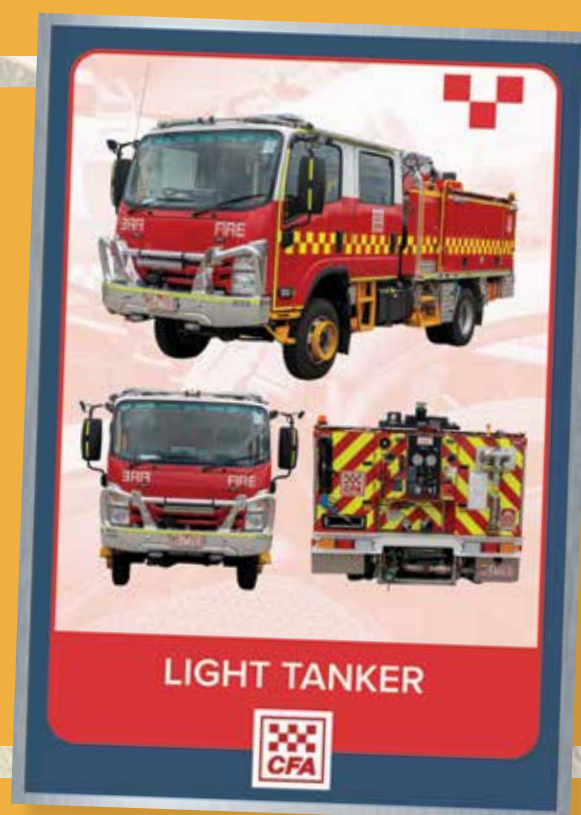


Medium tanker

- Hino 1528 GT500 4x4 crew cab
- 6 speed Allison automatic transmission and high/low range transfer case
- 2,500-litre water capacity
- 900lpm @ 700kPa main pump
- Electric primer
- 25lpm @ 10,000 kPa ultra high pressure pump
- Induction Class A foam system with 2 x 20-litre carboys
- 9m pre-connected hard suction
- 20m 25mm electric rewind live hose reel
- 60m 12mm electric rewind hose reel for UHPS
- In-cab joystick controlled front monitor
- Crew protection

Light tanker

- Isuzu NPS 4x4 crew cab
- Five-speed AMT with two-speed transfer case
- 2,000-litre water capacity
- 650lpm @ 700kPa main pump
- 20lpm @ 10,000kPa ultra high pressure pump
- Touch screen pump/lighting controls
- Induction Class A foam system with 20-litre carboy
- 8m pre-connected hard suction
- 60m electric rewind live reel on UHPS
- BA capability if required
- Crew protection



Ultralight tanker

- Ford Ranger 4x4 single cab
- 10-speed automatic transmission with high/low range transfer case
- 550-litre water capacity
- 500lpm @ 500kPa diesel powered pump
- Induction Class A foam system with 20-litre carboy
- 5.5m pre-connected hard suction
- 30m 19mm electric rewind live reel
- Lift-up locker doors with gas strut assist
- Increased locker volume for personal gear
- CAF-based crew protection deluge system



Create engaging social content

If you take a scroll on any social media platform you'll be exposed to clickbait driven by fear, rage and division, and poorly executed AI images. Content is fast, vast and over consumed, and with such a high saturation it's increasingly difficult to create a memorable experience for audiences when it comes to CFA's mission of protecting lives and property.

CFA's important messages about recruitment, who we are and fire safety will never be a one-size-fits-all for any page or audience, and we need to look at different ways to reach every audience group in our communities to cut through the noise.

It's incredible to see so many brigades adopting their own unique style when creating content and building a strong following.

Taradale Fire Brigade has its own fresh approach to creating content, with some content reaching more than 80,000 viewers. Brigade Community Safety Coordinator Jodie Parker shared the challenges and lessons learned of producing unique content with a creator style approach.

"We created a video at the end of last fire season about a tanker being moved and it got a huge viewership," Jodie said. "Pushing for that second appliance, we realised video was more effective for the message we wanted to convey to the local community.

"Since then we have seen an increase in our views and followers.

"We ran a mini campaign with bite-sized bits of information that was far easier to digest for short attention spans on social media."

But Jodie pointed out that video isn't always the answer.

"Everyone consumes media in a different way, so brigades should first think about the message they want to share and then use a combination of posts and reels to share that for a better reach."

Jodie said the biggest challenges were finding the time to create content and getting those people who are more cautious about social media to understand why it was needed.

"Content normally involves multiple people, and it means we need to have the people around and I need to be available to capture it," she said.

"Similarly, not everyone has the same relationship with social media, so it's important to ensure the people you want to feature in content are OK to be filmed and that they understand we need this as a platform to share our story as a brigade."

Jodie's top tips for making unique content

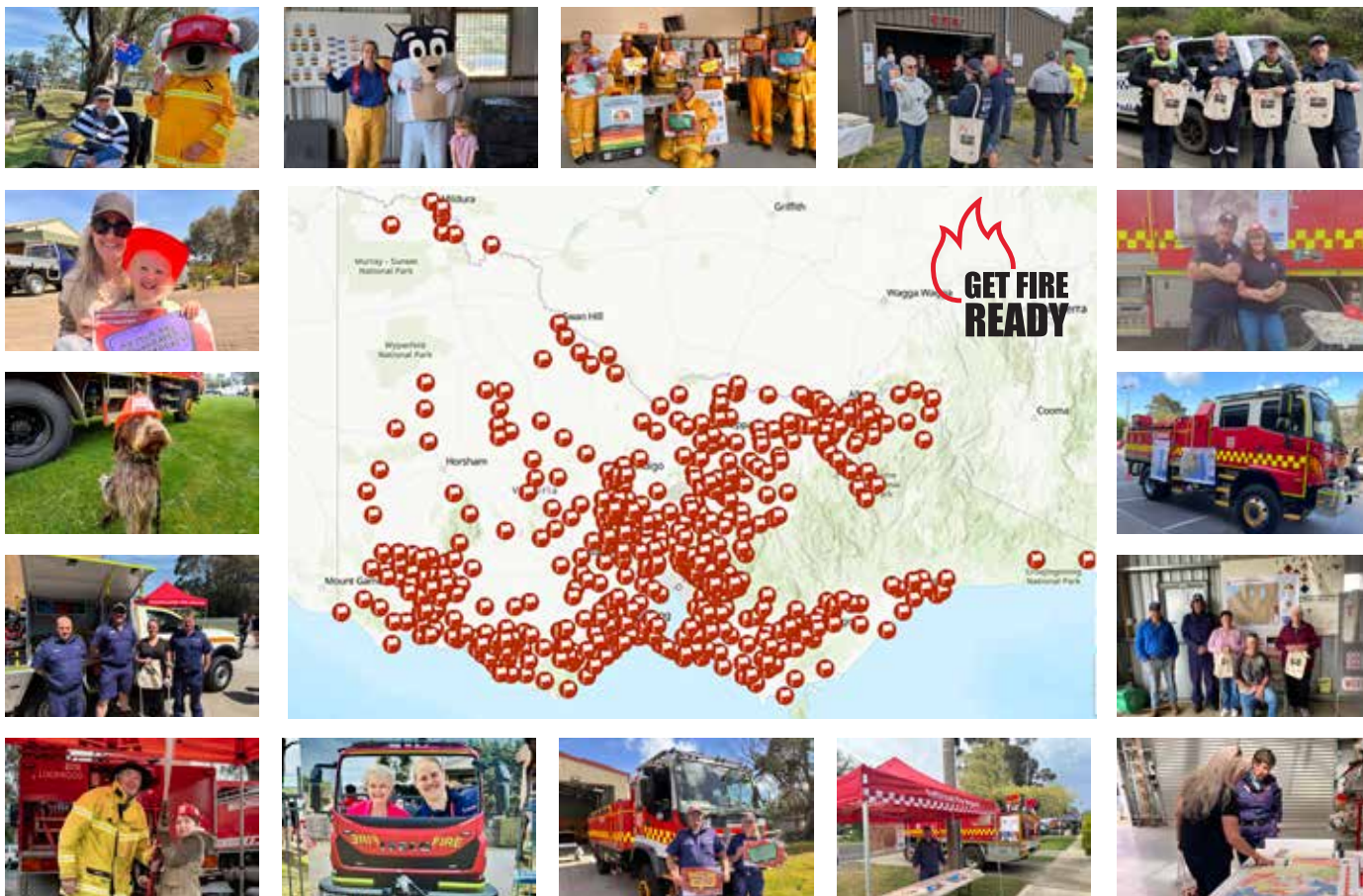
- Keep it simple, honest and authentic.
- Use opportunities such as events or training to show the reality of your brigade.
- Keep it short and uncomplicated – don't try to convey too much in one post.
- Get more people and their ideas involved in your page.
- If you're struggling to get people on board with content explain the reason you need it and show the results on performance.
- If you need someone to manage your social media, it should be someone comfortable with computers who enjoys doing social media. It can be time consuming, and they need to understand the platform and how to moderate it.

STORY COURTNEY WALKER



STATEWIDE SUCCESS IN COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

STORY BY GEORGINA HILL



CFA volunteers across the state have once again demonstrated the power of community connection, with the first Get Fire Ready initiative proving a major success. More than 500 brigades took part throughout October, hosting events that collectively engaged tens of thousands of Victorians about fire safety.

The release of the AFAC Seasonal Bushfire Outlook for spring made it clear that Victoria could be heading into a challenging fire season. Insights from previous fire events and community surveys reinforced this concern, showing that many residents were not as prepared as they needed to be. In response, CFA called on brigades to open their doors, step into community spaces and start meaningful conversations about the local fire risk.

Brigades were encouraged to host events of any size, from station open days and barbecues, to market stalls, park pop-ups or simply being available at the station for a few hours. The goal was simple: to give community members the opportunity to speak directly with their local brigade and learn what they need to do to get ready for the season ahead.

Brigades embraced the call wholeheartedly. From Kadnook in the west to Toongabbie in the east, volunteers created opportunities for locals to understand their local risk, prepare a fire plan, know where to get emergency information, ask questions, explore the trucks, collect resources, and learn more about what they can do to keep their family and property safe.

Statewide success

Chief Officer Jason Heffernan described the initiative as “an overwhelming success” and a “powerful month-long focus on community preparedness”. He visited several events across the state including Mooroolbark, Kinglake, Beveridge, Trentham, Wendouree and Stonehaven. He said the enthusiasm from both brigades and community members was unmistakable.

“The atmosphere was really positive. People were interested in how they could take practical action ahead of the Fire Danger Period,” Jason said. “The new local area maps were particularly popular. They gave residents the opportunity to pinpoint their properties and discuss their specific fire risks.”

Brigades reported strong attendance, valuable conversations and a renewed level of community interest in preparedness – clear signs that Victorians were keen to take early action ahead of summer.

Recruitment boost

An unexpected but welcome outcome of the initiative was a noticeable increase in volunteer recruitment. Many brigades reported new enquiries, with some signing up recruits on the spot.

Spring Hill Fire Brigade Captain Scott Selle said the event gave his small community, situated near the Wombat State Forest, an important opportunity to engage with firefighters face-to-face.



“We’ve never run an event like this before, so it was great to give locals a chance to ask questions about the season ahead,” Scott said.

The day had an added bonus, with local resident Jamie Clark signing up as a new recruit after stopping in to see the truck and tour the station.

At Malmsbury, Captain Linda Krive shared a similar experience.

“While we took part in Get Fire Ready to inform locals about their fire risk, we gained a new volunteer which was, of course, an added positive,” Linda said.



Celebrating every brigade

Whether your brigade hosted a large community day, staffed a small table at the local market, or simply opened the station for an hour or two, your contribution mattered. Every conversation, every question answered and every resource shared helped Victorians understand their fire risk and take steps to prepare.

Your efforts directly contributed to tens of thousands of Victorians being better informed and better prepared for the months ahead.

With the fire season fast approaching, the success of the Get Fire Ready initiative has set a strong foundation for ongoing preparedness engagement. Brigades continue to play a vital role in helping Victorians stay safe, not just during emergencies but long before they happen.

Thank you to every volunteer and support staff who planned, promoted, attended or supported a Get Fire Ready event. Your leadership, local knowledge and commitment to your community remain at the heart of CFA.



Photo competition winners

The Get Fire Ready photo competition celebrates CFA brigades across Victoria and showcases the energy, dedication and community spirit behind local preparedness events. The competition invited brigades to share moments that reflected meaningful community engagement – from conversations about fire safety to hands-on activities that help people prepare for the season ahead.

Congratulations to the competition winner Courtney Simpson from Nariel Valley brigade. Her winning photo (pictured

top) beautifully captures the sweeping Nariel Valley landscape and the deep connection the brigade has with its local community and environment. The photo embodies the essence of what Get Fire Ready is all about: community, place and preparedness.

Congratulations to runner-up Emma Larsen from Gapsted brigade. Her photo (pictured bottom) perfectly depicts the spirit of community engagement, with brigade members working alongside locals against the vibrant backdrop of the town's rural setting.



Mural to celebrate 100 years



Upper Beaconsfield Fire Brigade has served its community for 100 years. The brigade welcomed the community to the station in late October for a day of festivities, including the long-awaited unveiling of the new mural painted on the side of the station by artist Keira Slootjes.

When the brigade formed in 1925, there was no specialised firefighting equipment. Brigade members relied on horses to get to the fire and used gum boughs to beat out the flames.

In 1949, the brigade became one of the first to use radio communication to coordinate firefighting activities, and in the early 1980s it continued to make history by welcoming women members.

Captain Ian Pinney said it was fabulous to be able to celebrate the brigade's history and look back at everything they have achieved in the past 100 years.

"We have a long history and we have had many milestones and many challenges," Ian said. "It has been great to be able to celebrate everything we have done for the community over that time, and everything they have done for us."

One such challenge was when the town was completely destroyed by the 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires.

The Upper Beaconsfield blaze took the lives of 21 people, including 12 firefighters.

"It certainly was a challenging time, but we try to focus on the good where we can, while remembering those we lost," Ian said.

Now the brigade is stronger than ever with 54 members, of which 31 are firefighters. The brigade also has an Auxiliary that turns 50 this year.

Ian said the mural was a celebration of the brigade's history from the first truck – a 1920s T model Ford – all the way through to the most recent one.

"It is honouring our membership past and present, and is something to be really proud of," Ian said. "We are hoping people will visit the mural like they visit the silo art in the area, and it can become something really special for the whole town."

"We would like to thank everyone who helped us put this together; our sponsors and of course Keira. We are so grateful."

Alongside the mural unveiling, the brigade hosted a Get Fire Ready event, helping to inform the community about the upcoming fire season and what they can do to be best prepared.

"Despite everything that has changed in the past hundred years, we are still here to help the community. That will never change," Ian said.

STORY LUCY BISHOP



FIRE WISE KIDS AND TRUCK TIME LAUNCH

CFA has transformed its Fire Safe Kids program into two new, curriculum-aligned and developmentally appropriate programs, shaped through extensive consultation to better reflect today's classrooms, emerging fire risks and strengthened child-safety standards.

STORY BY SIOBHAN GREENE AND ELISSA JANS



CFA's previous children's education program, Fire Safe Kids (FSK), was developed in 2011. It consisted of a series of classroom lessons and a truck and fire hose activity. But many things have changed since 2011.

Classrooms look different, children interact with more digital media and have shorter attention spans, and they have more electronic devices in their homes. In addition, houses are consumed by fire more rapidly than they were 20 years ago, giving children less time to safely exit. Research shows that children need to be taught fire safety messaging appropriate to their age.

Over the past two years the Community Engagement team has redeveloped the children's program following feedback from members, educators and parents to better understand the challenges and successes of FSK. Then consultative groups were established with volunteers and regional and headquarters staff to provide additional valuable insights.

The result is two new programs and a suite of resources that better reflect our understanding of child development, improve our compliance with child safety standards, align with the latest curriculum and include prevention of emerging fire hazards.

Truck Time



The fire truck activity is now a standalone program called Truck Time, consisting of hands-on activities for children such as climbing into the cabin or on the back of the truck, seeing how fire hoses work, looking at equipment in the lockers and learning about simple fire safety messaging.

Truck Time is best delivered at community events, school fetes and fire station open days, but can also take place during school hours. However, it should be delivered on a separate day to Fire Wise Kids because research shows that when truck activities are delivered on the same day as classroom fire safety programs, children are distracted in the classroom and forget those important messages.

The training, available on the Learning Hub, consists of a 30-minute eLearning module called Delivering Truck Time CFADTTIND. The module explains the new Truck Time guidelines, CFA's child safety and OHS requirements, and ensures Truck Time is a safe, inclusive and enjoyable experience for everyone. All members delivering Truck Time will also need to complete the Child Safety – Playing your part CFAPYPIND module, and have a current Working with Children Check.

"The Truck Time eLearning module was useful for clarifying exactly what we can and can't do with the kids. It cleared up a lot of misinformation," North Warrandyte Brigade Community Safety Coordinator Martin Anderson said.

"The child safety risk assessment template and the truck safety procedures helped streamline the whole process and brigade members could be confident that we were providing the kids with a fun, educational and safe experience.

"More than 80 three and four-year-olds attended four different Truck Time sessions at our station and everyone really enjoyed the experience. Afterwards, the kids sent us lots of pictures that they had drawn of the visit to say thanks.

"The experience creates lifelong memories and connections with local brigades. Some of our current members still remember their trip to North Warrandyte's station when they were at kinder."



Fire Wise Kids



Fire Wise Kids is CFA's new in-classroom program delivered by CFA members. The five new 30 to 60-minute lessons cover the most important aspects of fire safety for children including smoke alarms, exiting safely, home hazards, calling Triple Zero, basic fire science, outdoor fire safety, and more. These lessons are tailored to age groups from kindergarten to Year 4.

The lessons have been developed with child development, learning styles, individual needs, curriculum and fun in mind. The lessons consist of a mixture of explaining with visual resources, questions and answers, and physical activities. These work together to ensure children learn and remain engaged throughout the lesson. Topics are separated to ensure they are age and developmentally appropriate.

Paul Webster, a Fire Wise presenter and captain of South East Region Community Safety Brigade, can see the benefit of the updated program.

"Giving kids an education about fires and emergencies is important as ever. With Fire Wise Kids and Truck Time we can separate the lesson and truck experience to achieve better education," Paul said. "Plus, we can educate kids in a fun way."

Fire Wise Kids lessons are reinforced by providing the children with a pack to take home that includes a Family Fun activity book, sticker sheet and certificate. These are only for use in the delivery of Fire Wise Kids.

Every Fire Wise Kids lesson requires the attendance of a Fire Wise Kids presenter and an assistant.

Members who are interested in becoming Fire Wise Kids presenters must:

1. First complete four eLearning modules on the Learning Hub:
 - Child Safety – Playing your part CFAPYPIND
 - Introduction to Community Engagement CFAICEAWE
 - Communicating for Community Engagement CFACSEIND
 - Introduction to Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) CFAIAFAWE.
2. Complete the eLearning package Presenting Fire Wise Kids CFAFWKIND on the Learning Hub, which consists of seven modules between 15 and 45 minutes each.

3. Attend a district-based observation day after completing the eLearning modules. The timing and availability of observation days are at the discretion of each district.

Members who are approved by their district can then deliver the program. Fire Wise Kids presenter satchels will be provided to brigades after they have at least one approved Fire Wise Kids presenter.



Brigade giveaways

Captain Koala has had a facelift and has also found some new friends to help spread the fire safety message. Captain Koala's new friends are Dingo, Possum, Wallaby, Cockatoo, Kookaburra and Echidna. The Community Engagement team has created new children's stickers and a fire safety activity book featuring the characters which are available for members to give away at community events, open days, markets and festivals. These can be ordered through your community engagement coordinator (CEC) or brigade administrative support officer.

More information about the programs can be found on the **Community Engagement Content Portal** using this QR code. If you have any queries about these programs or giveaways, contact your CEC or email education@cfa.vic.gov.au.





Merrijig brigade marks 100 years of service

In early November, Merrijig Fire Brigade gathered with members past and present and the wider community to celebrate a century of volunteer service. The brigade has come a long way since it was formed in 1925.

"Originally it was a small community firefighting group, formed and funded by local farmers," Merrijig Fire Brigade Captain Anthony Wakeling said.

"Over the years we've been involved in every aspect of community life through good and bad fire seasons.

"We are all so proud to have such a long history of volunteer service behind us."

Crowds gathered at Merrijig Fire Station to enjoy a vibrant community open day. The festivities began with a one-minute siren sound-off from the brigade tanker, followed by the raising of the brigade's mascot flag and the opening of the Captains' Avenue of Honour.

The celebrations also featured a vintage tanker display, children's activities, food vans, live music and interactive demonstrations.

The event was also used to launch a brigade history booklet, written by John McCombe, which captures stories from the past 100 years.

"It was so great to see our community and brigade come together to celebrate this really important milestone," Anthony said.

John Findlay, member of the organising subcommittee, reflected on the success of the tanker display.

"The display of CFA trucks, alongside presentations from local emergency services, drew huge interest from the public," John said.

"Many visitors commented about how special it was to see so many vehicles from across the decades, especially the beautifully restored vintage tankers, some dating back to the 1950s.

Organiser of the open day activities and the opening ceremony Marta Wakeling said emotions were running high as the wind sent the CFA flag, the brigade flag featuring an eagle, and the Australian flag flying together.

"As the anthem ended, a gentle gust of wind caught all the flags and it felt as though the eagle had taken its first flight, carried by the spirit of all who have stood on this land, fought fires and served our community before us," Marta said.

The celebrations continued into the evening with a reunion dinner where service awards were presented to members for between five and 60 years of service.

"The day wouldn't have been possible without the tireless work of our small but dedicated subcommittee," Anthony said. "We can't thank them enough for their time, energy and talent."

Anthony said the brigade had a proud past and a promising future.

"Merrijig brigade has always been about people helping people," he said. "We've achieved a lot in 100 years and I'm sure the brigade will be here celebrating again in another 100."

STORY BRITTANY CARLSON



Natte Yallock celebrates

Natte Yallock Fire Brigade members celebrated the official opening of their new station in October. Natte Yallock Captain Ronald Peacock said the brigade is proud to call this new station home.

"It's incredible to see how far we've come from what was a small tin shed, to now operating out of a modern facility," Ronald said. "We are now even better equipped to respond and protect our community when they need us most."

"For our brigade members, it means we can focus more on the job and less on juggling space or gear. It might seem small, but it makes a big difference when things get busy".

The station features a motor room with two reverse in bays fitted with powered roller doors, a turnout room, laundry facilities, change room areas, a workshop and an office space.

"We're also building for the future, and that means creating a space where everyone feels welcomed and supported," Ronald said.



"The addition of gender-neutral toilets and showers are a big step forward in encouraging more women into volunteer roles too. We hope this will play a positive role in attracting a diverse range of members to our brigade."

A new ultra heavy tanker was also a welcome addition to the brigade, which will allow them to better navigate remote, rural areas with open grasslands because of its increased water carrying capacity.

New station for Golden Square

Golden Square Fire Brigade, which formed in 1881, has been responding from its first station location for the past 114 years. But in October 2025, brigade volunteers gathered to celebrate the much-anticipated official opening of their new fire station.

The new station will enhance the brigade's response capability in an area that is seeing an increase in structural risk because of residential development and expansion in schools, health services and commercial and industrial areas.

Golden Square Fire Brigade Captain Bryan Greenwood said the new facility marked an exciting new chapter for the brigade.

"It gives us a lot more room compared to the older station," Bryan said. "It's not only nice to have, but it's a lot safer for our volunteers."

"The training area is a huge positive because it means we no longer have to worry about finding somewhere off-site to train our members."

"It also gives us the capacity to start recruiting again, which allows us to plan for the future and be adaptable to the changing community."

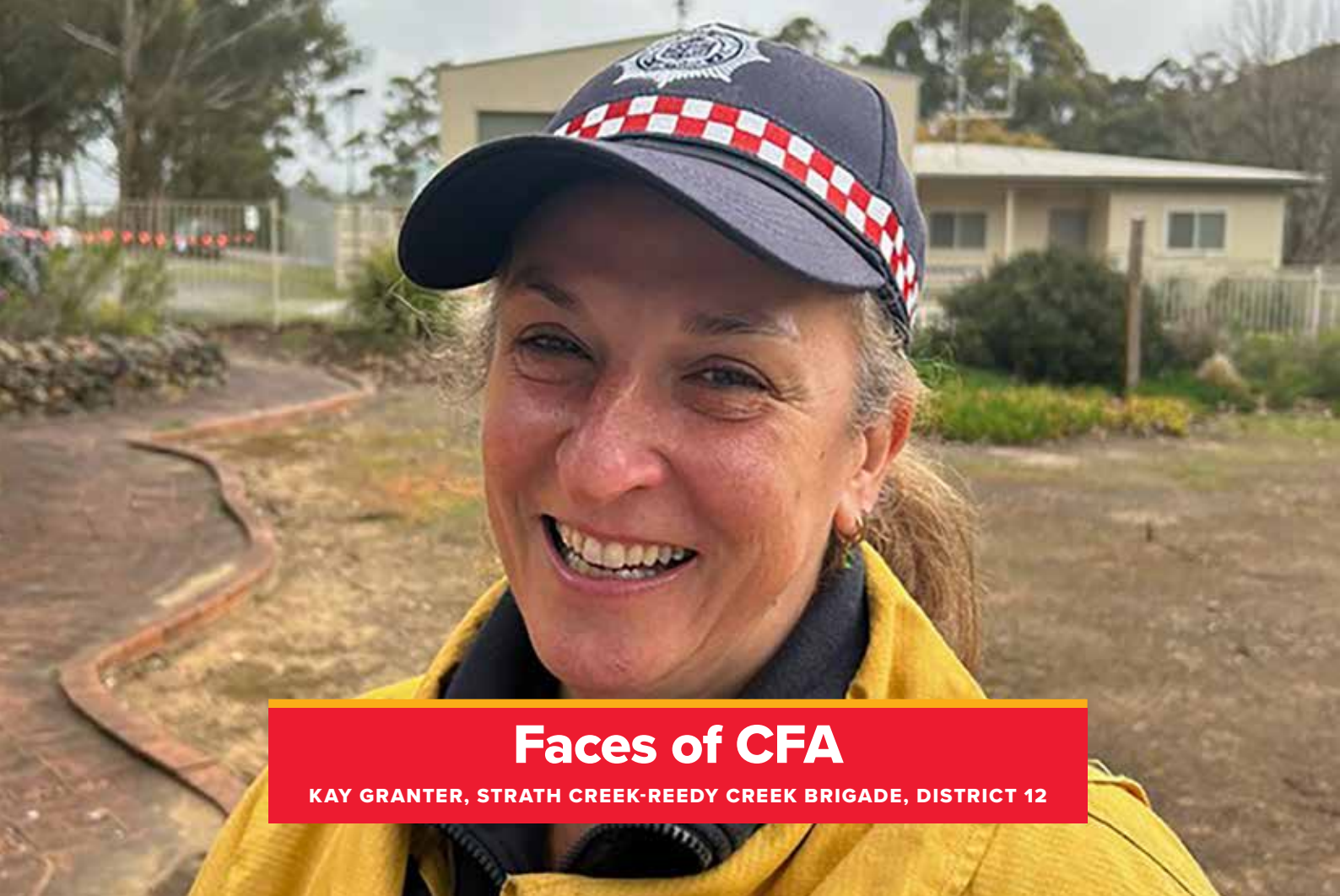
The new station includes a four-bay motor room, a turnout room and change facilities for both men and women. There's also a workshop, large external shed, a laundry and drying room, and a hose drying tower.

District 2 Assistant Chief Fire Officer Archie Conroy said he was glad to see Golden Square receive the upgraded facilities they needed to continue to provide the best service.

"It's wonderful to see them in a new station that will future-proof their ability to contribute their essential service to the community."

Below: Chief Officer Jason Heffernan, Golden Square Captain Bryan Greenwood, The Hon Maree Edwards MP, CFA Board Member Peter Shaw AFSM





Faces of CFA

KAY GRANTER, STRATH CREEK-REEDY CREEK BRIGADE, DISTRICT 12

What is your CFA role?

I'm currently 2nd lieutenant and community safety coordinator.

Why did you join?

After living in the Dandenong Ranges as a child, the fear of bushfires was always instilled in us and always on our minds. Both my brothers were CFA members for Sassafra-Ferny Creek, The Basin and Glenburn brigades. I assisted at times to help wash the trucks.

After moving to Strath Creek my young family endured the terrible 2009 Black Saturday bushfires that devastated our small town.

I thought it was time to get out there and have a go to help my community.

What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

There have been many incidents, such as car accidents, that I think about. But the bushfire in Flowerdale in 2023 had the most impact on me because we were one of the first to arrive on scene. The fire was going really quickly with strong winds. It was large, widespread and heading up the surrounding hills out of reach of most vehicles. Seeing multiple aerial support come in quickly was a great relief, as was the assistance of surrounding brigades who brought their experience and knowledge.

Who have been your mentors in CFA?

So many CFA members from District 12 have given me support in some way or another throughout the years. However, my amazing Captain Eric Smith is always there for me and always has the time of day to assist or chat.

Our District Instructor Tony Scicluna AFSM has an absolute wealth of knowledge and is a great guy to work with.

So much knowledge is shared, which is fantastic. I'm always learning.

What have been the highlights of your time in CFA?

I think everything we do as a member is a highlight for me. After spending many years as a mum of three (all grown up now) I've been very fortunate to upskill my everyday life with new skills such as BA, medium rigid driving licence, community safety coordinator, chainsaw use and crew leadership skills. I really enjoy it and I'm a very proud CFA member. It gives me a sense of achievement – something I never thought I could do.

I like to empower community members to learn more and educate themselves on how to deal with emergency situations.

I now have two grown-up kids in the process of joining our brigade and I have a very supportive hubby. Dinners and washing machines are no longer a priority for me!

How do you motivate your brigade members?

I try to stay positive, see the good in things and have a laugh. I encourage others to get involved and have a go at something they ordinarily wouldn't do. CFA is great at supporting new courses and allowing members to explore different avenues for varied levels of confidence in people.

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

I like to think that we are very lucky to be involved as CFA members. It's a great organisation that accepts people from all walks of life. We are a diverse group and we can all learn from each other.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like to spend time in the garden and my new greenhouse. I also enjoy competitive swimming, horse riding and the occasional hunt for foxes and rabbits with my son.

Most of all, I love to spend time at home on the farm watching the view. As I live in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, it's never boring.

What inclusion means to CFA members

In recent years CFA has been doing a lot of work to strengthen our organisational culture. CFA is passionately committed to fostering an environment where every individual feels valued, respected and fully supported, truly embodying a culture of inclusion. We asked a range of CFA members to tell us in their own words what inclusion means to them.

“Diversity and inclusion is about providing a safe and welcoming environment for everyone. Where people know and feel they belong, that they are appreciated, valued, supported, celebrated and understood. Encouraging a culture where everybody has the same opportunities to flourish.”

LISA PETERS, SOUTH-EAST REGION

“Diversity and Inclusion isn’t about ticking boxes. It’s about creating spaces where every door is open, every voice is heard and no one gets left behind. It’s where we recognise everyone’s potential to build a truly inclusive foundation, but it has to be something we consciously commit to daily, not just in our words but through action.”

JODIE CLARK, TALENT ACQUISITION TEAM

“Diversity to me is about a wide range of people. Everybody has different qualities and ideas and ways of looking at issues. One person might look at solving a problem one way, and someone else might look at the same problem a different way. For example, with LGBTQIA+ conversations, some people might look at the minority angle and others look at it from the majority angle. Programs in the city might be well supported, whereas the resources are different in rural areas.”

ROSS SIMPSON, DUNKELD FIRE BRIGADE

“As a gay man, I find diversity and inclusion incredibly important in providing an environment where people can live authentically, without fear or judgment. Growing up, I certainly understood how it can feel isolating when you’re seen as different to others, and I believe everyone deserves to feel seen, heard and valued for who they truly are. Embracing diversity means recognising the beauty in our differences, while inclusion ensures that everyone has a seat at the table – not just in theory but in practice. For me, it’s not just about representation but also about respect, dignity and the freedom for everyone to thrive.”

DARRYN PASPA, MANAGER PROCUREMENT

“Diversity and inclusion is not only about bringing together different groups; it’s about embracing those perspectives and ensuring all contributions are valued in a respectful, supportive and non-judgemental setting. Furthermore, this mindset needs to be embedded within the fabric of an organisation. I relate it to the well-crafted quote: ‘Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.’

**SALLY BOND,
PROJECT TEAM**



“A diverse and inclusive CFA is a safe and welcoming CFA for everyone. A place where people can serve their community under a common agreement of how we will work together to achieve our mission. Individually, we are from all walks of life and collectively we are CFA.”

HAMISH FLETCHER, NORTH-EAST REGION





Stawell ready to showcase the Champs

The CFA/VFBV State Firefighter Championships are returning to Stawell in March 2026, bringing CFA's biggest annual event back to the Northern Grampians for the first time in two decades.

After five fantastic years in Mooroopna, the move has already created a buzz around town as preparations build for one of the most anticipated weekends on the CFA calendar.

Stawell Fire Brigade captain and local Championships Committee Chair Mal Nicholson said seeing the event come home carries real significance.

"It's been a long time since the Championships were held this side of the state, so to bring them back to Stawell means a lot," Mal said. "There's a real sense of pride in being able to host it at North Park again."

Mal and his team are looking to put their own stamp on the event.

"The 2026 Championships will mark the first time the urban and rural events run side-by-side at the same venue," Mal said.

"Traditionally they've been held in different places and run separately. We're trying to break that divide a bit. We're all CFA at the end of the day – one competition, one organisation and everyone's welcome."

The move back to the region is expected to draw fresh competition from across the west and south-west.

"A lot of brigades out this way haven't run for a while," Mal said. "This is a good opportunity to dust the cobwebs off and have a go."

With the last iteration of the Championships in Stawell held back in 2006, it means many of the brigade's younger members won't have any memory of the event ever being in town.

"For our older members it'll feel like a homecoming," Mal said.

"For the younger ones, it'll be the first time they get to see what a big weekend looks like in their own backyard.

"That goes for the wider region too. We're really hoping to see some new teams or old teams coming back," Mal said.

"There's nothing like seeing the lanes full and that's exactly what we're hoping to see."

The timing also lands at an important moment for western Victoria. The region has endured its share of tough fire seasons in recent years and the Championships are set to provide a significant boost for the broader community.

Northern Grampians Shire Mayor Karen Hyslop said council didn't hesitate when CFA approached them about hosting.

"Stawell has a proud history of hosting major CFA events, having previously welcomed the State Championships in 1995 [pictured opposite], 2000 and 2006," Mayor Hyslop said.

"When CFA approached council to host the 2026 and 2027 events, it was a natural fit.

"Hosting the event provides an opportunity to celebrate our community's spirit, teamwork and resilience, especially following recent bushfires.

"It also aligns directly with our Northern Grampians Event Strategy, which focuses on high-impact events that bring economic and social benefits to the region."

Above: Stawell brigade Captain Mal Nicholson, Northern Grampians Shire Mayor Karen Hyslop and Stawell brigade Firefighter Jai Smith



Mayor Hyslop said the Championships also offer an important morale boost.

"It brings people together and creates a really positive energy around town," she said. "It shows what Stawell can achieve when we come together as a community."

Those benefits are expected to be significant, with a projected \$2 million injection into the local economy over the two weekends.

"We're anticipating around 900 competitors and more than 4,000 visitors," Mayor Hyslop said.

"Local clubs, service groups and suppliers will also benefit through event operations and logistics. Beyond the immediate return, it's an opportunity to showcase Stawell and the Grampians' capability, strengthening our reputation for hosting major sporting and community events."

For local businesses, the Championships represent a meaningful influx of people at a time when every visitor counts.

Stawell retailer Adrienne, who runs a small business on the town's main street, said weekends like this provide real momentum.

"This kind of weekend brings real benefits straight into the pockets of local businesses," she said.

"When visitors grab a coffee, browse the shops or book a few nights' accommodation, that money stays in town, it keeps people employed and keeps our small operators moving."

Mayor Hyslop hopes visitors will be inspired to return to the region.

"We welcome the opportunity to see people return after experiencing what our region has to offer," she said.

"Stawell sits at the gateway to the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park, and we know visitors can't fit everything into a single weekend, so we hope they come back."

Mal hopes the event will draw not just CFA families and competitors, but locals and visitors keen to see something different.

"This isn't something you get to witness every day," Mal said.

"It's fast, it's skilled, it's full of tradition and it's a great chance for people to come and cheer on volunteers from right across Victoria."

Teams can register for the 2026 CFA/VFBV State Championships through their associations or by visiting vfbv.com.au.

STORY JAMES TAYLOR



Fellowship focuses on bushfire risk



PHOTO: EDDY SUMMERS

New tools and knowledge to help Victoria adapt its bushfire risk strategies in a changing climate are at the centre of bushfire scientist Dr Hamish Clarke's four-year Australian Research Council (ARC) Mid-Career Industry Fellowship.

Natural Hazards Research Australia (the Centre) researcher Dr Hamish Clarke's research project, titled 'Decision support for climate-adapted bushfire risk mitigation', is a close collaboration with the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, CFA and the Centre.

Hamish spends time on-site each week with partners throughout the fellowship.

"This is a really exciting opportunity to address knowledge gaps in fire management effectiveness and climate change and build stronger links between

research and practice," Hamish said.

"We'll be looking carefully at existing and upcoming projects, processes, decisions and roles to figure out where we can make a difference.

"Sometimes this will be through new research, sometimes it might be about making better use of existing research, other times it could be about building better connections or processes to support ongoing translation and two-way communication."

Hamish will develop a prescribed burn prioritisation tool to optimise burn outcomes across multiple objectives.

"The prioritisation tool needs to be flexible and interactive, supporting decisions about how to spread burns across the landscape and how to optimise placement of the next fuel

treatment considering difficulty, window availability and likely encounter rates," Hamish said.

Other work planned for the first year includes a knowledge review of fire management effectiveness across fuel management, suppression and community engagement, starting with strategic fuel breaks, and an analysis of current and future weather windows for prescribed burning.

"Our focus is Victoria but there are obvious connections with other states and territories, as well as other hazards. We'd love to build these up over the project."

For more information contact hamish.clarke@unimelb.edu.au.

**STORY LINA WOOD,
NATURAL HAZARDS RESEARCH AUSTRALIA**

New collaboration with Canada

The escalating global outlook about fire seasons highlights the urgent need for unprecedented international collaborative learning and knowledge-sharing in bushfire management.

In October, Natural Hazards Research Australia and Wildfire Resilience Consortium of Canada (WRCC) announced a landmark partnership to support bushfire research, resilience and knowledge sharing.

The agreement creates a formal pathway to share the knowledge of each country to address the growing risks of natural hazards and bushfires through science, collaboration and community engagement. Both countries will benefit from evidence-based tools and strategies that enhance all-hazards preparedness, response and recovery capability.

Natural Hazards Research Australia CEO Andrew Gissing and WRCC

Executive Director Garnet Mierau attended the signing at Thompson Rivers University, British Columbia.

"Advancing our knowledge around natural hazards risk of bushfire relies on local and global partnerships. Combined partnership efforts ensure we are doing the utmost to enhance public safety, resilience and sustainability locally and globally," Andrew Gissing said.

"This historic collaboration supports cooperation across mutual areas of interest and global relevance in wildfire resilience, scientific research and capacity building in Australia and Canada," Garnet Mierau said.

Critical to both organisations is their focus on fostering greater collaboration between researchers, government agencies

and the emergency management sector to ensure new knowledge supports decision-making.

The collaboration will focus on aligned objectives to:

- strengthen community resilience to natural hazards
- promote evidence-based decision-making
- foster collaboration across government, academia, Indigenous communities and industry
- address the increasing frequency and severity of climate-driven disasters.

Future collaboration may include transnational bushfire resilience frameworks, best practices in Indigenous fire management and climate adaptation research and disaster simulation technologies.

**STORY AINSLEY BURGESS,
NATURAL HAZARDS RESEARCH AUSTRALIA**



Chief Officer's message for summer

As we are now in the 2025-26 high-risk weather season, our focus is clear: we will collectively protect lives and property. Every action we take must reflect our commitment to the Chief Officer's

Command Intent, State Emergency Management Priorities and CFA values.

We will achieve this by following our Command Intent guiding principles:

Safety first: Everyone goes home.

Situation reports: Accurate and regular updates.

Clear and transparent intent: No ambiguity in direction or expectations.

Community focus: Protect life and property. Our actions aim to keep communities safe and informed.

Leadership: Be consistent and calm; build effective teams.

Continuous improvement: Debrief and identify opportunities for improvement.

Celebrate wins: Recognise achievements and maintain morale.

We are trusted to act decisively, adapt to changing conditions and maintain control, even when plans shift or communication breaks down. By staying aligned with these principles, we ensure CFA remains a trusted, respected and effective emergency service. Our actions must reflect CFA's core values of safety, teamwork, adaptability, integrity and respect.

Parts of the state are already experiencing elevated risk, and our brigades are responding to fires and escaped burn-offs, with risks escalating on days with higher temperatures and increased wind speeds. It's likely we will see a significant increase in operational activity across many regions. To ensure firefighter safety remains a key priority, my expectations are unchanged and are as follows:

- Everyone comes home, every time, safely.
- All members responding this season must have currency in:
 - Minimum Skills/General Firefighter
 - annual entrapment drill as per SOP 9.32
 - tree hazard awareness training.

Based on our predictive intelligence, many parts of the state may experience a significant number of high-risk weather days. Fatigue management and wellbeing remain a focus; look after yourself, your families and your teams.

This edition of the Quarterly Operational Update includes the following key insights from recent operational updates and case studies, which are essential for all brigades to review and apply this season.

Early response is critical

The first 15 minutes of a grass or scrub fire response can shape the entire incident. Gathering information, establishing control and making SMART decisions early improves the chance of containment and safety.

Private equipment integration

Private firefighting units such as farm utes and tractors can be valuable assets but only when safely integrated and supervised by CFA crews. Clear briefings, appropriate tasking, safety checks and communication are essential.

The power of situation reports (sitreps)

Accurate and timely sitreps help everyone – from fireground crews to state-level officers – make informed decisions, allocate resources and issue public warnings. They are foundational to successful operations.

Lessons from real incidents

Case studies from Glenbrae and Moorooduc fires highlight what worked well (early escalation, sectorisation and water supply management), and lessons identified included the implementation of appropriate communication channels and fatigue management. These lessons help brigades prepare for similar high-risk scenarios.

Safety, command and control

Emphasis is placed on the early appointment of safety officers and the establishment of clear command and control structures. These elements are crucial for ensuring crew safety and achieving operational success.

Thank you for all that you do in service of your community and CFA.

Use this QR code to access the Quarterly Operational Update, along with a number of other topics that may be of interest.



First on scene series – responding to a going grassfire



Responding to grass and scrub fires is often seen as CFA's bread and butter. However, the early stages of responding to a fast-moving fire of this nature can be extremely challenging. This edition of the First on scene series discusses the steps you can take within the first 15 minutes of arriving on scene at a going grass and scrub fire.

Picture this... It's midday on a Sunday and your brigade is paged for a grass and scrub fire in a semi-rural area. The area is primarily lifestyle farming properties across 10 hectares, with scattered pockets of bush and trees, and scrub on roadsides. The temperature is in the low 30s with a moderate to high wind from the north (about 25km per hour). Grasslands are 90 per cent cured and the FBI is 47. It's not a Total Fire Ban day for your area, and your district is not at an elevated readiness level.

Information gathering

Make the most of the time while en route to the fire to gather as much information as possible.

- First, use your local knowledge and what you already know about the area where the fire has been reported. What are the fuel types there? What are the fuel loads? Are there any existing water supplies in that area?
- You should also be considering the weather. Note the wind speed and direction and identify whether the conditions are likely to remain as they are or if changes are expected. This will help build an understanding of how the fire may behave, and assist you with considering appropriate control point locations.
- Third, consider the resourcing. With what you already know of the situation, are the resources that are currently responding sufficient? Are pre-determined dispatch aircraft responding or is a separate request required? Is there an appropriate command vehicle en route?

Considering all these points while en route will help you to determine priorities when on scene, and will give you an appreciation for the incident at hand.

Arriving on scene and establishing control

Often what happens in the first 10 minutes of a brigade arriving at a fire can determine how the incident runs for the next several hours. The initial steps you take on arrival and how you establish control are essential to your success over the coming hours.

On arrival, you identify that the fire is moving quickly across the property, and has already spread to a pocket of bush and trees. The fire is about 100 metres x 100 metres. There is one house and an outbuilding that may be exposed and the fire is spotting ahead.

The crew leader on the first truck on scene should establish control. The control point should be situated in a strategic location where the fire is visible but not likely to impact the location. The name of the control point should be broadcast to Firecom, shortly followed by an initial wordback. In districts where the fireground channel is not automatically allocated by Firecom, it's best to also broadcast the fireground channel that will be initially used.

An incident controller tabard should be worn to ensure easy identification by arriving crews.

If the best access point to the fire is not easy to find, consider placing a CFA-related item at the best access point to assist arriving trucks.

Quickly establish with the property owner (if present) what has occurred and take charge of any firefighting efforts that may already be underway by the property owner or private firefighting units.

Conducting a size-up

Depending on the size of the fire, you may conduct the size-up by driving around the entire perimeter of the fire. However, in situations where time is of the essence you may instead conduct it from a fixed location where the fire is visible.

Facts: Establishing the facts will build on the information you began gathering en route. You should consider the time of day, current weather conditions, fuel load, curing and access to the fire. Keep in mind that fires that start before the peak fire danger index of the day are likely to become harder to control and the conditions may deteriorate.

Probabilities: Consider the probabilities, or in other words, what may develop or eventuate. This includes the threat to life and property, the potential for the fire to spread, the potential for fire behaviour to change and whether there are breaks in the fuel load that may assist in stopping the fire.

Your situation: Assess your own situation, particularly with consideration to resourcing that is available to deal with the facts and probabilities of the incident.

- What firefighting vehicles are currently on scene and en route?
- Are there command vehicles present to assist with incident control?
- Is there any other firefighting equipment available?
- What type of aircraft is available and what would the travel time to the fire be?
- How many firefighters are present?
- What is their skill set?

Decision: Having surveyed the facts, probabilities and your situation, a decision about the desired outcome for the incident needs to be made and framed in the form of a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) objective.

At grass and scrub fires, one of the incident controller's key objectives should be to stop the forward spread of the fire. The objective should be very succinct and follow the SMART acronym. It may be similar to "contain the forward spread of the fire before it reaches the road and black out the perimeter to a depth of 10 metres by 2pm".

Plan: The plan will outline how the objective will be achieved and address priority actions identified through your size-up. Priority actions are informed by the State Emergency Management Priorities.

The plan will detail the strategies and tactics to be applied and task equipment and resources to be employed to achieve the objective. The plan also ensures that mitigation strategies are put in place for any hazards. For example, elements that may be included in the plan are a direct attack on the head fire using tankers, deploying the next arriving truck for asset protection of the structures, and issuing an Advice Message to the community advising of fire in the area and any road closures.

If there is no imminent risk to life, the first arriving trucks should be tasked to do this with a concentrated, hard-hitting attack.

Situation reports

Situation reports or 'sitreps' are a vital way to create a word picture of what is happening at the scene, what may happen and the firefighting actions being undertaken. At a grass or scrub fire this will include:

- the current size of the fire
- the forward rate of spread (FROS)
- the fuel type (standing crop, stubble, bushland/forest, pasture or mixed grass and scrub)
- what is in the path of the fire?
- your objective and plan to stop the fire
- the likelihood of success.

Further sitreps may include the water supply location, refilling strategy and the progress on bringing the fire under control.

Terminology such as going, contained, controlled and safe, can be useful at this point to explain accurately what is happening with the fire's perimeter or one of its flanks. These terms are explained below.

Incident status	Definition
Going	Fire expanding in a certain direction or directions
Contained	The spread of the fire is halted
Controlled	The complete perimeter of a fire is secured and no breakaway is expected
Safe	No further suppression action or patrols are necessary

After 15 minutes

The steps outlined above give the initial incident controller the best chance of achieving success. However, there will be times when factors are not conducive to success and first attack fails. In these incidents the incident controller must rapidly reevaluate the objective and the strategies and tactics and request further resources. Preparations will need to be made to expand the incident management team and the communications plan.



The importance of sitreps



The situation report is one of the most important methods of transmitting information about a fire or incident. It's commonly referred to as a 'sitrep'. A situation report can be transmitted verbally by radio or in a written format for more complex or larger incidents.

The purpose of the sitrep is to provide information about an incident to give a sound mental picture to those who are not in attendance at the incident. The information will support decision-making processes for those who aren't on scene. This decision-making may be critical to obtain the appropriate resourcing, publishing warnings and advice and providing essential information to support other functions to manage the incident.

The timeliness of information from the fireground is critical. An initial sitrep will support the rapid escalation of resources, while ongoing regular sitreps will give the recipients an understanding of the development or suppression success on the fireground. The audience for your sitrep is broad and may use information in many ways.

Responding brigades, aircraft and other resources will use your sitreps to gain the correct address, the best access and an understanding of the control and communication arrangements. They may also obtain further tactical information to understand possible tasking needs when arriving on scene.

Your group duty officers and district duty officer (DDO) or state duty officers (SDO) will rely on fireground sitreps to understand the likelihood of success of the initial response and the need for additional resources or fireground support. The DDO and SDO will use your initial sitreps to consider the need for public warnings and advice messaging, mapping of the fire, fire predictions, activation of aircraft, heavy plant, welfare needs and the likelihood of control being transferred to an incident management team.

Incident management teams in preparedness will be monitoring any developing fires and the sitrep will assist their pre-planning in case the fire management is transferred into their centre. This information is critical

to ensure a smooth transfer of control with a clear understanding of the situation on the fireground.

The public warnings and advice team need accurate information about a fire's location, type, size, direction of spread, and time and distance to impacting properties to ensure timely and accurate warnings to the public.

Fire spread predictions are important to understand the potential of a fire. This assists with prioritising resourcing, and better warnings and advice to the community, and provides an understanding of fire behaviour and intensity. The fire behaviour analyst relies on an accurate point of origin, current fire behaviour and on-site weather observations from your sitreps to validate their computer models.

Required information in a sitrep

- The exact location or address of the fire or incident and the most appropriate access for responding vehicles.
- The type and size of incident that you are attending.
- The direction of travel of a fire.
- Likelihood of first attack success.
- Whether there are any assets under threat, including time or distance until fire reaches those assets.
- Whether an advice or warning message is required.
- Any changes in the response. Any escalation or reduction of attending resources.
- Whether any people are involved, including injuries, gender, age and condition.
- Summary of the current weather conditions.
- Provide the incident management structure including fireground channels.
- Hazards for responding crews.

Remember, the sitrep is for those people who aren't at your fire, yet they are undertaking actions to support your objective. Providing a timely and accurate sitrep is one of the foundations to the success of your operation.

Private equipment in firefighting

As Victoria prepares for another fire season, CFA acknowledges the increasing role of private firefighting equipment in supporting bushfire response. From utes and tractors to heavy machinery and side-by-side vehicles, private units have proven valuable in early intervention, blacking out and post-fire operations.

Their effectiveness directly relies on safe integration, and management and supervision by CFA operational members responsible for ensuring all equipment on the fireground contributes to incident safety and supports coordination and overall operational success.

Managing private equipment

CFA operational members play a critical role in managing the presence and use of private equipment during incidents. An incident controller's (IC) responsibilities include:

- assessing the suitability and safety of private units before they are engaged in firefighting tasks. In some districts these inspections and checks may have occurred prior to the season
- ensuring private operators are briefed and understand the incident action plan. Ensure briefings via the SMEACS format to all private equipment operators prior to deployment or any fire suppression activities
- maintaining command and control. This is essential for coordinated and safe operation, ensuring appropriate management or supervision procedures are in place
- redirecting or standing down equipment. The IC ensures that private plant or equipment on the fireground that poses a risk or is unsuitable for the conditions is removed from the fireground immediately.

A shared responsibility

Private operators must take responsibility for their own readiness, but all ICs are ultimately responsible for verifying suitability, safety and readiness to work on the fireground. This may include:

- personal safety checks. ICs will assess whether operators are wearing appropriate personal protective clothing (PPC), including long-sleeved natural fibre garments, leather boots, gloves, helmets, goggles and high-visibility items
- equipment inspections. ICs may inspect private vehicles to ensure they are roadworthy, mechanically sound, and equipped with essential safety items including first-aid kits, woollen blankets and amber beacons
- communication capability. ICs will confirm that private units can maintain contact via UHF radios or mobile phones, which is vital for coordination and safety.

If any of these elements are lacking, the IC may advise operators to withdraw or reposition to safer areas.

Operational integration

While private equipment can be beneficial, it's imperative the IC carefully manages its deployment. Challenges could potentially include:

- varying levels of training and experience among private operators
- limited water capacity or crew protection on some units
- potential duplication of effort if tasks are not coordinated.

To address these issues, CFA encourages private operators to liaise with their local brigade before the season begins. This improves trust, coordination and the likelihood of effective deployment during incidents. Landowners should also conduct pre-season equipment



checks and operator training to ensure readiness and safe operation.

On the fireground, CFA members will assign tasks to private units based on the type and capability of the equipment, such as whether it is a fully equipped ex-firefighting truck or an older farm tanker or ute with a water tank. Additionally, the competency of the operator, the desired operational objectives and the overall safety of personnel will be factored into the decision-making process.

Legal responsibilities

CFA volunteers are covered by insurance, injury compensation and legal protections when operating or performing operational activities on behalf of CFA. However, private operators working independently do not automatically receive these protections. CFA operational members are always required to remind private operators that:

- they must have landowner permission to enter any private property
- they are responsible for any damage to their private equipment
- they must comply with road laws and workplace safety regulations
- all private vehicles must display amber flashing lights only (red and blue lights are prohibited)
- private vehicles do not receive exemptions under road rules.

Working together for a safer season

Successful firefighting depends on successful cooperation and collaboration. CFA operational members are trained to lead safe, coordinated responses, and private operators can provide valuable support. If private units arrive before CFA they should act cautiously and within their limits of competencies and experience. When CFA arrives on scene, it's essential to contact any private equipment or units on the fireground and ensure CFA provides clear directions. By collaborating with a safety-first approach CFA and private operators can effectively make the communities safer.

Glenbrae Equestrian Centre stables fire



Summary

On 1 April 2025 at about 10.40pm, multiple reports were received of explosions and a large fire involving timber stables, with visible structural damage. Flames were clearly visible though it was initially unclear whether the fire was spreading. The best access to the site was identified, and a subsequent call highlighting the scale of the fire prompted an early escalation. A second escalation occurred within five minutes when approaching crews could see flames from the highway. By 10:50pm, a situation report (sitrep) confirmed that the timber stables, approximately 50 metres x 50 metres, were fully alight.

The incident controller implemented a defensive strategy guided by RECEO principles, focusing on protecting critical exposures including gas bottles and nearby vehicles.

Although the timber stables were fully alight and ultimately destroyed, the coordinated multi-agency response ensured surrounding assets were preserved. The fire was declared under control at 11.34pm, with a final stop wordback at 6.47am the following morning.

Incident overview

Wandin Fire Brigade tanker 1 was responding to a burn-off during the Fire Danger Period when a stables fire was reported at Glenbrae Equestrian Centre. Coldstream Fire Brigade was immediately paged as Code 1. Upon observing a significant glow from the fireground, the Wandin Tanker 1 crew upgraded the response and proceeded directly to the scene.

The IC arrived shortly after and escalated the response based on the fire's intensity and the presence of critical exposures. Sector commanders were appointed to manage operations, with immediate attention given to protecting nearby assets, including a truck and several

90kg gas bottles. A trusted member of the public confirmed that no individuals or animals were inside the stables, allowing crews to adopt a defensive strategy. RECEO principles guided the operation, prioritising exposure protection over internal attack due to the extent of structural involvement.

Specialist appliances, including the Scoresby hose layer, were instrumental in establishing a reliable water supply. Approximately 1.3 km of hose was deployed, with pumpers stationed at key intersections to maintain flow and pressure throughout the operation.

What worked well

Local knowledge: Advice from Victoria Police was effectively incorporated – it was unknown if anyone was inside due to poor visibility, but it was noted that one man known to reside at the property and reported to have hearing difficulties, may have been present. The resident was located, and RECEO principles continued to guide strategy, sectorisation and fireground channel allocation, enabling early establishment of a water sector and supporting operations through to the overhaul stage.

Use of ground monitors: Ground monitors were effective for initial suppression and asset protection. While limited in extinguishment capability, their deployment highlighted the need for early identification and response of specialised equipment.

Control Point (CP) Delineation: Clear marking of the CP boundary with tape helped establish a defined IMT area and reduced interruptions.

Safety officer appointment: A safety officer was appointed during overhaul operations involving machinery. Although communication was limited to hand signals and verbal instructions, the role supported safe night-time operations.

Machinery support for overhaul: A contractor-supplied excavator and track loader were highly effective in removing metal sheeting and exposing hot spots for extinguishment.

Water supply management: Relocation of the water supply via the Scoresby hose layer significantly improved delivery pressure, demonstrating the importance of preplanning and identifying low-capacity hydrants.

Integration of specialist resources: Communicating with Scoresby before the hose layer arrived ensured seamless integration into the water sector.

Rehab and BA support coordination: Locating Yellingbo Fire Brigade rehab unit and Hillcrest Fire Brigade BA support together improved communication and member tracking, particularly near the decontamination point.

Crew welfare considerations: Early welfare discussions were held. While most members preferred to return home rather than receive catering, this resulted in limited rehab support for crews stationed on main roads.

Community notification: Early public messaging regarding smoke ensured community awareness and reduced concern.

Initial IEMT engagement: Early engagement between the IC and Victoria Police facilitated planning around machinery support and traffic management.

Security and demobilisation planning: As operations transitioned to overhaul, the IC reviewed and adjusted tactics, demobilising resources in line with the evolving situation.

Lessons identified

IMT structure and appointment of safety officer: A safety officer was not initially included in the fireground structure, and safety issues such as some personnel lacking respiratory protection were identified. Early appointment of a dedicated safety officer is recommended in line with JSOP 3.04.

Water company notification: The water company was notified but did not attend. Where intervention is required by the water company, such as to assist with low flow or limited water, a specific request for attendance at the CP should be made.

Scene congestion and siting of vehicles: Initial vehicle placement contributed to congestion. Early traffic management planning and vehicle coordination are recommended to maintain access and egress.

Fatigue management and relief crew planning: Relief crew planning should consider cumulative hours worked. Group duty officers can assist with early tasking and scheduling, including delaying non-critical tasks to daylight hours where appropriate.

Lighting for night operations: Additional lighting would have improved safety during machinery operations. Lighting support should be considered for future night-time incidents.

Radio channel issues: Channel 513 was unresponsive during part of the incident, and RMR channels had delays. Crews should consider using Simplex fireground channels for critical tasks to avoid communication issues.

CP and hose protection: Lack of hose protection delayed vehicle demobilisation. Use of 100mm hose ramps should be considered to maintain water supply while allowing vehicle movement.

Decontamination procedures: The decontamination point was established late and not well communicated. Broader training and clearer communication of procedures are recommended to ensure consistency across the fireground.

Conclusion

The Glenbrae Equestrian Centre stables fire presented a complex and high-risk scenario during the Fire Danger Period, requiring a rapid and coordinated multi-agency response. The incident demonstrated strong operational leadership, effective application of RECEO principles and successful integration of specialist resources. This collectively ensured the protection of surrounding assets despite the total loss of the stables.

Key strengths included early sectorisation, strategic water supply management and proactive engagement with support units and external agencies. These elements contributed to a well-managed fireground and efficient transition from suppression to overhaul. However, the incident also highlighted areas for improvement, particularly in safety officer appointment, communication protocols, logistical planning and fatigue management.

This case study provides valuable insights for future incident responses, reinforcing the importance of preparedness, clear command structures and continuous improvement. By addressing the identified opportunities, brigades can enhance operational effectiveness, crew safety and community outcomes in similar high-risk scenarios.



Moorooduc fast-moving grass and scrub fire

Summary

At 3.23pm on 10 March 2025, a column of smoke was reported issuing from behind inaccessible properties in Moorooduc. The fire was initially believed to have been caused by a nearby property owner conducting a burn-off, but this was later found not to be the location of the fire.

Attending crews have shared the key lessons Identified with the benefit of hindsight. These include:

- the importance of early resource escalation and accurate initial reporting
- the value of local knowledge and familiarity with equipment and terrain
- the need for improved communication structures and resource allocation during escalation.

Incident overview

Upon arrival, a grass and scrub fire not yet under control wordback was issued and the incident was escalated to make tankers five. The incident controller (IC) requested a community warning (non-evacuation) via the state duty officer (SDO), which was issued within 15 minutes. An effective incident management team (IMT) was established within the same timeframe.

At 3:32pm, advice from a neighbouring property informed crews of an access point via a driveway and that the fire, which was about 0.4 hectares in size, had spread to an adjacent paddock.

Somerville Fire Brigade's field command vehicle (FCV) arrived within 11 minutes, carrying a qualified strike team leader. This vehicle was deployed for reconnaissance to assist the operations officer (OO) in assessing the fire's size and direction, as it was not visible from the incident control point.

Moorooduc Fire Brigade's ultra heavy tanker (UHT) was deployed for the initial grassfire attack, and successfully knocked down the fire head and halted the forward rate of spread using just over 5,000 litres of water. The water point was effectively communicated to all vehicles on scene via the RMR channel.

By 3.40pm, the fire head was reported as under control, though crews faced access challenges from the north. Additional reports indicated the fire flanks had spread further, prompting requests for two more tankers and aircraft support.

Ongoing emergency management team (EMT) meetings ensured all agencies on scene remained informed.

Aircraft operations were coordinated via a dedicated radio channel, with clear communication to ground crews before firebombing commenced.

By 4.43pm, all crews were committed to one hour of blacking out.

What worked well

Early escalation: The IC's early decision to escalate (requesting five tankers) ensured adequate resources were available. ICs should consider resource needs when providing an initial wordback and make additional requests as early as possible.

Clear IMT establishment: the IC and operations officer (OO) roles were established early. This enabled clear objectives to be set and communicated to crews, allowing all firefighters to understand what needed to be achieved.

Aircraft response awareness: the IC and OO identified the need for aircraft early. They were aware that the incident was outside of the pre-determined dispatch (PDD) footprint, so promptly made a request through Firecom. All brigades are encouraged to familiarise themselves with PDD arrangements and the footprints, to ensure timely aircraft support is received.



Effective use of UHT: Understanding the UHT's capabilities allowed for its strategic deployment and effective attack on the head of the fire. ICs and crew leaders should familiarise themselves with UHT specifications.

Local water supply knowledge: Crews used a nearby ground ball hydrant with strong pressure, which emphasised the importance of local water supply awareness.

FCV crew deployment: The FCV crew was deployed for reconnaissance to feed information back to the OO. This allowed for effective utilisation of the experienced members on board, and meant that all firefighting vehicles could remain engaged in suppression activities.

Aircraft tasking: Aircraft were appropriately tasked, supporting ground operations. There was clear communication between the aircraft and OO, particularly around the commencement of firebombing operations which ensured the safety of crews on the ground.

Transfer of control: A Level 2 IC went forward to the incident when it was escalated to make tankers five. They arrived within 45 minutes of the call, which allowed for a smooth transfer of control early in the incident.

Regular EMT meetings: The Level 2 IC conducted EMT meetings every 30 minutes, ensuring that all agencies on scene were informed about the incident

Lessons identified

CAD table accuracy: As the incident escalated, the brigades identified that the CAD tables were based on outdated data. Brigades should use road modelling data to review and update response areas, and ensure the closest and most appropriate vehicles will be responded.

FCV deployment: The only FCV on scene was deployed in the field, leaving no fixed control platform until the Level 2 IC arrived. ICs should consider early response of any additional FCVs to assist with the control point where required.

Radio channel management: Communications became congested on a single fireground channel. Additional channels should be allocated early when sectorising.

Sector management: Vehicle management was hindered by physical barriers between properties, and would have benefited from an additional sector being established. A dedicated sector commander should be appointed to support the OO.



Incident logging: The IC noted that the absence of a logbook operator (penciller) made it difficult to track personnel and vehicles. ICs should consider whether there are trained people in their brigade to undertake this role, and consider upskilling and training members if not.

Conclusion

This incident in Moorooduc highlights the importance of early decision-making, effective communication and local knowledge in managing a fast-moving grassfire. The coordinated response and timely establishment of an IMT contributed to successful containment.

Thank you to the brigades from District 8 who were involved in the after-action review process and drafting of this case study to share their experience.



Incident statistics

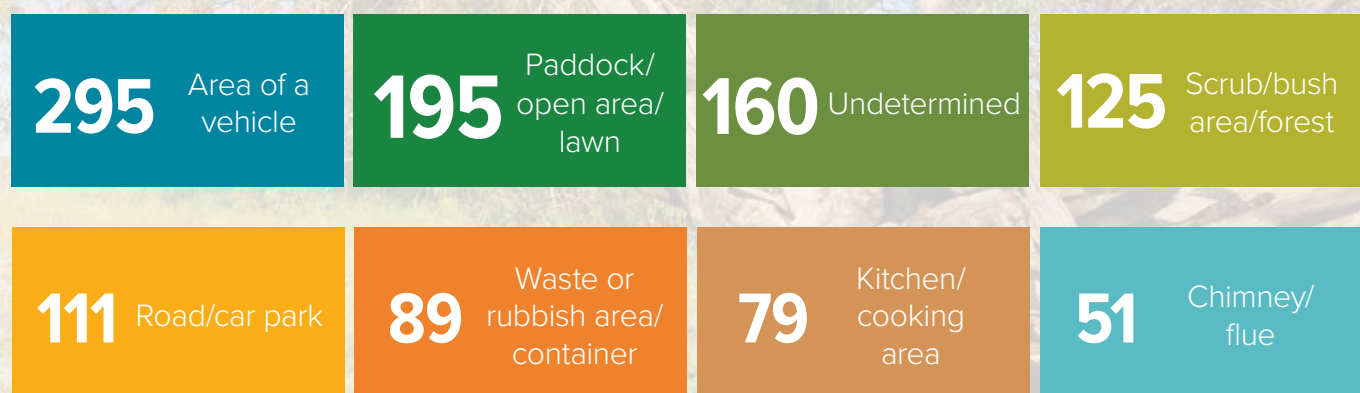
1 July 2025 – 30 September 2025

INCIDENTS BY TYPE



* Includes 2,337 callouts supporting FRV, 4 supporting DEECA

ORIGIN OF FIRE



INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

SOUTH WEST		WEST		NORTH WEST		NORTH EAST		SOUTH EAST	
District	Incidents	District	Incidents	District	Incidents	District	Incidents	District	Incidents
4	72	15	526	2	454	12	264	8	2,019
5	136	16	146	14	1,471	13	682	9	271
6	119	17	109	18	118	22	301	10	135
7	567			20	179	23	206	11	154
						24	239	27	252

IN BRIEF

VOLS ON HOLS PROGRAM

As holidaymakers flock to Gippsland's scenic towns, local brigades often face a surge in demand. The Vols on Hols initiative was created to boost operational capacity during this seasonal swell by inviting CFA operational members on vacation to support brigades. This year, we've expanded the program to District 10.

Just take your pager and gear on holiday, and if a call comes through while you're nearby you're welcome to respond. No pressure, no obligation – just the opportunity to help if you're willing and able. To register your interest use the QR code.



DRIVING SOPS UPDATED

The driving Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have recently been updated. Use the QR code to access the Members Online page for all SOPs and scroll to section 12: 'Drive and operate CFA vehicles'.



MISSING MERRYWEATHER ENGINES



In the late 1890s the Country Fire Brigades Board (CFBB) placed an order for up to 25 Merryweather & Sons horsedrawn manual fire engines. These engines were distributed across Victoria, particularly to brigades where water supply was an issue. Unfortunately, most records about this acquisition have disappeared. Research has located up to 13 engines, but it's not known how many still exist. If you have information about a Merryweather please email Ron Gilchrist (Buninyong-Mt Helen brigade): rongilchrist1950@gmail.com

NEW CHILD SAFETY QUICK GUIDES

We encourage all members to explore a new suite of child safety resources designed to support young volunteers, Junior leaders and all members working with Under 18s in brigades. These resources aim to strengthen our commitment to creating safe, inclusive and empowering environments for children and young people. Whether you're a young CFA member, a Junior leader or have 16 and 17-year-old members at your brigade, these useful quick guides and visual resources will help you foster a culture of care, respect and safety. Use the QR code to access the resources.



SAS RELEASE 11

Release 11 of the Supplementary Alerting Service (SAS) app delivers an overhaul and improvement to one of the most requested features from our members – the ability to manage availability. This upgrade makes it easier, faster and more flexible for members to set and manage their availability to respond to incidents, directly within the app or on a computer. Release 11 also improves visibility for brigade, district and regional SAS administrators, which is especially important when managing capability during busy periods or major incidents. The SAS user guide has been updated to reflect these improvements.



FREE VICMAP TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS

Vicmap Topographic maps, created by the Department of Transport and Planning, are available statewide in four scales: 1:25 000 (A0); 1:30 000 (A3 and A4); 1:50 000 (A0); and 1:100 000 (A0). These maps are created using Vicmap, the Victorian Government's authoritative data, and are updated every three years. From this year, CFA members can download Vicmap topographic maps at no cost all year around using the coupon code VICMAP_CFA.

The maps show natural and built features including water bodies, watercourses, contours, vegetation, roads, railways, buildings and administrative boundaries such as private and public land. The maps are georeferenced and can be used for navigation on the field, incident control management, asset protection, locating water sources, and planning evacuation and escape routes. For more information use the QR code.



VOLUNTEERS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

CFA has introduced a new position on hearing requirements for volunteers. Declaration of a hearing impairment will no longer require a referral for a medical review. Instead, CFA will support volunteers to continue in operational roles where safe, using a new Role Assignment Risk Assessment process.

Volunteers who have been made non-operational due to hearing impairments have been offered this process as a mechanism to return to operational duties. Volunteers with hearing impairments are still encouraged to declare these conditions to CFA to ensure practical steps are taken to support health and safety. For more information about CFA medical programs use the QR code.



Boronia Fire Brigade

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Boronia Life Members



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- 1 75th anniversary, 2017
- 2 Austin tanker, 1950s
- 3 Boronia brigade's first life members: Kevin Smart, Laurie Maguire and John McLeod
- 4 Bill Ireland (left) has collected for the Good Friday Appeal for more than 50 years
- 5 International K6, 1960s
- 6 Brigade members, 1948
- 7 Brigade vehicles, 1970s
- 8 Current fire station
- 9 Fire in an orchard packing shed, 1961
- 10 Ford 350 light pumper, 2000
- 11 Ford Blitz tanker 1942 and CFA's first diesel tanker Ford K700, 1967
- 12 First fire station, 1948
- 13 Firefighter Tony O'Loughlin at a bushfire, 1968

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Brigade

If undeliverable return to:
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6/400 Princes Hwy
NOBLE PARK NORTH VIC 3174

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 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.



- Save 8% with **Australian Unity** Corporate Health Insurance (T&Cs apply and new members on corporate products only).
- Get \$5 off your next **Doctors on Demand** video consult and pay no booking fee.
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- 10% off ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff with **Searoad Ferries**.
- Save 5% on adult Spirit and Flexi fares with **Spirit of Tasmania**.
- 5 to 10% off the best unrestricted rate of the day at **Accor Hotels**.
- Save up to 25% on room and bed & breakfast rates at the **Radisson on Flagstaff Gardens**, Melbourne.
- Get the Preferred Customer Rate at more than 270 **Choice Hotels** across Australia and New Zealand.
- Up to 15% off daily rental rates with **Europcar**.
- **Sixt Australia** offers up to 20% off passenger and commercial vehicle hire.
- 10% off Australian car rentals with **Budget**.
- Corporate leisure rates and reduced insurance excess with **Avis**.
- **Nissan** fleet pricing and extra benefits on selected new vehicles.
- Save \$170 on **Virgin Australia** Lounge Memberships.
- Discounted Village Cinemas eVouchers and combos in Victoria and Tasmania.
- Play nine holes of golf at **Holey Moley** for just \$12 (normally \$20).
- Discounts on **Village Roadshow Theme Parks** five-day Escape Pass, Aussie Outback Spectacular, Topgolf, Sea World Resort and Paradise Country Farmstay.
- 10% off **Experience Oz**, plus hot deals on attractions, zoos and theme parks.
- Save up to 10% on **eGift cards** including Coles, Woolworths, JB Hi-Fi, Endota Spa, EG Fuel Card, Bunnings and Ultimate Gift Cards.
- Commercial pricing on appliances and electronics with **The Good Guys Commercial Division**.
- Special pricing on appliances and electronics with Harvey **Norman Groups & Associations**.
- **Plantmark** has wholesale prices on plants and garden products at stores in Langwarrin, Thomastown, Werribee and Wantirna.
- 20% off flowers from **Petals Network**.
- **RSEA Safety** has 10% off full-priced items in-store only.
- **JB Hi-Fi Corporate Benefits Program** has exclusive savings on tech, entertainment and fitness gear.
- **iSubscribe** has 10% off any magazine subscription including Better Homes & Gardens, National Geographic and Gardening Australia.
- **AJH New Car Brokers** offers \$250 off your new car brokerage fee, plus fleet pricing and VIP delivery.
- 10% off servicing, repairs and TCP tyre purchases at **mycar Tyre & Auto**.
- **Bridgestone** has 15% off car, SUV and light van tyres via the Business Associates Program.
- Save \$50 on a **Driver Dynamics** Defensive Driving Course.
- **Sheen Panel Service** has a \$300 excess reduction when your car is repaired there.
- **Flie Legal** offers a free online consultation and 20% off fixed-rate conveyancing, wills and estate planning.