

Brigade

autumn 2019

cfa.vic.gov.au

SAFETY
TEAMWORK
ADAPTABLE
INTEGRITY
RESPECT



▼ Fast response protects Hepburn





18

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Fast response protects Hepburn

COVER PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM

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Chair Greg Smith AM



As your Board, we have set a strategic direction for CFA and have put in place robust leadership to guide this planned action.

Our direction is clear:

- We will only accept a culture everyone is proud of
- We will continue to improve the way we engage with stakeholders
- We will inspire and recruit the next generation of CFA firefighters
- We will set strategic goals to deliver what is required to maintain CFA as a leading emergency services organisation.

Our four strategic goals will guide us through this year and into the future. Our strategic goals are:

- We put the community at the centre of everything that we do
- We deliver programs and services that make a positive difference
- We provide a great place to volunteer and work
- We are a progressive emergency service.

To ensure we're a great organisation for our people, safety will be a leading priority. This includes areas such as child safety, training, operational capability and most importantly, the health and wellbeing of our people.

We have launched the CFA Wellbeing Support line, which is a central 1800 number, available 24/7 to support all our volunteers and their families. I strongly encourage you to use this service when needed.

We're committed to operational safety, both in action and decision-making on the fireground, as well as identified training needs and provision of equipment.

As a community-based organisation, we have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that children interacting with CFA brigades and members are safe and free from any form of abuse. CFA has appointed a Child Safety Officer as the primary point of contact for children, parents and employees/volunteers to raise concerns or allegations and get advice and support about the safety of children.

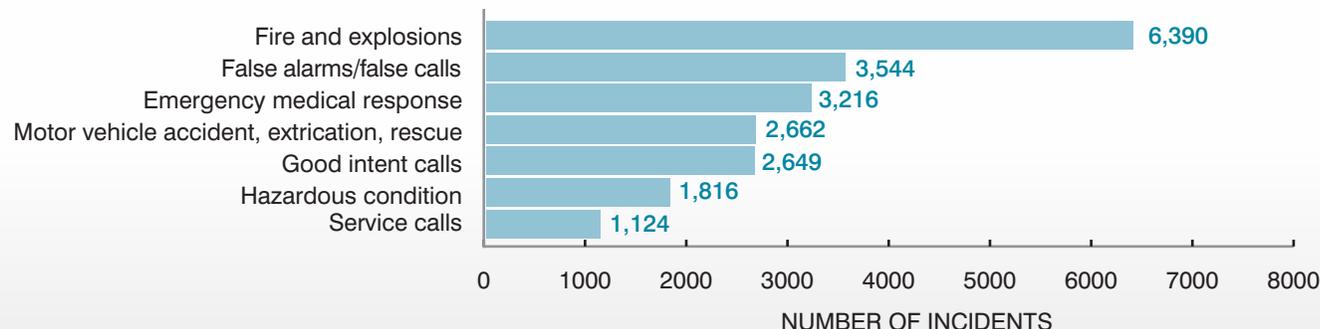
With the re-election of the Labor Government, we're preparing for the proposed fire services reform. Your Board and Executive is undertaking work to plan and prepare for the future in relation to possible roles, functions and activities, to ensure CFA remains a successful organisation.

Our active fire season has highlighted the shared expertise of interoperability and benefits to the community and each other. We attacked the various fires collaboratively which led to minimisation of property and asset loss, as well as protecting the lives of community members and our people.

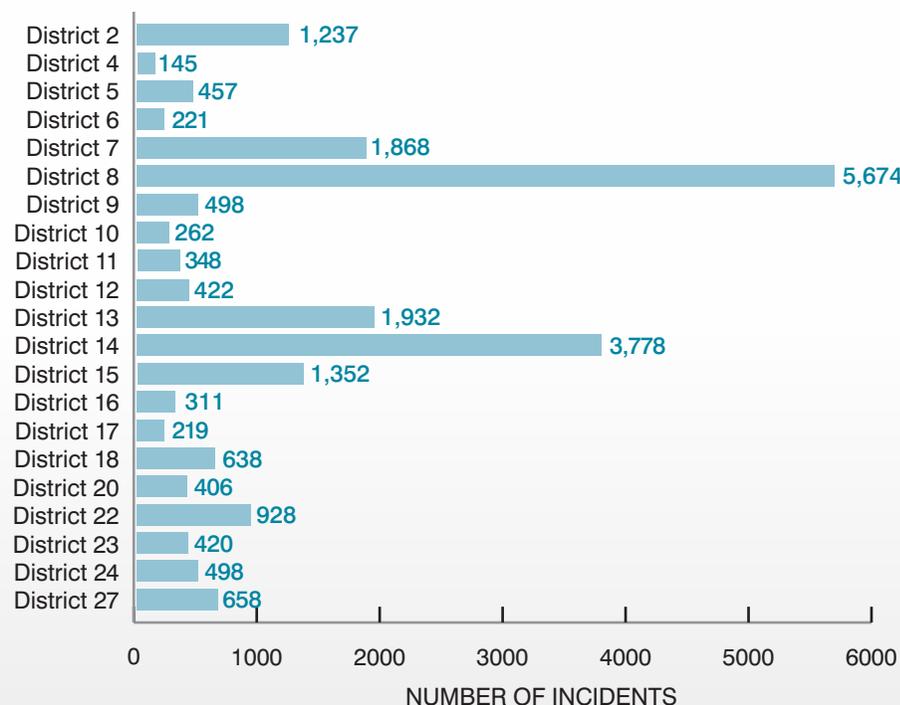
As part of our vision for the organisation, we're focused on risk-based decision-making to ensure the best outcomes for our people and CFA. We will continue to communicate the decisions of your Board through CFA's communication platforms.

Incident summary 1 July – 31 Dec 2018

STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY TYPE

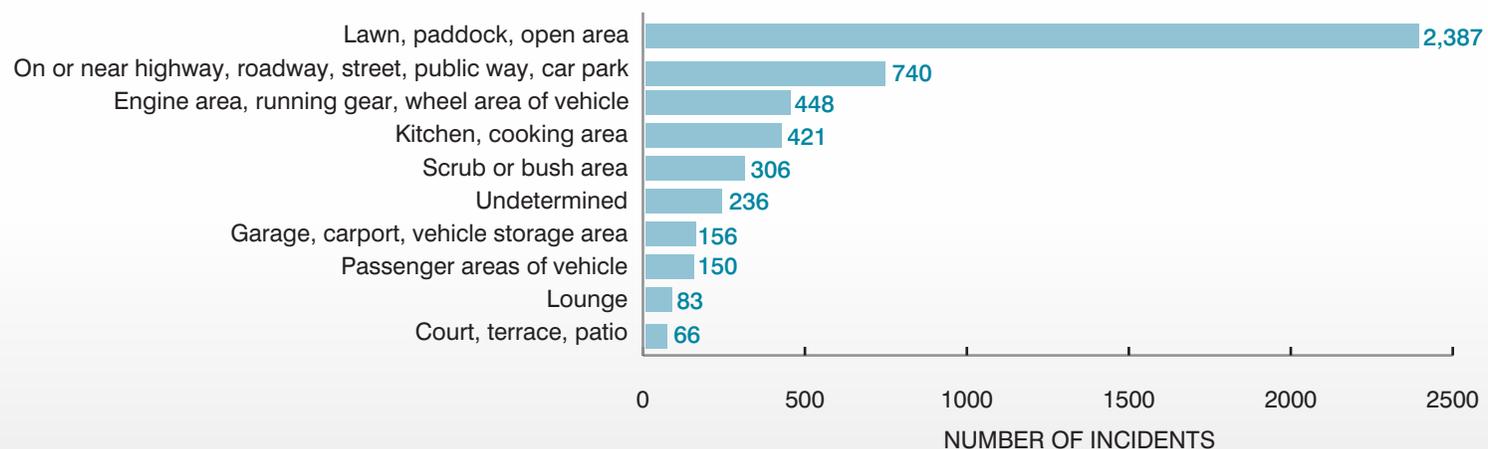


STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT



Brigades are reminded to submit their incident report as soon as possible after attending an incident. Brigades on strike teams also need to submit a report to the Service Delivery Reporting Centre (SDRC). Call 1800 62 88 44 between 8am and 11pm.

ORIGIN OF FIRE



New Year firefight at Rosedale

Under challenging conditions fire and emergency services came together with the community on Friday 4 January 2019 to protect lives and property. Assistant Chief Officer South East Region Trevor Owen gives his perspective.

With temperatures above 40°C across the state and a total fire ban in place, our brigades stood ready to respond. We had 75 strike teams and 69 aircraft on standby, and more than 370 multi-agency personnel staffing incident control centres, regional control centres and the State Control Centre.

As expected, underlying dryness, heavy fuel loads, high temperatures and strong and erratic winds led to rapidly developing and intense fires. More than 220 fires occurred in 24 hours, and the most significant ones were at Rosedale, Strathbogie and Tallangatta.

The fires in Strathbogie and Tallangatta were contained early into the weekend but the firefight near Rosedale in Gippsland continued for several days as crews worked to contain the fire's perimeter. The fire was contained on Wednesday 9 January after it had burned 1,150 hectares.

The Rosedale fire started just before 1pm on Friday but it was the south-westerly wind change later in the evening that led to the significant increase in fire activity.

At the height of the fire there were 110 CFA firefighters in 30 tankers and a number of command vehicles, various plant and machinery, and 13

aircraft working day and night to contain the blaze. This was the first time night water bombing was used following last year's successful trials. (For more about night water bombing, see page 50).

I had the opportunity to visit the ICC, Gippsland Regional Control Centre, fireground, staging areas and the District 10 headquarters over the weekend to witness the tremendous effort on the ground and in the air to extinguish and contain the fire.

I couldn't be more impressed and proud of our people as well as personnel from Forest Fire Management Victoria, EMV, SES, Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria. Fire and emergency services worked as one to protect lives and property. The collaboration with HVP Plantations was also outstanding.

The courage shown by our firefighters and their willingness to give up their time to support fellow volunteers and their communities was phenomenal.

Thanks to the combined effort of all involved there was minimal damage to assets and most importantly no injuries to members of the community or our fire and emergency services personnel.

Well done to all involved in this very difficult firefighting operation.

STORY TREVOR OWEN

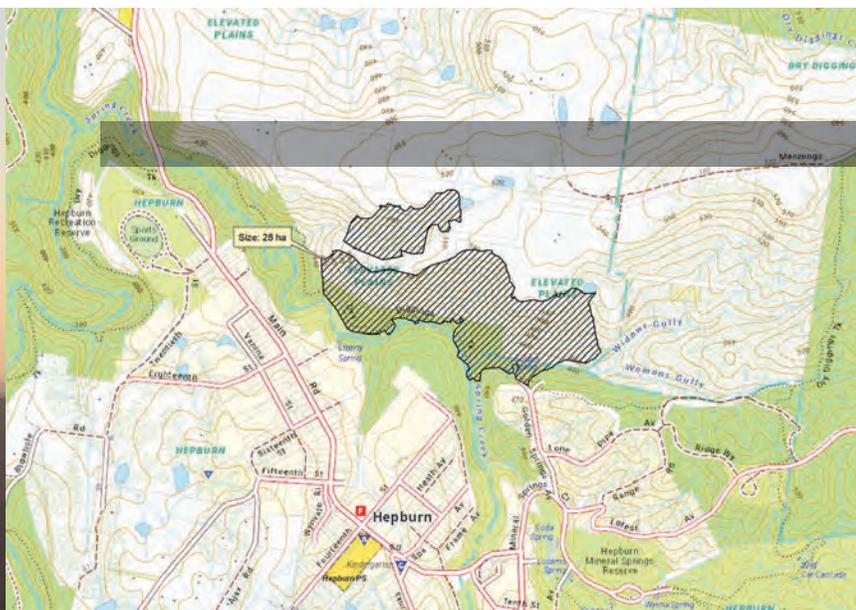




PHOTOS: ANDREW NORMAN

Grassfire threatens Hepburn

PHOTO: WAYNE RIGG



A bush and grassfire started in the evening of Saturday 2 February at Elevated Plains, north of Hepburn following a severe fire danger day in the mid-thirties. The fire threatened residents and led to about 80 homes being evacuated by Victoria Police.

It was a dry, hot, 38-degree day when the weather changed; humidity rose and the wind started to pick up. A lightning front moving across the state from the north-west sparked a fire in the gully at Elevated Plains near Hepburn.

A tanker from Hepburn was first on scene just after 5.30pm. Within 10 minutes a page went out to make tankers six as well as to call in a big fill. Air support was already on its way from Ballarat air base. With treacherous conditions another two air bombers were paged and a call to make tankers 15.

"The fire started in challenging, steep terrain – some areas were virtually inaccessible," Hepburn Captain Barry Yanner said.

"We sectorised the fire within the first five minutes of arriving on scene because it was clear even then we weren't going to hold it.

"We knew straight away that we needed air support. Within half an hour we had three aircraft continually dropping water and retardant which in the end was vital to saving properties and lives."

At around 7pm a Watch and Act was issued for Hepburn township. More tankers were paged, bringing to 20 the number of trucks at the scene or en route. Soon after the Watch and Act was upgraded to an Emergency Warning as numerous spot fires started to emerge. Police doorknocked homes telling residents to evacuate as the fire travelled in a southerly direction.

"Our biggest focus was stopping the run of the fire with control lines before it made its way up the gully and into Hepburn," Barry said.

"Within the first hour we had Forest Fire Management Vic [FFMV] dozers put in firebreaks to protect the houses on top of the hill and then cut tracks through the bush so we could get in with our trucks to attack the fire.

"With the wind, we knew that if it got away from us and over the ridge then the town was gone."

Another two big fills and two strike teams were paged and a staging area formed at Hepburn-Newstead Road.

By 9pm more than 30 hectares of land had burned, in some areas as close to 300 metres from residences. Police were forced to close Back Hepburn Road as sightseers gathered to get a closer look at the activity putting themselves directly in the line of the fire. Thankfully the crew's efforts meant the fire was able to be downgraded to a Watch and Act. Aircraft returned to base as it became too dark and unsafe to operate but firefighters continued to work overnight on the ground to hold the fire.

Aircraft were back in operation early on Sunday morning as fears grew that north-westerly winds could cause the fire to once again impact Hepburn. At 8.30am another Emergency Warning was issued for Hepburn and the northern part of Hepburn Springs. A large air tanker from Avalon Airport dropped flame retardant as crews battled to access heavy fuel in the area around Spring Creek. A further Emergency Warning was issued at 9.50am.

About 200 CFA and FFMV firefighters in about 50 trucks were tackling the fire with the support of five aircraft and several bulldozers. More adverse weather including another wind change was expected to hamper the firefight later that day. With a Watch and Act still in place, a community meeting was held at Daylesford Town Hall on Sunday evening where about 600 people heard more about the incident.

By Monday the threat from the fire had significantly subsided and it was deemed under control. A number of schools and early childhood services were closed as a precaution but favourable weather conditions allowed firefighters to consolidate control lines and commence blacking out and burning out remaining fuel.

"Everyone from all areas of CFA and broader emergency management worked so well together to manage this fire. We had no hiccups – and this fire had the potential to be really disastrous," Barry said.

"It's still very dry up here. Looking forward we need to look at better vehicle access to the gullies and similar areas in our region. Fuel loads and improved access will go a long way to improving the firefight if a fire breaks out here again."

Three weeks after the fire first started, crews continued to patrol the area to black out and monitor the fire. The fire was declared safe on 19 February but continued to be monitored on high fire risk days.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TARADALE FIRE BRIGADE



STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN

Queensland deployment: adapt and overcome

A contingent of 88 Victorian firefighters and incident management specialists including members from CFA, Forest Fire Management Victoria and SES travelled to Queensland at the end of November 2018 to help with major bushfires.

Acting Operations Officer Don Wilkie from Dandenong Fire Brigade shared his experiences following a five-day deployment. The Victorian team included Don's fellow air ops personnel, CFA's Warren Fuller (air observer/air attack) and Peter McEwan from DELWP (air operations manager).

I went to Queensland with the attitude that I was there to help in any way I could. If what they really needed was someone to clean toilets, that's what I would have done. But along with Peter McEwan I was called upon to use my aviation and air attack skills to assist as an air attack supervisor.

On day one we helped develop aviation plans until lunchtime. Then the calls came and I was off for the next four hours doing air attack, working fires from Gladstone to Mackay – a distance of more than 500 kilometres.

The second and third days were interesting working at Finch Hatten and Camilla West near Mackay, aiding ground crews by water bombing a chalet at the top of a large cliff. Bombing rainforest felt a bit weird. 'It just doesn't burn like this' was a common comment from locals.

Locals cut a landing strip in a cane field for us. It's probably the first and last time in my career I will work from a cane field.

The fourth and fifth days brought more challenges. When we arrived at Curtis Island we saw right away that it was a bit like French Island in Victoria, just a lot bigger. Crews had to be barged across so it was going to take until the next morning for them to arrive.

When we flew in, the fire was 20 metres away from a homestead. We firebombed and saved the house. We lost a shed, but with multiple drops we saved the machinery sheds and machinery.

Another drop saved a grader that had just started to burn. A tractor was saved with yet another drop and was later used by a couple of locals to make fire breaks.

A woman, her children and two volunteers got away as we started water bombing. They drove through the fire to the beach for safety before being airlifted by Queensland Rescue.

I landed later to check on the family and to apologise for not being able to save their shed. We tried really hard but just couldn't. Of the 15 buildings on the island we only lost one shed – a good outcome considering the conditions.

We were on this fire for two days with six fixed-wing bombers and three helitacks. We also had two gel drops from the large RJ Bomber 166 air tanker as support. Then the first storm arrived.

Severe winds and lightning forced us to bug out. We left as fire was encroaching on buildings but luckily there was enough rain coming down at that point to save them and put the fire out.

Everyone returned to Victoria tired but happy to have helped out. I'm honoured to have been able to help Queensland in its time of need.

It was hard work but I also loved the challenge.



PHOTOS: DON WILKIE

I made some more friends there – fellow pilots and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services people. They are a great bunch. They faced a lot of challenges as they don't normally have fires of this magnitude.

The crews on the ground did the really hard work and put the fires out. We were happy to assist them.

Everyone pitched in to get the job done and came home each day safely, and I would assist our interstate comrades again at a moment's notice.

Adapt and overcome, and just help out wherever and whenever we were asked.

STORY: DON WILKIE

Fires, floods and a brown snake



PHOTOS: ASHLEY MILLS

At CFA our people face a variety of situations in all sorts of conditions. In December 2018 there were huge fluctuations in the weather with a weekend of high temperatures and bushfires followed by a weekend of heavy rainfall, storms and floods.

Over the weekend of 15-16 December Eldorado near Wangaratta had 201mm of rainfall and nearby in Everton there was 181mm. Flooding on the Hume Freeway left more than 120 motorists stranded. Wangaratta Fire Brigade Officer-in-Charge Trevor Logan told us his experience of that Saturday.

I received a call at around 8.30am from Wangaratta Deputy Group Officer (DGO) Lachy Gales informing me that a wall of floodwater was crossing Eldorado Road near the Carraragarmungee School. Lachy said he'd never seen water travel so fast in this area before.

Just after that I received a call from the State Control Centre saying that volunteers were advising of severe flooding in the Tarrawingee and Londrigan areas.



The fire stations at Everton, Tarrawingee and Wangaratta North brigade were inundated with water, and Tarrawingee experienced a grassfire only the weekend before. Those three brigades, plus Bowser and Wangaratta brigades, spent all day out in their areas helping locals and the travelling public with the flood situation.

Four DGOs from Wangaratta Group also spent the day providing leadership and communications to their crews, connected to the District 23 Command Centre, which was operated by me, CFA staff and volunteers.

Operations Manager Stewart Kreltszheim returned from Melbourne mid-afternoon and was deployed to the affected area to oversee our crews' welfare.

Volunteers and career firefighters from Wangaratta brigade were deployed to the Hume Freeway flooding where they rescued many people from stranded vehicles in conjunction with Victoria Police Air Wing, Ambulance Victoria Helimed and SES. Wangaratta also set up a staging area using the Technical Rescue Pod, to provide welfare and shelter to those who'd been rescued.

While one firefighter was helping a woman from her car, a brown snake tried to climb up his trousers to find safety. This was dealt with and the firefighter concerned carried on with his task with a minimum of fuss.

We also arranged for the District 23 minibus to transport people from the staging area to the relief centre in Wangaratta. The last of our fire trucks returned to their sheds at about 8.30pm.

Despite several CFA volunteers' houses being inundated with floodwater, I saw a tremendous effort by volunteers and career staff from the Wangaratta Group over the course of the day.

Many kilometres of farm fencing were lost and the clean-up took a long time with brigades assisting the Wangaratta Council and VicRoads to reinstate roads and private property.

STORY TREVOR LOGAN, WANGARATTA FIRE BRIGADE

Seamless teamwork at Mt Buffalo



CFA and SES were paged at about 1pm on 2 October 2018 to Mount Buffalo after a caller to Triple Zero (000) reported seeing a man fall into the gorge. Unlike other mountains in the area Mount Buffalo is a rocky outcrop with vertical sides.

The Hume High Angle Rescue Team comprises qualified members from Mount Beauty, Wangaratta and Wodonga brigades and Bright SES. All team members are paged when a high angle rescue is needed – they were all needed at this incident. Bright and Porepunkah brigades, Victoria Police Search and Rescue (SAR), Ambulance Victoria and Parks Victoria were also on scene.

After some time an Air Ambulance helicopter located the man some distance below the edge near Echo Point. Due to the location, wind conditions and wash from the helicopter, it wasn't possible to use the helicopter's winch.

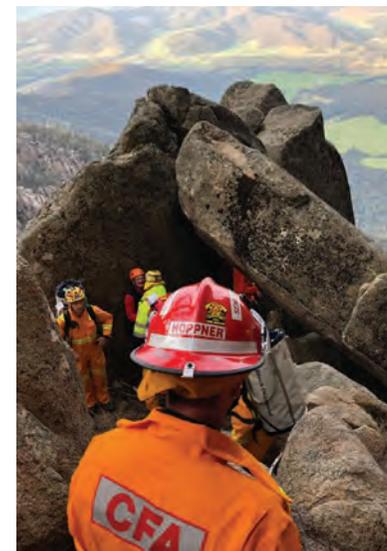
At about 1.30pm Parks Victoria rang Dave Chitty from Adventure Guides Australia for his help. The emergency personnel needed to know the best way to reach the man on foot.

"I know all the cliffs at Mount Buffalo and I can give advice to help reduce the risk for emergency services," Dave said. "I showed the police the safest way to get to the man by using a track followed by a short abseil. It shows the importance of local knowledge."

SES and CFA crews set up a two-part recovery system before SAR arrived. The CFA team set up the lower part, which involved a vertical component to transport the man eight metres up the rock face, past an overhang (which caused some difficulties) and through a cave. The SES crew established the upper part – a steep-angle hauling system to the top.

With crews working in limited space and the need to reset the system regularly, the recovery operation took about two hours.

The debrief by Victoria Police focused on the psychological impact of the incident, rather than operational matters, because the man died.



PHOTOS BRIGHT SES

"Sergeant Paul Evans from Myrtleford Police Station called everyone together. He emphasised that peer support and other help was available if needed," Mount Beauty Captain Rob O'Connor said. "He then talked to each agency in turn to find out whether they had any questions or wanted to raise any issues. He handled the debrief very well and was aware that the incident could be traumatic to some people."

All services agreed there was seamless integration between the four organisations, working together with a common goal.

"The whole thing went off without a hitch," Rob said. "Everyone worked together. It was very good."

STORY GRAHAM GALES (BRIGHT SES) AND DUNCAN RUSSELL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Paul Smith



Making CFA a great place to work and volunteer

As outlined in the Chair's column on page 2, CFA has developed four strategic goals which will form the basis of our long-term CFA Strategy, which will be released in coming months. Our CFA strategy will anchor us and map out our long-term objectives and outcomes.

In the meantime we have been strongly focused on making CFA a great place to work and volunteer. Through various communications and feedback channels, we've identified key areas that need to be addressed: safety of our people; leadership; ensuring people feel engaged and valued; behaviours; clear organisational direction; and better systems and tools.

We are implementing a number of programs, initiatives and changes to address this feedback and develop a culture that truly reflects our values. If people feel valued and engaged they will perform at their best, and so will the organisation. There will be avenues to provide feedback to all levels of leadership and I encourage you to take advantage of these.

Behaviours will be aligned to our CFA values – safety, teamwork, adaptable, integrity and respect. There is no place at CFA for anyone who does not live our values, and we will be enforcing these through our codes of conduct.

We have implemented an Integrity Framework and supplemented our CFA Investigations Unit with more resources to deliver on this commitment to the highest levels of integrity within the organisation. As I have previously outlined, we are undertaking a thorough review of our complaints processes. If you have any thoughts or suggestions about how CFA's complaints handling processes could be improved you can contact the team at complaints@cfa.vic.gov.au.

Your safety is paramount. This extends well beyond physical injuries to making sure we are focused on the psychological health and wellbeing of our people. We're developing a mental health awareness training program to equip our leaders with the skills to recognise and support members who are dealing with issues which impact on their work and personal lives.

As you'd be aware, we now have a universal CFA Wellbeing Support Line – **1800 959 232** – for all services and we've appointed regional wellbeing coordinators to ensure there is training and support for staff and volunteers right across the state.

We're putting considerable effort into child safety this year, as our organisation has many interactions with children and has a moral and legal requirement to ensure they are protected and supported. Our Child Safety Framework is evolving and we will keep you updated about developments in this area.

We've also developed an online induction program for CFA to support our new staff and volunteers and provide them with critical

information about the organisation. If you haven't already visited this site, take the time to do so as this is a very valuable resource. Search for 'CFA induction program' on Brigades Online.

We will also be addressing many of the long-standing issues around our systems by introducing new platforms and tools so that people can undertake their work more easily and efficiently. The CFA Intranet and Brigades Online platforms will be shortly undergoing a refresh to make them more user-friendly and easy to navigate. We're also reviewing all our digital platforms and will continue to enhance our business intelligence to ensure we are making the best investment decisions.

As the Victorian Government has indicated, it will be proceeding with fire services reform, and I want to assure you that the Executive is strongly focused on planning and preparing for the future of CFA. Through reform we have a unique opportunity to set ourselves up for the future and be the organisation we want to be. We will articulate our clear direction to put the community at the centre of everything we do, which is one of our strategic goals.

Successfully managing change is a key priority for the Executive. It will be values-based and people-focused, and maximise opportunities for the organisation throughout the process. We will keep you informed about our work in this space, as much as we can, and address any misconceptions or concerns that arise.

We have much work to do and there will be many challenges throughout 2019, but we will navigate these with a focus on supporting our people as we achieve our goals.



CHIEF OFFICER



Steve Warrington

In the last edition of Brigade magazine, I reminded everyone to be ready for one of the longest and driest fire seasons in recent memory. I couldn't be prouder of the work our people have done to ensure lives and property have been protected to the best of their ability.

From the start of this fire season more than 160,000 hectares have been burnt in Victoria. Conditions have certainly been challenging, with below average rainfall and increased temperatures over the course of the past six months.

In particular, February was a difficult month. Our firefighters faced tough conditions with simultaneous fires in Bunyip, Licola, Dargo and Yinnar South, where upwards of 2,000 firefighters were on hand to protect the state.

Only a few weeks earlier, our people were on the frontline of fires at Tanjil South, Grantville, Hepburn and Walhalla. Rosedale, Benloch, Strathbogie, Buninyong and Little River blazes also took the full attention and efforts of our firefighters to bring under control.

When fires continue for weeks it can take its toll on both firefighters and their families – fatigue can become a major factor.

I have nothing but praise for each and every person who has helped over the course of the past six months. This is regardless of the role you played; from the incident controller to those who were stepping onto the back of a truck for the first time or those who organised food or volunteered their time in incident control centres. It takes a lot of people to keep a state safe and I commend all your efforts.

While we can look back on the summer and say "job well done" it's also time to look forward. There are a number of things on the horizon that are important to our people.

CFA is introducing the new General Firefighter training program, to replace Minimum Skills for all new volunteer firefighters (see story on page 72). We will be developing new workwear for our volunteers, taking into account the feedback from more than 3,300 people who completed the survey. We are also looking forward to the 2020 CFA-VFBV Firefighter Championships where the urban and rural events will be held concurrently in Mooroopna (see page 61 for more details).

Winter is coming and as we know this is the time when there are more preventable residential fires than any other time.

I'd encourage you to take the opportunity to undertake some of the training opportunities which are available through the Learning Hub on Brigades Online. Most of all, however, I'd encourage you to take a well-earned rest. This is what I'll be doing, with my colleague Gavin Freeman taking the reins as Chief Officer for a period of time.

Once again, well done to all and enjoy your rest – you've earned it.

DEPUTY CHIEF OFFICER Operational Capability & Growth



Steph Rotarangi

When you read this column, I'll have spent several weeks as Acting Deputy Emergency Management Commissioner and Director Capability and Response. I'm grateful for this opportunity to learn more about the coordination and delivery of Victoria's emergency management arrangements.

Since joining CFA a year ago as DCO Operational Capability and Growth, I've been on a steep learning curve. A fire and emergency service such as CFA is always adapting to best respond to the needs of communities that are constantly changing, along with implementing new and emerging capabilities.

In my acting role at EMV, and moving forward, I'm looking to strengthen our capacity to plan for, withstand, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

In my first week, with 100,000 hectares burning, I got to witness firsthand the emergency management sector working closely together in the face of major bushfire operations and the delivery of the State Emergency Management Strategic Priorities including the protection and preservation of life. This was done while concurrently arranging relief and early recovery for communities already stressed by drought and recent fires.

It's worth noting that Victoria's 30-year average for bushfire full season (1 Oct to 30 Sept) is 736 fires totalling 155,534 hectares. To date we've already responded to 1,607 fires which have burned 163,101 hectares, About 100,000 hectares were burned in the week of 28 February to 6 March alone.

More than 2,000 CFA volunteer and staff firefighters worked alongside FFMVic and MFB. The major fires, particularly in the east, were supported by resources from the state's west and interstate.

IMTs, DMOs, government agencies, interagency liaison officers, critical infrastructure SMEs and many others all worked together to ensure the safety of emergency services personnel and the safety of community members. This was paramount for vulnerable community members along with providing our firefighters with the resources they needed. This was achieved while our agencies and volunteers continued their business-as-usual roles and maintained readiness throughout the state.

To illustrate the extent of the engagement, in the first week of March 529 community warnings were issued, including 62 Emergency Warnings. In addition more than 1,200 people attended community meetings and many other events across the state. This was a huge achievement.

As well as containing and extinguishing the current fires, we'll be supporting displaced community members and completing impact assessments as we transition to social, economic and environmental recovery.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for the terrific work you do in keeping communities safe, along with families and friends for their support during this time.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North West Region



Gavin Thompson

I would like to thank all members of North West Region for their outstanding support and resilience over the 2018-19 fire season. We overcame a number of challenges by working together both on and off the fireground. I'm grateful for the absolute dedication of our people who continue to provide and support the delivery of services to our communities.

The season started on 15 October 2018 with the declaration of the region's first Fire Danger Period in District 18 and part of District 20, approximately five-and-a-half months after the termination of the 2017-18 Fire Danger Period. With the early onset of the fire season came heightened levels of readiness and response, which was compounded by the effects of drought on our communities.

We have experienced a large number of Total Fire Ban days, leading to increased readiness activities in the region. We also provided resources to other parts of the state, including Gippsland for what turned out to be a campaign fire. I thank all members for their willingness to provide support to those in need in our state and in South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales.

This season haystack fires were common across the region, particularly in Districts 18 and 20. These fires are resource intensive and require lengthy monitoring by brigades to ensure they remain contained.

I would like to highlight the great leadership and initiative displayed by Deputy Group Officer Shaun Thompson on the fireground at the Beulah haystack fire on 25 January 2019. DGO Thompson not only ensured the appropriate management of the fire but also considered the health and safety of the team while out in the extreme Mallee heat. He seamlessly initiated a plan to organise shift change and the rotation of crews from the afternoon through until late in the evening. He also undertook forward planning for the hydration of members and catering for the duration of the incident.

The flood that impacted the Birchip township and surrounding area in mid-December 2018 surprised all of us. This was a perfect example of how emergency services and communities work together in a time of need and collaborate to look after one another.

Reflecting on the challenges we faced, I encourage all members to take the time to look after their health, safety and wellbeing and also to look out for others. The strength of CFA is in how we look after ourselves and how we look out for one another. CFA has a variety of wellbeing support services. You and your direct family members can access these services by calling the Wellbeing Support Line on 1800 959 232. The services are free and confidential.

OPERATIONS MANAGER District 6



Dean Manson

It's hard to believe we're now towards the end of the 2018-19 fire season. For District 6 it only just feels like we've recovered from the 2017-18 fire season, and I'd like to reflect on last year's St Patrick's Day fires.

There were a number of smaller fires leading up to the St Patrick's Day fires but on 17 March 2018 the fires hit very hard. The district was impacted in a number of ways, from the early response of volunteers throughout the district, to long-term peat fire management that continued to burn for months after the initial incident.

Volunteers are still dealing with the after-effects of this incident. The personal sacrifices made and the response we received at the district was a true testament to our volunteers and their commitment to CFA.

As operations manager of the district, I was extremely proud of the way our district responded, supported and helped each other through a difficult and somewhat terrifying situation.

Communities along with groups, brigades, local councils and governments rallied to ensure everyone impacted was given the support they required. People were kept informed about the situation, with regular community briefings taking place. In true Australian spirit, within days communities were collecting donations, directing feed to cattle, assisting on farms, removing damaged trees from properties and ensuring the impact to people and property was lessened wherever possible.

The fires also showed how effective and cohesive the emergency services throughout the state can be. CFA, along with Parks Victoria, Victorian Police, Ambulance Victoria and the SES all worked long days and nights in the incident control centre, and in the impacted communities to ensure a targeted approach to the fires, both in the initial stages and throughout the longer peat fires.

I would also like to acknowledge the support District 6 received from the other arms of CFA. Assistant Chief Officer Rohan Luke and Regional Business Manager Emma Cort worked immediately with district management to ensure coverage and relief staffing were brought in from other districts to lessen the impact on district staff who were already under immense pressure. The support from other districts throughout the state (with many strike teams being dispatched) was a major factor in allowing us to focus on the incident support required and the huge administrative impact that occurs after a fire.

We also received support from Community Safety and the Volunteer Sustainability Team.

It is proof that when it really matters we are here for our community, and everyone plays a part in the response and subsequent recovery that occurs when we're faced with extreme incidents.

Australia Day 2019 Honours

NICOLE HARVEY

Nicole's work as the state fire investigation coordinator has not only benefited CFA but Victoria's emergency services as a whole. She is considered to be one of Australia's leading subject matter experts in fire investigation and is regularly approached for advice by other organisations throughout Australia.

Nicole joined CFA's fire investigation team in 1998. Her experiences in CFA and her qualifications in the applied sciences contributed to her strong belief that communities could be made safer if fire services devoted more time to determining the causes of fires.

In the 20 years since, her technical knowledge and skills, outstanding leadership, and professionalism have established her as an acknowledged expert in fire investigation. Fire investigation has become a core component of CFA's services under her influence, and her efforts mean that frontline firefighters understand the importance of preserving incident scenes so the causes of fires can be determined.

As an educator, she has trained and established a team of more than 160 capable

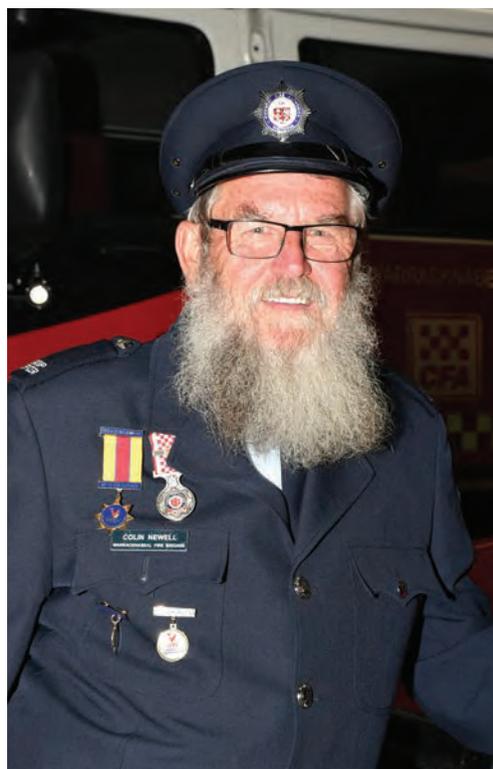
and respected fire investigators who, combined, carry out to up to 800 investigations each year. She continues to lead training across the emergency services, and the quality of her team's work is valued and respected by all stakeholders, particularly Victoria Police.

Nicole also developed the only online fire investigation reporting system in Australia, significantly improving the quality of investigation data.

Nicole said one of the most satisfying parts of her role was the ability to use the outcomes of investigations to identify fire trends that lead to the prevention of fires.

"What drew me to into becoming a fire investigator was the ability to create a significant impact in people's lives when they are often at their weakest and most vulnerable," she said. "Thankfully, CFA has given me a great opportunity to do just that across the entire emergency services and really make a difference.

"It's also very rewarding to support other authorities, particularly internationally, to train in fire investigation techniques and establish their own fire investigation teams."



COLIN NEWELL

A firefighter for the past 50 years, Colin Newell is a well-known leader in his community of Warracknabeal and beyond, and has led innovative projects that have transformed what it means for CFA and community to work as one.

Colin's ethos has always been that CFA and community are one and the same.

"I joined CFA as soon as I was 16 years old. I didn't think about it, it's what everyone in the community did," he said.

"We do our job best when the community is involved. It's what I've always believed and tried to follow when I was captain and now as group officer."

Facing rural decline, Colin launched the Group Hubbing Project which transformed the way local brigades in the group operated by centralising the roles of secretary and treasurer across the 13 brigades.

"It's a simple idea that meant our smaller brigades were no longer required to fill admin roles while they were already struggling to attract new members," Colin said. "It doesn't

sound like a big change but it has taken the strain off our smaller brigades, ensuring they can do what they do best and focus on keeping their communities safe."

The community and innovative mindset feeds Colin's commitment to CFA and has also seen him lead the *Voluntary Grain Harvesting Guide*. Like much of rural Victoria, the landscape in Warracknabeal is dominated by agriculture, and fires are often sparked by harvesting machinery.

"Our community was facing a lot of harvest fires during the season. We took a look and said people needed to take responsibility. These fires are preventable and tie up vital CFA resources," he said.

"Working with the local Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) we systemised how farmers determine if it's a safe day to harvest. We also worked with the VFF to develop a system where we can text farmers on days when it's not safe to harvest. It's been a huge success and we've seen a significant decline in fires started by harvesting since implementing it three years ago."

The Australia Day Honours, announced by the Governor-General, provide national and formal recognition for Australians who've made a significant difference to their communities. Congratulations to the four CFA members who received the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) for their work in emergency services.



GWYNNE BRENNAN

Gwynne Brennan, who was most recently CFA's Executive Manager Community Safety, spent almost two decades with CFA dedicated to community bushfire preparedness and resilience. She was one of the architects of community safety messages and action plans following the 2009 bushfires.

While at CFA, Gwynne made an outstanding contribution to the safety of the community through her leadership, vision, energy, enthusiasm and passion for CFA volunteers and the safety of the community. Her extensive experience in public information gives her the ability to continually look at improvements that will support timely advice to communities, while considering activities that communities can participate in before, during, and after a major incident.

Following the 2009 bushfires, she led the Community Engagement team in implementing programs to support the recommendations from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, and testing new approaches to engage communities in the creation of bushfire action plans.

"The whole rulebook was rewritten that day and a core group was established very quickly that brought together our new messages," Gwynne said. "You could say we were some of the architects of the Fire Danger Ratings system and how we use them to help people make better decisions about their safety.

"It was a challenging time. A lot of work was put in by a lot of people and I'm honoured to be recognised for leadership and commitment.

"I'm particularly honoured as a woman to receive this award for the work I've done in prevention and preparedness. Not to take anything away from the firefighters, but I'm honoured that this important work is recognised as well."

Working in incident management teams has given her the experience required to work in communities during fires, with an in-depth understanding of how a current emergency situation impacts communities.

Now Director of Communications and Engagement at the Environment Protection Authority Victoria, Gwynne spoke fondly of her time at CFA.

"I'm not with CFA any more but I never stop talking to people about bushfires and safety," she said.



JOHN CALLAHAN

For the past 55 years John Callahan has been serving CFA and his community with distinction. He was 23 years old when he was a founding member of Barwon Downs Rural Fire Brigade in 1963. Elected as the communications officer, John holds the same position to this day, a testament to his endeavour to give back to his community.

These values of community, cooperation and outcomes have been with John throughout, leading to many pioneering achievements in CFA both operationally and socially. In 1971 Barwon Downs became one of the first brigades in Victoria to welcome women into operational roles during a fire at Hayden's Mill when no men were available. Noting the need for a more reliable service, John encouraged greater female participation.

"CFA is a big family and we should always be looking for ways to improve how we interact with the community and improve our service to them. Having more diversity in brigades enables both of these to occur."

While aerial observation and suppression are now considered business as usual for CFA, John was one of the first members to use this approach during incidents because he had a pilot's licence.

John regularly flies all day in difficult conditions to relay the most up-to-date information. During the Ash Wednesday fires John first fought the blaze at Deans Marsh and then took to the skies to survey the scene.

"I saw the fire sweep through Moggs Creek and Fairhaven. The townships looked like doll's houses. I'm one of the only people to have seen Ash Wednesday from the air and it's something I will never forget."

A lot has changed since then. "I used to draw maps of the fire and drop them in a tube on a small parachute to the ground crews. Now we use computers for mapping. Anything done on aircraft is available live to any CFA command and other agencies across the state. We really have come a long way as an organisation and sector."





Remembering 2009

In February, CFA honoured and remembered everyone affected by the devastating 2009 Victorian bushfires which claimed the lives of 173 people and destroyed thousands of homes across the state.

To commemorate the tenth anniversary, CFA was involved in events across the state.

A State Memorial Service was held on Monday 4 February, and Chief Officer Steve Warrington was given the honour to speak on behalf of all emergency services.

Steve and CEO Paul Smith also attended North East Region's commemoration event in Seymour, which provided the opportunity for emergency services in that area to reflect on the events and outcomes from those fateful fires.

Steve Warrington said the anniversary was a difficult time for many Victorians in the community and all responders.

"It was a time to reflect on the incredible courage, strength and bravery shown by CFA members, their families and the community and our colleagues at other agencies who stood shoulder to shoulder with us on that day," he said.

"Rarely does a day pass where something about that day doesn't cross my mind or my

colleagues'. For the past 10 years we have channelled our grief into a determination to ensure we keep learning and evolving.

"As a fire service we had to review, reflect and improve on what we did, and the Royal Commission guided those changes – setting a new standard for firefighting practice and procedure here and internationally.

"Many changes were made across the emergency services sector, and most importantly, our partnerships with the sector were strengthened. We work more collaboratively now than ever before.

"I am humbled and inspired by the kindness and generosity of those who have continued to support all of us over the past 10 years.

"We have learnt so much from those fires, and while it's impossible to prevent all fires in our often unpredictable landscape, the community should take comfort in the fact we have some of the best firefighters in the world, ready to protect lives and property.

"We will continue to carry the memories of heroism from those fateful fires and we will always strive to be better prepared."

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER



Above: Wreath at the commemoration event in Seymour.

PHOTO: MATT AHERN

Left: (from left to right) Operations Manager Rob Van Dorsser, Vegetation Management Officer Mitch Emmett, Operations Manager Paul King, Operations Manager Stewart Kreltze, Operations Manager Adrian Gutsche, Graeme Scorrings (Ambulance Victoria)

PHOTO: WAYNE HERRING

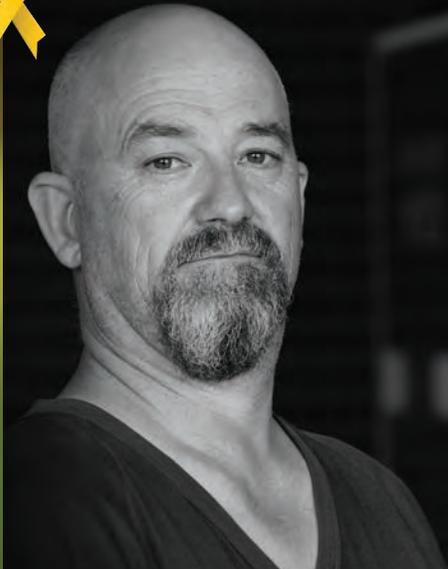
Above right: Chief Officer Steve Warrington speaking at the State Memorial Service

PHOTO: ANDREW HOBBS

Right: Steve Warrington at the Seymour commemoration event

PHOTOS: WAYNE HERRING





“As we headed down the highway it had an eerie feel to it. As we got closer to Kilmore we saw the fire cross the highway and I realised what we were facing.

No-one was talking. It was a pretty tense moment waiting for the fire.

I went to save a house but the gate was locked. I was so focused on my job that a crew member had to tell me to leave as the trees exploded around me.”

*Trevor Cheeseman, captain
Carlyle Fire Brigade
Kilmore fire*

“If I could have had more trucks, I could have protected more properties. But the magnitude of the fires meant I couldn't. We had to prioritise which houses we saved. Some houses weren't safe for even firefighters to save.

You can only prepare so much; nothing can stop Mother Nature. Preparation is great, but life is paramount. You have to know what you need to do to protect life.”

*Steven Rhodes, strike team leader
Bunyip State Forest fire*



“We had a wind change and the fire headed off in a south-westerly direction. There weren't enough trucks in the district to stop that.

When we heard people were trapped in their homes we sent tankers to protect them.

My mother and granddaughter took shelter in a dairy and the fire burned around them. Dad always said that was the worst day of his life.”

*Chris Place, Camperdown
group officer
Weerite fire*



“We’d been monitoring the fire since that morning. Then all of a sudden the forest just exploded. I don’t think any of us expected the enormity of the day.

Victoria is one of the most vulnerable places on the planet for bushfires and the community needs to understand that one day you will be impacted by bushfire. So what are you going to do to prepare your property for when it happens?”

*Bruce Jewell, crew leader
Bunyip Ridge fire*



“I had to walk outside to just take a breath. That was the only way you knew the air-conditioning was working.

When I looked to my right I could see the Redesdale plume, and to my left was the Eaglehawk plume. That’s when I knew we were in real trouble. It was coming at us, the Eaglehawk fire.”

*Peter Rogasch, incident controller
Bendigo fire*

“At the time the fire crossed the highway, it was on my property. The gardens around my house were burning and the pagoda was on fire. I had a sprinkler system that pushed the fire around the house.

We were lucky we didn’t lose the house. I got a call from my wife to say we needed a tanker quickly and I had to tell her no. It wasn’t very nice to have to do that.”

*Terry Place, former captain
Pomborneit & District Fire Brigade
Weerite fire*





“My husband was group officer and District 12 was well prepared. The HQ in Yea was ready to go.

Many people’s partners were out fighting fires and we didn’t know what was going on. That was the hardest part; not knowing what was going on.

On that day it wouldn’t have mattered how many people or how many trucks we had. There was nothing we could do to contain those fires.”

*Jan Beer, Limestone Fire Brigade
Murrindindi fire*

“An operations manager said to me at the time, ‘have I done the right thing?’ and I said, ‘yes you have’. His biggest concern was whether he’d done the right thing.

Our people were shocked by the velocity, the heat and the number of houses that were destroyed.

Fires were spotting miles ahead. All our people did the best they could but unfortunately it was out of their control.”

Norm Bowen, District 2 peer support coordinator



“We could see the firefront in front of us, and we were approaching a dangerous area. The fire jumped the highway. I’d never seen a fire that big.

We consider the highway as a significant firebreak, but it jumped it like it was nothing. The flames were at least 12 metres high.

I was anxious because of the fire’s velocity. I looked at the fire that day and thought there was nothing we could do.”

*Andrew Russell, strike team leader
Kilmore fire*





Update on BA replacement

PHOTO: LISA BREITTSCHNEIDER

We're entering a new era of firefighting in Victoria as the Victorian Respiratory Protection Replacement Project (RPRP) breathes new life into aged and obsolete equipment.

This has been a unique statewide project especially in relation to aligning such a major piece of operational protective equipment across agencies. The RPRP team has worked closely with MFB, Ambulance Victoria and Corrections Victoria to implement the next generation breathing apparatus (BA) equipment.

The project's success can be attributed to positive consultation and engagement with other agencies and stakeholders across emergency management, the United Firefighters Union and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria.

The MSA G1 BA is being implemented with two variants: the Classic (pneumatic) and the Electronic sets. These variants will be allocated to CFA brigades based on a pre-determined brigade classification and risk profile.

There has been thorough preparation leading up to implementing the new BA. Collectively, the many different working parts have involved CFA Fleet and Protective Equipment Department, MFB BA Department, CFA/MFB Training and Development, representation from other stakeholders and agencies and all the subject matter experts. Everyone has been dedicated to enhancing respiratory protection safety and interoperability across the sector.

The MSA G1 will be introduced as part of the 2019 Victorian firefighter recruit courses, where CFA and MFB career recruit firefighters will be trained to use the new BA. CFA and MFB will then continue to roll out the MSA G1 to career and volunteer fire stations. The Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre campuses across Victoria will continue to be an integral part of ongoing BA skills acquisition and maintenance courses.

Congratulations to District 20 members (pictured) who began their training in December 2018 and became operational with the MSA G1 Classic BA and 300bar cylinders on 21 December 2018.

"Credit goes to the entire District 20 with special mention to Operations Officer Mick Lavery and Training Coordinator Jo Murray for their efforts in organising and running the training sessions," District 20 Operations Manager Peter Taylor said. "The challenge was put to all District 20 BA brigades and in true fashion they responded.



"In mid-December – among school break-ups, end of season gatherings, harvest and the busy operational time of the Fire Danger Period – District 20 trained over 120 operators across 15 brigades. My appreciation goes to the RPRP team for choosing District 20 to lead the rollout, but ultimately to the staff and volunteers for accepting the challenge head on and set the example for the rest of the state."

D16 Operations Manager Bernie Fradd said the RPRP changeover project in District 16 has been one of the smoothest and simplest change management processes he'd been involved with.

"Most of this I am happy to attribute to the cooperation between the project team and district, particularly through the excellent work of our Training Coordinator Amanda Kilpatrick," Bernie said. "Having Amanda dedicated to this project, managing all the complexities, was the difference between a smoothly run program and one where things get missed.

"Another great effort was having all catchment teams, operations officers and BASOs delivering the training in the one day."

The RPRP team would like to acknowledge and thank the ongoing support from staff and volunteers during this intensive implementation program. For more information and project updates go to the RPRP page on Brigades Online.

STORY WILLIAM MALAK

Structural helmets project update

The structural helmets project includes the procurement and deployment of a new European-style helmet for approximately 5,000 CFA volunteer firefighters who have both breathing apparatus and search and rescue competencies.

An open market tender for the project was released in mid-January and closed at the end of February.

As part of the evaluation process simulated field trials of shortlisted helmets are currently being conducted with volunteers at several training grounds across the state. Expressions of interest were sought from volunteers wanting to take part in the field evaluations. The feedback from participants will help to determine which helmet is chosen.

When this process is complete, we will let volunteers know the outcome and the likely timeline and process for deployment.

The project was funded as part of the State Government's \$60 million investment in the Victorian fire services as part of the 2017 Fire Services Statement.

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM

New alerting service coming soon

The Emergency Alerting System (EAS), which uses one-way pager messages, has been used by CFA, SES and Ambulance Victoria (AV) since 2006 to alert career and volunteer emergency personnel about emergencies. The system is a vital part of these organisations' operational procedures, and is used to dispatch emergency services and relay important information to field personnel.

The EAS works well, is very reliable and has good network coverage across the state. However, CFA has taken on feedback from users about the system's limitations, and there are features which, if included, would improve its usability. For example, allowing users to acknowledge messages could allow other members to quickly see who is attending an incident and how far away they are.

It is not technically feasible to upgrade the existing EAS service to include additional features so the emergency services decided we would need a supplementary alerting service (SAS) delivered via a web browser and smartphone app to address these issues.

In late 2017 Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) set up the SAS project, and a project team was formed that included representation from CFA, SES, AV, ESTA and EMV. EMV will procure the SAS on behalf of the agencies.

First, the project team defined the objectives of the SAS project and developed a set of

high-level requirements based on feedback from users of the existing EAS service. An online survey run in July 2018 attracted a high response from members. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents thought this was an important, beneficial and long overdue project.

The results from the survey led to a number of key changes to the specifications to ensure the system reflected user needs. In particular, people highlighted the need for:

- appropriate privacy protection measures
- accessibility options for users with vision impairment
- additional options in relation to message acknowledgement
- greater control around deleting messages.

EMV and the participating agencies appreciate the many staff and volunteers who took the time to respond to the survey.

The SAS solution will be dependent on commercial mobile networks, which don't offer the same level of availability or coverage as EAS. The EAS network was built to mission-critical standards and will continue to operate in conditions where commercial mobile networks may fail or operate sub-optimally. There are also many areas of the state that currently have no mobile network coverage.

This means SAS will be an optional, supplementary service only. The EAS network

will continue as the primary way to alert staff and volunteers throughout the state, and CFA expects operational members to wear and use their pagers even if they choose to use the SAS.

A request for tender (RFT) for the SAS service was released by EMV in October 2018 and tender responses closed in November 2018. All agencies are heavily involved in the evaluation process. Although the project team is aware there are several products already in the market, respondents were free to propose either an existing product or a newly developed product. The project team has no pre-conceived solution in mind.

All responses are being evaluated against the documented tender requirements with the aim of choosing the product that best meets the needs of the end users, while also offering good value for money for the state.

At the time *Brigade* magazine went to press, the successful tender respondent had not been announced.

Once implemented, SAS will be a valuable supplementary service providing a mechanism to acknowledge messages and track team availability, as well as provide a range of other features designed to simplify the work of volunteers and career staff.

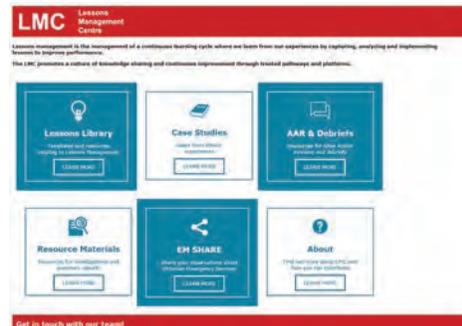
STORY MALCOLM WINCH AND JASON LAWRENCE

New resource for lessons learned

The Lessons Management Centre (LMC) has launched new pages on CFA Online as part of the commitment to performance improvement, learning from experiences and engaging with CFA members.

Lessons management is the management of a continuous learning cycle where we learn from our experiences by capturing and analysing observations, and sharing lessons identified to improve performance.

The online resource (www.cfa.vic.gov.au/lmc) will make it easier for members to learn from these lessons with the entire CFA case study library now available online. LMC Coordinator Katerina Sirianos hopes the website will encourage members to get in touch with the centre to share their own stories.



"We encourage everyone to own their mistakes and successes so we can all learn from each other's experiences," Katerina said.

The website will also host a range of resources related to lessons management and operations

and will be updated throughout the year to give members easy access to learning products from CFA and other agencies from around the world.

There's also a link to EM Share, an online platform that enables sharing of observations from your experiences before, during and after emergencies. This helps the emergency management sector to learn from incidents and drive continuous improvement.

We encourage you to share your experiences with us and if you would like more information about how you can be involved, particularly in case study development, email lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY SARAH BOOTH

Valuable research into fire behaviour

Volunteer firefighters participated in the first study of its kind into crop fires. CFA and CSIRO undertook the cutting-edge research burns on private land at Wallinduc south-west of Ballarat during high fire danger days in February and early March 2019.

They used a range of data collection resources including remotely piloted aircraft (drones) and infrared gear to collect data that will improve the way risk is assessed and fire behaviour is predicted in such conditions.

In thanking participating brigades, CFA Deputy Chief Officer Bushfire Alen Slijepcevic said the burns would not have happened without the support of volunteers.

Cape Clear Captain Michael Rowe, author of *The Art of Roadside Burning*, said volunteers were happy to help support the project knowing it would make a difference.

One of the state's most experienced brigades at stubble burning, Cape Clear brigade burns about 2,500 hectares of stubble a year to raise \$10,000 for the brigade. Michael called on volunteers to help create a safety barrier around the research burn site.

Thirty firefighters came from districts, 6, 7, 13 and 15 helped on the day of the burns.

"Carrying out this research is fantastic. It will completely change how we do the Fire Danger Index," Michael said. "This is data that has never been collected before and that's why we were there to help."

In the days following, Michael and a mixed strike team of members from surrounding brigades returned the favour by turning up to fight the Bunyip fire in the south-east.

The results of the research burns, which will be analysed by CSIRO, will help CFA with future response to crop fires, and help determine Fire Danger Ratings, Fire Danger Periods, Total Fire Bans and how CFA allocates resources across the state.

STORY LISELOTTE GEARY



ICCs: a hive of activity

CFA has incident control centres (ICCs) scattered throughout the state that activate when a local incident escalates from Level 1 to Level 2. All incidents begin at Level 1 and move to Level 2 or Level 3 depending on the threat to life and property.

An ICC can also be put on standby on high-risk days when weather conditions could lead to a large-scale incident such as a major bushfire or flooding.

On Friday 4 January as temperatures soared into the 40s across the state, the ICC based in Gisborne in central Victoria was put on notice. We shadowed some of the volunteers and staff that day to find out what goes on behind the scenes.

10.15am

There are around 30 people working in the centre today but on any given day there could be as many as 80 or 90. With everyone now present, a briefing takes place to describe the conditions to be aware of over the course of the day.

As well as soaring temperatures, a 60km/hour southerly wind change is expected between 1pm and 4pm.

Representatives from CFA, DELWP, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Victoria Police, SES and Parks Victoria are here as Incident Controller Trevor Roche explains everyone's role and runs through key weather details. He tells everyone they need to attack any fire that may arise with concentration and depth.

11.30am

Currently working as acting typography coordinator at CFA headquarters in Burwood, Michelle Andrews is today's mapping officer (pictured above right). She's been with CFA for 12 years and has worked in incident management teams (IMT) almost every year.

"My role is to sketch fire outlines, update our e-map systems and map fire predictions," she explains.

"I get a lot of the key details from our Situation Team, which gives me the rate of spread for the fire.

"There is the mapping that is conducted by our fire behaviour analysts at headquarters in Burwood, and I compare and verify this with manual mapping here. Sometimes having local knowledge of the area can really help in that regard."

Michelle explains that the regions covered by an ICC are not necessarily split evenly into CFA regions. She shows me the areas that Gisborne ICC is covering today – most of districts 2 and 14, and parts of districts 7 and 15.

"I really enjoy working in an IMT. It's a fun environment when it's not busy, and I love working with maps. Hopefully, it doesn't get too busy today but if it does, we're generally really on the ball here in Gisborne."



1pm

By the afternoon temperatures have reached 36 degrees. Although there are no major fires in the area, the centre is a hive of activity.

A staff-wide teleconference communicating key weather details is taking place, with the rest of the state joining in. This reveals that the wind change that was initially expected to come through at around 4pm is now expected at about 6pm, which means everyone at the centre will have to stay for longer.

The incident controller of an IMT is responsible for the management of all activities carried out to control an incident. They are responsible for the health and welfare of operational and support crews as well as managing the interaction with communities that are likely to be affected.

It's no surprise then that an incident controller needs considerable experience. As a former CFA chief officer, Trevor Roche (pictured above right) has this in spades.

"The main things to consider as incident controller are the welfare of our own people and to continually focus on the possible threat to communities," Trevor says of his role.

"Communities need to have the capacity to look after themselves to some extent but we also need to make sure they're as well informed as they can be.

"I think in my role it's really important to chat to locals as they are the people who can tell you the most as they know the area best."

Trevor was chief officer from 1996 to 2002 and has been involved with CFA in some capacity ever since.

He is currently on standby during summer to act as an incident controller, helping out during large-scale incidents or on dangerous days like today.

"My wife says I'm mad to keep going," he says with a laugh.

"I fell into the role a bit. Following the 2009 bushfires, I was asked to sort out the accreditation process that's now required to work in an ICC.

"I just love it. I've got a real passion for CFA.

"I enjoyed my time as a volunteer first, and then as an employee later, so I thought why stop there?"

"It's a wonderful organisation, full of some really wonderful people."



Trevor's point about having local knowledge is one that is echoed by today's Deputy Planning Officer Peter Dillon (pictured below).

Peter has been a volunteer with Macedon Fire Brigade, a 15-minute drive from Gisborne, for more than 30 years.

"People who live around here know the roads, they know the forest, they know the grass. They just know the area so well," he says. "I think it's been great that CFA has encouraged locals to get involved in incident management.

"In the planning team, it's our role to provide information about situations, conditions, etc. In the event of a long and enduring campaign fire, we provide the tactics and strategy designed to combat the fire, which form part of an incident action plan (IAP).

"Once this gets signed off by the incident controller, it's given to the operations guys who then deliver it onto the fireground."

Peter has been doing this for around five years, and enjoys having an additional way to contribute to CFA.

"As I'm getting on a bit, it can be difficult to keep getting on the back of a truck, and there's also the issue that I live a little bit of distance from the brigade.

"Working in an ICC gives me a way to continue being involved and it's something I really enjoy."



3.30pm

Temperatures have reached their highest point, a scorching 42 degrees. News has filtered through of a major fire in Rosedale in East Gippsland.

4.30pm

As the afternoon wears on it seems less likely there will be a fire. But as Planning Officer Neil Thompson (pictured below) explains, IMT members need to be ready for dangerous fire activity in the afternoon because of changes in the weather.

"I've worked in IMTs for the past 13 years, and later afternoon can be a very dangerous time," Neil says. "There's the potential for wind changes; we're obviously expecting that today and that can change the direction of the fire.

"We've also got the possibility of a thunderstorm today, albeit a low one.

"You have to stay vigilant across the course of the day and always monitor the conditions."



PHOTOS: TIM MCGLONE

7.30pm

Thankfully, there are no more significant changes in the weather and most IMT personnel begin to leave the centre at 7.30pm. The day has gone smoothly in this area.

Managing incidents involves many people working in a rapidly-changing environment which has the potential to impact many people. CFA needs a range of people with different skills and experiences to work in an ICC and training is available for both volunteers and staff. To get involved, speak to your group officer or operations manager.

For information about IMT accreditation pathways and the different roles in an IMT, go to <https://cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelid=incidentManagement>.

STORY TIM MCGLONE

Spotlight on engineering team

Our firefighters put out fires or get them under control within hours, days or weeks. But the Engineering team that designs the trucks and equipment to support them has to wait longer than most to see the fruits of their labour. Designing and producing a new truck can take several years of hard work.

The Fleet and Protective Equipment team is split into three divisions: Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing, Fleet Operations, and Fleet Engineering. The engineering team provides and maintains protective equipment and fleet assets to make sure CFA members have the resources they need to protect Victorian communities.

CFA's Manager of Engineering Andrew Webb said his team does more than just build trucks.

"Fire appliance planning is obviously a large part of our job. Our team is responsible for the design and management of new and retrofitted fire appliances to support and enhance frontline capability," Andrew said.

"But we also prepare technical and commercial documentation, offer evaluation and contract recommendations, design and manage our fleet of retrofit programs, and conduct appliance and mechanical equipment innovation, research and development."

"The amount of effort our engineering team puts in from appliance concept stage right through to final delivery should not be underestimated," Executive Manager Fleet and Protective Equipment Danny Jones said. "Trying to meet the needs of all stakeholders while managing projects within timelines and budgets takes initiative, determination, professionalism and persistence."

To give you an idea of the work that goes into producing the vehicles, we took a look at the journey of a brand new medium pumper, from start to finish.

1. GENERAL SPECIFICATION AND CONSULTATION

Establishing design requirements and conducting a requirement analysis for a new pumper can take a considerable amount of time and research. This will involve the engineering team assessing the existing fleet of vehicles and determining what improvements or modifications need to be made.

"Consulting with key stakeholders, including material and equipment suppliers, manufacturers, CFA's financial team, and of course CFA brigades and firefighters, is a key part of the process." Project Manager of Engineering Karen Barnet said.

Vehicle designs, initially on paper, are drawn up as the vehicle begins to take shape.

2. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

The engineering team produces a document that defines a set of requirements that the pumper must meet or exceed.

"It's our job to state what the vehicle needs to do at the end of production," Karen said.

"We determine what we need the vehicle to do and the manufacturers work with us to find solutions.

"At this stage, we create a technical specifications document that's usually about 100-plus pages long. It's pretty comprehensive."

3. TENDERS AND ORDER

CFA has a number of trusted suppliers who we approach to build a vehicle. A tender is sent to these suppliers for the supply of some parts of the truck.

When the tender is complete, an order for parts is placed. CFA's vehicles comprise parts from both local and international suppliers. The cab chassis comes from Sweden, foam pump from France and the water pump from England. But the ladders and interiors come from just down the road in Ballarat. Some parts, including the pumper's lockers, are produced on site at SEM Fire and Rescue Manufacturing Plant, Wendouree.

4. BUILD COMMENCES

Production of the pumper begins in Wendouree. After the cab chassis arrives, it's painted and key parts are added.



The pumper's lockers are built separately to improve speed and efficiency and ensure a safer build. In fact, much of the vehicle is produced separately, including electronics, interiors, and water pumps, before being assembled near the end of the build.



5. PROGRESS INSPECTIONS

CFA's engineers visit the plant in Wendouree to check the progress of the vehicle at regular intervals throughout the production process.

"Generally we'll be at the manufacturing plant to iron out any issues surrounding supply, parts or questions the guys might have regarding the vehicle," Karen said.



When phase one of the build is complete, a crane lifts the lockers onto the pumper, where they are bolted into place and extra compartments affixed.

Pre-installed electronics are hooked up and final details are added. CFA gear is transported from the CFA logistics centre and stowed in the pumper's lockers. The truck is nearing completion.

6. FINAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA) INSPECTION

A member of CFA's engineering team carries out a final QA inspection before the pumper leaves the manufacturing plant, something Karen said can be a painstaking process.

"It will generally take a full day to inspect a vehicle entirely. The vehicle specifications document from earlier in the process comes back into play. Everything needs to be checked and tested – this is not something that can be sped up," Karen said.

There were around 20 vehicles, all at different stages, being built in the plant on this particular day, including a tanker that was ready for a QA inspection.

7. REGISTRATION AND CLEAN/DETAIL

Just like standard cars, CFA vehicles are subject to regulatory processes. The truck also gets a fresh clean before delivery. All vehicles are then delivered to the relevant workshop where a district mechanical officer carries out a pre-delivery inspection and ensures all rectifications identified during the QA inspection have been carried out.

8. DELIVERY TO BRIGADE

The big moment! CFA's firefighters get their hands on the vehicle for the first time. A ministerial event is generally announced, presenting the vehicle to its new fire brigade and community.

The entire process, from initial designs of the pumper through to delivery to brigade, can take more than two years. So while the firefighters at Moe Fire Brigade enjoy testing their new pumper (pictured below) CFA's Engineering team will be well on the way to producing the next fleet of vehicles.



PHOTO: ROWAN DAY

2017-18 STATISTICS

- 69 vehicles were delivered to CFA locations.
- 53 of these were financed through CFA and 16 through the Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP).
- By the end of the 2018-19 financial year the number is expected to increase to 55 CFA-funded vehicles and 51 through VESEP.
- A total of \$34.9 million was allocated to CFA engineering for 2017-18.
- Prototypes of the new heavy pumper, ultra heavy tanker, ultra light tanker, single-axle trailer pump, rehabilitation unit and sand tanker were completed.
- Testing and validation of the Crew Protection System completed.
- The Volunteer Support Package comprising 16 medium pumpers, 10 heavy tankers and two ultra large tankers, was completed. All vehicles are heading to volunteer stations.

BlazeAid helps rebuild people's lives



In the aftermath of the devastating 2009 bushfires, Kilmore East farmers Kevin and Rhonda Butler needed to quickly rebuild their fences. They were among the many who suffered damage to their property. At risk of losing their livestock, they sought help from family, friends and locals to help rebuild their fences.

The job, which would otherwise have taken months to complete, was finished within a week. This marked the beginning of the group known as BlazeAid.

Since 2009, BlazeAid volunteers have come from near and far to help rebuild fences in the aftermath of a bushfire. But as vice-president Brian Carr explained, it's not just fires and fences that BlazeAid's army of volunteers have assisted with.

"People are often surprised when we say that building fences is usually our second priority," Brian said. "Our first priority is to lift the spirit of the farmers we are helping.

"A lot of the time when we first see them, they're in tears, they've lost everything. Having people there helping shows them that somebody cares."

The group currently assists those in need following a fire, flood, cyclone or drought, Australia-wide, in the recovery phase after first responders have departed.

"We get people on the verge of ending it all, and they literally can't get out of bed in the morning to face the day.

"We had one gentleman whose greyhounds were his pride and joy, and he had quite a lot of them. He lost them all in a fire as well as his house, his machinery and fencing. He was devastated and I think we were able to save his life just by being around and giving him something to do, some people to talk to. He's going strong now.

"I would imagine we've saved quite a few lives doing what we do."

More than 16,000 volunteers donated their time to BlazeAid between 2009 and 2017, and an estimated 7,050 kilometres of fencing was rebuilt by the group in this time.

BlazeAid volunteers have come from all parts of Australia as well as New Zealand, Switzerland, England, Afghanistan, Canada, Germany, Austria, the US and France. The group is a triumph of human spirit, an example of people's willingness to provide assistance to those most in need.

None of the 16,000 who has volunteered for BlazeAid has received a cent, and indeed the group has many parallels with CFA and its large group of dedicated volunteers.

In fact, some of those who have volunteered for BlazeAid are also CFA volunteers or volunteers for other states' fire service organisations.

"We get a lot of older people offering to help, but we also get some younger people too, even school age," Brian said.

"They'll stay at camps for sometimes up to nine months helping out and doing what they can.

"The people that receive the help think it's absolutely lovely that there are people who will help them, but our volunteers are just looking to do something useful for those who need it."

STORY TIM MCGLONE



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED BY BRIAN CARR

What research tells us about the 2009 fires

A decade on from Australia's deadliest bushfires in which 173 people lost their lives and thousands of houses were destroyed, we look back at what the research found in the immediate aftermath. The lessons from the fires still resonate today.

Conducted by the then Bushfire CRC, the research effort began less than 48 hours after the fires began. The purpose of the research was to provide the Australian fire and land management agencies with an independent analysis of the factors surrounding the fires. It focused on three aspects – fire behaviour, human behaviour and building and planning issues.

In one of the largest post-hazard studies ever undertaken, the research taskforce assessed more than 1,300 homes, interviewed more than 600 residents and took more than 21,000 photos.

FIRE BEHAVIOUR

Researchers considered which fires were ordinary or extreme and which were extraordinary – that is, exhibiting fire behaviour outside known experience. They found that ember spotting (the distance an ember can travel in the wind) was a significant factor in the progression of the fires. Some spotting was recorded more than 30 kilometres ahead of the main fire, exacerbated by wind gusts that reached up to 100km/hour.

The fire behaviour models under-predicted the speed the fires spread, with a key recommendation suggesting that further work was required to understand the detailed progression of the fire across the landscape.

Since 2009 there has been a lot of research to develop fire spread simulators, with researchers working alongside operational personnel to



PHOTO: DAVID BRUCE, BUSHFIRE AND NATURAL HAZARDS CRC

improve modelling accuracy. This has enabled agencies to issue more informed emergency warnings for the safety of firefighters and communities.

BUILDING AND PLANNING

The level of detail in house design, building quality and the age of the property were all considered to be crucial factors that contributed to the likelihood of house loss during the fires.

In all, 2,029 houses were destroyed during the 2009 fires. This included houses more than 380 metres away from continuous bush. Brick houses were more fire-resistant than mud brick and lightweight construction clad with timber or cellulose cement sheet. Vegetation overhanging or immediately adjacent to houses, either isolated or continuous, was a key factor influencing the likelihood of house loss.

Soon after 2009, this research informed new building standards. Changes to Australian Standard 3959 ensured that new buildings in bushfire-prone areas would be safer and more likely to survive during a fire. Scientists are now working with urban planners to mitigate risk across wider geographical areas in the design and management of communities as they expand into potentially hazardous zones.

The themes covered in the Victorian 2009 Bushfire Research Response report are still

a concern today for fire and land agencies, governments, and planning authorities. Read more about this research at bnhcrc.com.au/hazardnotes/58.

HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Key human behaviour issues examined included planning and preparedness, information and warnings, and intentions and actions. Many people were not prepared for the severity of the fires and most only took last-minute measures on the day to combat the fire threat.

Several weak links resulted in a lack of planning and preparation and affected people's ability to implement their fire plan. Many residents waited to assess the severity of the bushfires before deciding whether to stay or go. They identified public buildings, ovals and facilities with emergency services as relatively safe places of refuge during the bushfires.

Over the past 10 years, CFA and other fire agencies have adapted their community engagement approaches. They now place emphasis on the reality that the safest place to be is away from the fire and that during severe weather conditions defending a house from a bushfire will be impossible.

STORY NATHAN MADDOCK

A new way to work with communities

The better connected we are with our communities the better we manage risks together and the more resilient communities become.

That's the aim of a new Community Engagement Framework developed in 2018. It outlines how CFA people will interact with the community and what community members can expect when engaging with CFA.

The overarching goal of the framework is to create more resilient communities by increasing community participation in the decisions that we would otherwise make on their behalf. This is particularly important in high-risk bushfire areas, tourist locations, farming properties, with youth, and in culturally-diverse communities.

When communities feel empowered they are more likely to take positive action to manage their own safety risks before, during and after an emergency situation. It also means that decisions are more likely to meet community expectations and needs.

"Our people are highly-respected leaders and have an important connection to their local community," CEO Paul Smith said.

"When we include these communities in what we do, we improve their confidence and trust in us even more, building the partnerships that will make CFA a truly effective fire and emergency service.

"Delivering on the commitments we make in the Community Engagement Framework relies on every one of us embracing it and taking ownership.

"To support this, CFA will develop the tools and training to enable brigades to effectively work with members of their community and embed a community-first approach in everything they do. This includes community engagement training to provide staff and volunteers with increased knowledge and understanding as well as the skills to better engage with communities."

Applying this to your community

The Community Engagement Framework is a promise to put the community at the centre of everything we do, including planning, preparation, response and renewal.

This could include having honest and open conversations when and where the community wants them, creating opportunities for communities to be involved in decision-making such as when a controlled burn takes place or how vegetation is managed, working with other stakeholders to broaden CFA's reach, or feeding local knowledge and understanding into what we do.

Brigades can build and celebrate their skills in community engagement by participating in community engagement training, identifying instances where they have worked with the community and sharing it with other members through a story or case study, or putting someone forward for a community engagement award at the Spirit of CFA Awards.



Below, we've highlighted three local community engagement projects. For more information about community engagement programs, tools and resources or the Community Engagement Framework, please contact your district community engagement coordinator.

Workshops in the West

In West Region, Community Engagement Coordinator Chris Carey is working with his team of 18 facilitators to help communities prepare for bushfires and grassfires through scenario-based workshops.

Chris began trialling the use of hypothetical scenarios in 2016 after sensing that people were uncomfortable about disclosing their fire plans in front of neighbours and friends. Instead the hypothetical scenario asks attendees to assume one of several identities and discuss and debate what planning and preparation should include from this perspective.

Workshops cover the first 90 minutes after a fire impacts in real time, taking attendees through the myriad decisions they will need to make to remain safe or survive.

"Attendee numbers vary from five to over 50, though they are growing in popularity particularly for repeat workshops," Chris said.

"Brigades have also participated as it allows them to see a fire from the community's perspective.

"I have seen many lightbulb moments during the workshops. We've even seen an increase in activity from our Community Fire Guard groups including new groups forming."

Communities and emergency services: safer together

By 30 June 2019 more than 300 CFA people will have built the skills and knowledge to meaningfully engage with their communities through their participation in the Build Capacity and Capability project, part of the Safer Together Community First program.

CFA members and staff as well as volunteers from other emergency services are participating in a suite of three workshops, designed to help them develop the tools and confidence to work with their communities.

The community engagement workshops also give participants the opportunity to network and discuss how a community-centred approach to engagement can work in a practical sense. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive:



"I've done a lot of training over the years, including IAP2 and this was the best to combine theory, practice and context," said a participant who did the Level 1 Introduction to Community Engagement.

"It's great having such a good mix from a variety of agencies/ organisations – really builds on the networks/relationships," said a Level 2 Introduction to Community Engagement participant.

"Through all my careers, work and volunteer roles this has been the most beneficial training I have ever undertaken," said a Level 3 Creative Facilitation participant.

To find out more or to participate in the community engagement workshops email the Build Capacity and Capability Coordinator Niki Habibis at n.habibis@cfa.vic.gov.au.



Rochester builds Indigenous connection

"When we engage with the community we can share a common goal and work together to achieve that goal," said Rochester Fire Brigade Captain Luke Warren.

More than 18 months after Rochester brigade hosted CFA's first Smoking Ceremony focusing on safe passage through the fire season, the brigade's members continue to increase their knowledge of local Indigenous culture and the local clans in the area. Rochester is situated on the border of Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta lands.

The brigade has honoured significant events and days on the Aboriginal calendar such as NAIDOC Week, and shows respect by raising the Aboriginal flag outside the station during these events.

"Our members are interested in expanding their understanding of the history and goals of these events and seek out opportunities to participate in ceremonies and celebrations run by our Aboriginal communities," Luke said.

"It's a unique way for us to learn about each other and bring our communities closer together.

"After we installed the Aboriginal flag at the station, a local Yorta Yorta man walked in off the street and donated a coolamon to the brigade.

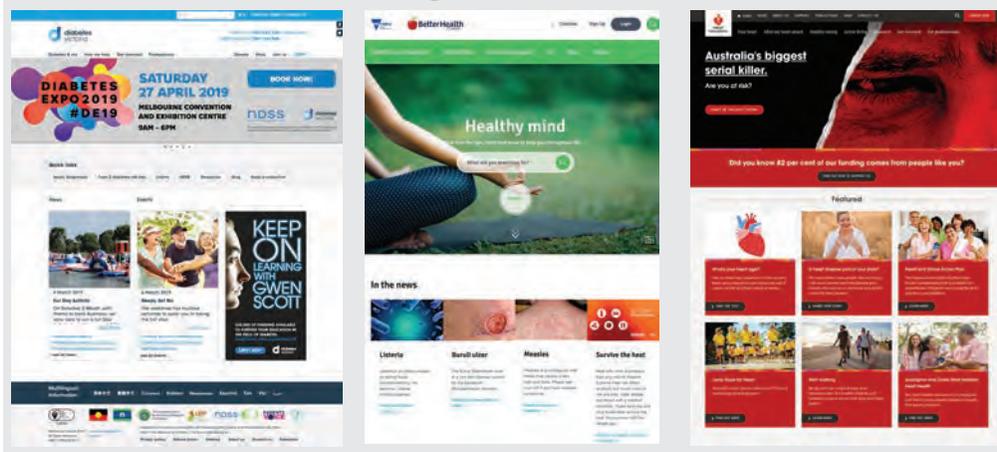
It's all about building partnerships based on cultural exchange and knowledge sharing."

Other activities initiated by the brigade include a cultural awareness workshop in Echuca alongside members of other local business and community organisations and reciting an Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of the brigade's monthly meetings.

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN



Look after your health



The health of Australians is changing. Over the past few decades there has been a gradual increase in the number of people with chronic health conditions. In 2017 cardiovascular disease was responsible for just over a quarter of all deaths in Australia.

Between 1990 and 2015 the number of people with diabetes tripled from 1.5 per cent to 4.7 per cent, and in 2015 almost two-thirds of Australian adults were overweight or obese. There's a lot of

trustworthy health-related information available to help you understand and manage your health and medical conditions.

Better Health Channel (betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

This Victorian Government-funded website gives you a wide range of practical information about nutrition, an A-Z of healthy living topics, an A-Z of conditions and treatments, information about the Victorian health system and how to access

the services you need, understanding and treating pain, and more. It also tracks current and emerging health issues and developments in medical research and practice.

Diabetes Victoria (diabetesvic.org.au)

Diabetes Victoria supports and campaigns for all Victorians affected by or at risk of diabetes through education, support programs and events. It funds research focusing on prevention and management strategies and the search for a cure for all types of diabetes.

Diabetes Victoria also manages the Life! program (lifeprogram.org.au), a free program to help you change aspects of your lifestyle to reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Health experts deliver the program to groups of people and can also coach you over the phone. The experts motivate and support you to make and maintain positive changes and to adopt healthy behaviours.

The Heart Foundation (heartfoundation.org.au)

Launched in 1959, The Heart Foundation charity funds lifesaving heart research and works to improve heart disease prevention and care for all Australians. The website has information about heart attacks, healthy eating, how to be more active, and the latest findings from Heart Foundation-funded research.

Post-traumatic growth

Despite experiencing negative and distressing reactions after a traumatic event, such situations also have the potential to create positive outcomes. Called post-traumatic growth (PTG), research is now exploring how it has the potential to generate a positive change within a person after they have experienced an event that disrupts their view of the world.

PTG does not occur as a direct result of the trauma. The level of growth is determined by how the individual incorporates the experienced trauma into their world view.

It's important to note that PTG is not the absence of suffering or the disappearance of distress. It can be displayed as people holding a greater appreciation for life, more meaningful interpersonal relationships, enhanced spiritual beliefs, new direction and purpose in life, and an increased sense of personal strength. It has been shown to occur in assault victims, traumatised children, people with chronic physical illness, disaster survivors and combat soldiers.

Everyone reacts to experiences differently and will work through them in different ways, and not everyone will experience PTG. The link

between PTG and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is unclear. Some studies have shown that growth may be a response to distress, others show that growth may lead to a reduction in distress or that it has no relationship at all.

These are some of the factors that can increase the likelihood of PTG:

- The availability of other people to share your emotions with to process the event. They could be your mates at work, managers, friends or professional support from a counsellor or psychologist. Working through the trauma is linked to the changing of personal goals, meaning and world views, which is required for PTG to progress.
- Development of coping strategies that work for you. Mindfulness can be a great one to try because it allows you to acknowledge emotions that are present.
- Personal awareness of post-traumatic reactions.

For more information on post traumatic growth, Sane Australia has some useful resources and tip sheets. Go to sane.org/the-sane-blog/wellbeing/what-is-post-traumatic-growth

NEED WELLBEING SUPPORT?



Member Assistance Program

- Psychologists & Counsellors
- Skills for Psychological Recovery
- Specialised Clinical Advice for leaders and people supporting individuals with mental health concerns

Chaplaincy Program

- Regular onsite visits to CFA locations
- One-on-one non-denominational pastoral care

Bullying & Harassment Hotline

- Confidential advice and support for referral to the right place in CFA

Peer Support

- Support for personal, brigade, station or team issues
- Support after Potentially Traumatic Events
- Deployment to Major Incidents

Centres Against Sexual Assault

- Specialised counselling and support to members and their immediate family who have been impacted by current or historical sexual abuse and/or harassment.

Education and Coaching

- Broad range of training packages available for delivery to your brigade, station or team
- Coaching delivered to leadership teams and individuals

Providing CFA members and their immediate families
access to support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

1800 959 232



For more information visit: cfa.vic.gov.au/wellbeing

CFA's new HealthReady Program

Coming soon is a new CFA health initiative **HealthReady for CFA district headquarters**. The HealthReady program is designed to help staff identify and reduce their risk of chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular disease. The program also includes information about key health and safety themes relevant to CFA staff.

The program will allow for cross-department collaboration (for example between health services and health and safety teams) to provide information about:

- individual health
- organisational safety
- lifestyle modification
- injury prevention
- health awareness

The HealthReady program joins CFA's existing programs aimed at career and volunteer fire-fighters: Healthy for Life and HealthWatch. The three programs will work together to provide the most relevant and beneficial prevention strategies across CFA to reduce cardiovascular disease and improve overall health.

HEALTH READY

For more information about HealthReady, email hflp@cfa.vic.gov.au.



What we can learn from CFASafe

CFASafe is a web-based system that records details of CFA accidents and hazards so that actions can be taken to eliminate or minimise the likelihood of them reoccurring. Last year all volunteers who use Brigades Online were given access to CFASafe. This gives members a quick and convenient way to report accidents and hazards which in turn means an action plan can be put in place quickly.

The system ensures that a risk assessment is carried out, and then a manager creates an action plan detailing what measures need to be taken.

The system can also produce reports and graphs to identify trends. In 2018 CFA employees and volunteers across our five regions reported 1,240 accidents and 450 hazards. This is a year-on-year increase in accidents and hazards of 23 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively. This means CFA people are either having more accidents or that we are getting better at reporting them.

Most accidents occurred on Sundays and Wednesdays, and in the months of January and March. Parts of the body most often injured were hands and backs, and the injuries were most often described as trauma to muscles and tendons, and laceration or open wound. The report highlighted that more than half the accidents occurred while responding to an operational incident. A significant number of accidents also happened during training, while doing administrative tasks and when travelling.

These results are a reminder that people need to use the appropriate personal protective equipment and use correct manual handling techniques at all times. It could also help to take an extra moment to stop and assess the situation, then complete a dynamic risk assessment before proceeding.

To report an incident or hazard go to Brigades Online and click the CFASafe red button on the home screen.

Website to help manage mental health

A new website Let Me Know gives firefighters, volunteers, staff and their families a tool to assess and measure their mental health at the touch of a button. The website is designed to be responsive so it can be easily viewed on portable devices such as phones and tablets.

The free online platform is a private tool to help people record their exposures and reactions to stress and trauma. Built-in trigger points alert the user to make a self-assessment or seek support.

As well as integrating a range of mental health and support contacts, the website also includes wellbeing tips to improve sleep, fitness, and nutrition.

Operations Manager EMR/Wellbeing Tony O'Day said Let Me Know was an important addition to CFA's range of wellbeing support services.

"Mental illness such as depression or anxiety can affect us all at certain times in our lives," Tony said. "We know that attending emergency incidents can have a cumulative effect on our firefighters, and we also know that it can be hard for people to reach out and talk to someone about how they're feeling.

"Left unchecked, this can build up. Let Me Know is one of the ways we can support our people in looking after themselves and their mental health.

"It allows firefighters, staff and their families to monitor their wellbeing, maintain their resilience and get quick access to information and support."

Tony said it wasn't a personal failing to feel overwhelmed and need help. "The role of a first responder is a tough one. We need to recognise that sometimes it's OK to not feel OK," he said.

"This is particularly important when we have anniversaries of significant events such as the 2009 bushfires which can bring up previous mental

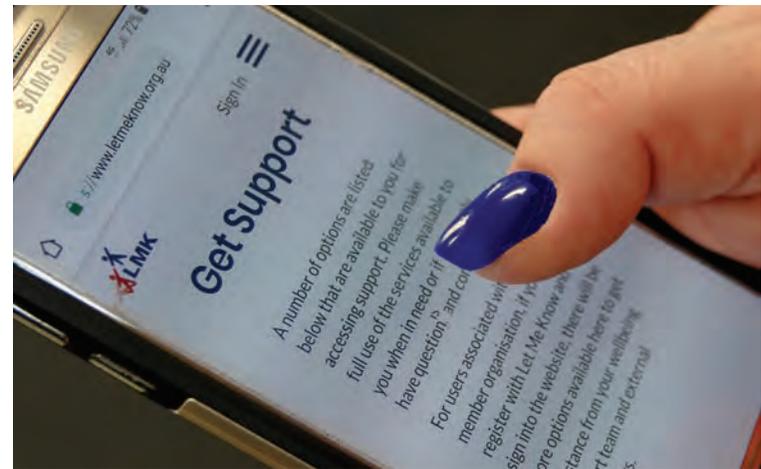


PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFISM

health and wellbeing issues that many people may have thought they had already dealt with.

"CFA has a range of wellbeing support options available, including Let Me Know, to help you to manage your wellbeing; we hope that encourages you to reach out for support if and when you need it.

"Our people have such a positive impact on the community. This is about them taking the time to do something for themselves."

All personal information on the website remains confidential and is only available to the individual user. Find out more about Let Me Know by going to letmeknow.org.au.



Recycle your pager batteries

CFA, through the use of pagers, consumes very large quantities of AA batteries – something like 230,000 every year. As well as contributing to landfill, batteries can contain toxic materials such as lead, cadmium and mercury which can leach into the environment. The solution is to recycle the batteries.

CFA members can now drop off used AA batteries at ALDI supermarkets for recycling. AAA, C, D and 9V batteries (rechargeable and non-rechargeable) are also being recycled by ALDI.

A recycling company collects the batteries from ALDI, sorts them into chemical types and delivers them to recycling plants. More than 90 per cent of the materials (such as copper, zinc and nickel) are recovered and recycled to make new batteries or other products such as stainless steel, sunscreen or road aggregate.

For any queries email CFA's environment manager at m.nantie@cfa.vic.gov.au.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ALDI

Q & A with three CFA chaplains

Asher Kirby from Burwood HQ, Rachel McLeish who supports districts 8 and 9, and Coordinating Chaplain Stephen Hill give us their insights about chaplaincy support at CFA.

Why did you become a CFA chaplain?

Asher: I like people! With my roles in church pastoring and sports chaplaincy I've been involved in supporting people through life's challenges for many years. I saw the role of chaplain with the CFA as being another opportunity to do this. Having first been introduced to something of CFA life as a young teen through regular visits to a family friend's farm in western Victoria, I've always been interested in the role CFA plays in the local community. When I started work with Converge International and the role of CFA chaplain was suggested, it seemed a great opportunity to support people in an organisation I value and respect.

Rachel: I had thought about becoming a chaplain for many years. I recently became a qualified chaplain and started working with CFA as part of my role with Converge International. I have a passion for supporting people in the workplace, reflecting God's love and giving people hope. I strongly believe in the work of CFA, so the role of CFA chaplain felt like a great fit.

I want to reflect hope and give support to people who are going through professional and/or personal challenges, and be someone who people feel comfortable talking to, no matter what their faith beliefs are. I've previously worked in HR and really enjoyed being alongside people in the workplace. I see my CFA chaplaincy role as one where I can solely focus on people and spend time getting to know everyone in the districts I work in. As such, I see my chaplaincy role as a great fit for me personally and a huge privilege.

Stephen: I joined Converge International in January 2017 to manage chaplains Australia-wide, and part of that was to be coordinating chaplain

for CFA. Since then I've moved into a principal consultant role which continues to include being CFA coordinating chaplain.

What types of chaplaincy support do you most often do with CFA?

A: Up to now my role has centred around walking the floor. There are more than 650 staff at CFA HQ in Burwood spread across three buildings, plus the staff at the nearby State Logistics Centre. Every week I spend time in the different buildings, saying hello. Sometimes the conversations are simply relationship building, just getting to know one another. Sometimes we talk about personal or work issues that may be impacting a person, and they just want someone to chat to. Occasionally, people ask to take some time out to sit with me to discuss an issue, so we set that up.

R: I walk the floor in District 8 and 9 offices and visit stations throughout the districts.

S: As coordinating chaplain I find, interview, referee-check and then present potential new chaplains to districts. I help to get recruits on board and then supervise and support them, including continuing professional development.

I discuss professional and policy issues with staff at CFA HQ, and work through any operational issues that come up from time to time.

One of the advantages of being full-time at Converge means I can accommodate CFA chaplaincy service requests that might otherwise have been difficult to resource. For example, there have been requests for urgent phone support to members, full-day deployments (that couldn't be covered by local, two-hour per week chaplains), ceremonial events such as blessing of the fleet and I am currently filling in for an injured chaplain in one of the districts.



What has been the highlight so far?

A: Without wanting to sound corny, the highlight is really the privilege of being able to listen to people as they tell me about the challenges they're facing, whether work related or personal, and how they are dealing with them. I never take it for granted that people are willing to speak to me about such things.

Aside from that, one of the significant moments was RUOK? Day in September 2018 when the CFA Wellbeing Team hosted an event at a local auditorium. About a hundred people gathered from headquarters to livestream the launch of the new Wellbeing Support Line, and then to join in a session learning about mindfulness. It was a great day with interesting input, terrific energy, and a good chance to meet many people.

R: Getting to know people in the districts and building up relationships so people feel comfortable talking to me about work and non-work-related concerns.

S: I think we're doing much better in finding good-quality replacement chaplains in a reasonable timeline to replace those who retire or leave a district. From a service delivery perspective, it was meaningful and enjoyable to be involved with a recent blessing of the fleet at Nillumbik Shire.

What's the most challenging aspect of being a CFA chaplain?

A: Remembering the names of hundreds of people! Seriously, the challenges relate to knowing how to best care for each person, given the situation they are going through. While walking the floor, it's also a challenge to know when to stick my nose in and say hello to someone, and when to leave them alone while they're hard at work.

R: It's a challenge getting to know everyone on all the different shifts within each station and meeting large numbers of volunteers, given the nature of shift work and volunteering.

S: It's a challenge to get the right balance between consistency in service delivery across the CFA as a whole, while allowing for a little customisation to fit the unique needs of each district.

Left: Asher Kirby.

PHOTO: DUNCAN RUSSELL

Right: Coordinating Chaplain Stephen Hill at Yarrambat Fire Brigade doing a blessing of the fleet

Above right: Rachel McLeish



Given the challenges of being a chaplain, how do you look after yourself (self-care strategies)?

A: I try to set up good support structures in my life with regards to relationships, professional support and time. I seek to balance my time with annual holidays, I try to spend regular time with my wife and children, and I see a professional supervisor and occasionally a spiritual director.

I also couldn't get by without my hobby – strategy board gaming. It's not the most exotic of pursuits but I love the workout it gives my brain and I love the social aspect of gathering with friends to talk and play – and trying to beat them!

R: I endeavour to exercise (some of the time) and make sure I look after myself. I also ask God to provide me strength and wisdom as I support people and pray God will also comfort them.

S: It's certainly a case of easier said, than done, but I do pretty well, getting to the gym about three times a week. In stressful moments, I find breathing exercises and even a prayer or two can help. I also enjoy making music – my drum kit gets a good workout every Sunday!

What quote captures your time with CFA?

A: I remember someone saying once when I introduced myself: "You're the chaplain? Oh – you're not what I expected!" Now that I think about it, she didn't actually say if she meant that positively or negatively, but I think I'll assume the best.

R: "A chaplain's biggest gift is to present and just listen" – US novelist Diane Johnson.

S: I love learning about the people and work of CFA, and feel privileged to offer any help that I can in return.

If you have any questions about the CFA Chaplaincy Program, email n.engelke@cfa.vic.gov.au or call 03 9262 8409.

Safety around firebombing operations

Firefighting aircraft such as fixed-wing planes, helicopters and large air tankers are a much-needed coordinated response to bush and grassfires. But it's important to be aware of the hazards when working alongside aerial support. During last year's Ranch Fire in California, which was part of the Mendocino Complex fire, a firefighter was killed by falling debris that was dislodged during a drop from a very large air tanker.

Below are some tips for crew leaders to ensure crews stay safe when working in conjunction with aircraft on a fireground.

- Fireground supervisors must ensure all personnel are notified of, and acknowledge, impending aerial firebombing drops from both fixed wing planes and helicopters.
- When personnel are working under a tree canopy, supervisors must ensure the firebombing drop path is cleared.
- Fireground personnel must always maintain situational awareness when firebombing aircraft are working in their vicinity.
- Brigade members are advised to watch Emergency Management Victoria's firebombing safety video: <https://files.em.vic.gov.au/public/aviation/Video/Firebombing-Safety.mp4> (login needed to EMV's website).

If crew members are caught in a dropzone:

- move quickly and safely away from the fireground
- watch out for falling branches and debris
- place tools well clear of you
- secure your helmet or protect your head with arms
- watch your footing as surfaces may be slippery
- wash with cold water if hit with foam or retardant.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFISM

The H3O Challenge

Research shows that we're heading into an obesity epidemic. In 10 years, three-quarters of us will be overweight or obese and at severe risk of diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. One way to change direction is by taking this small step from today.

The government-funded Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) recently launched the H3O Challenge to motivate people to switch sugary drinks for water for 30 days. This is an easy and convenient way to start making a big difference to your health.

By taking the challenge, you could:

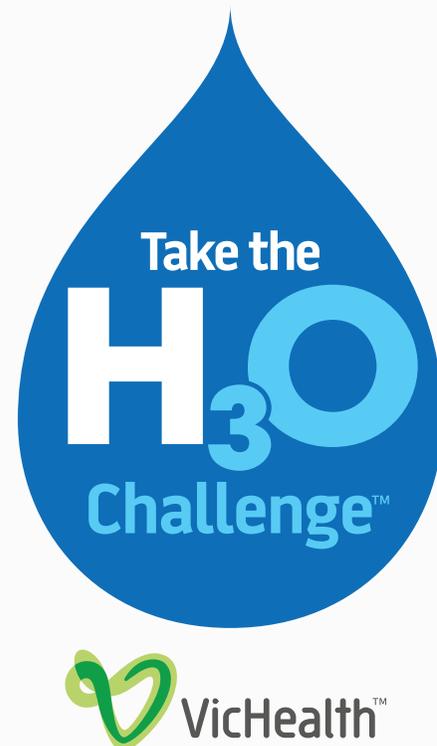
- lose weight – you are reducing the amount of kilojoules you put in your body every time you choose a glass of water over a soft drink. If you normally have one sugary drink a day, you'll be reducing your sugar intake by 69 teaspoons a week.
- improve your health – losing weight

can lower your risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

- reduce tooth decay – every sip you take of a sugar-sweetened drink produces an acid that can eat away at the surface of your teeth for around 20 minutes.
- save money – think about how much you spend on sugary drinks every month, and what you could spend that money on instead.

Why not set up a competition with your friends, family or brigade to see who can cut out the most sugary drinks?

To find out more information about the challenge go to h30challenge.com.au. When you sign up for the challenge, the website will give you a personalised dashboard to keep track of how many kilojoules and cash you've saved, and you'll get email updates, text messages and tips.



SOUND THE ALARM

Our firefighters know that working smoke alarms give a vital early warning when fire breaks out in a home. But our statistics still point to a need for greater community awareness of this important message.

CFA Chief Officer Steve Warrington said that all members can play a key role in getting this message out to people in their communities.

“Working smoke alarms provide an early warning of a fire, giving people a better chance to escape. They are not much use if they are disconnected, covered up or the battery is flat,” Steve said.

“When you’re talking to people about fire safety it’s a good opportunity to ask a few questions about the number and location of their smoke alarms. We know that most deaths in residential fires occur when the fire has started in the bedroom or living room, and when residents are asleep. So we urge people to install smoke alarms in all living areas and bedrooms.

“We now encourage people to set up interconnected units so if one alarm sounds they all sound. The more people who wake up at the first sign of smoke, the greater the chances of everyone getting safely out of the building.”

KEY MESSAGES 2019

CFA’s residential fire messages for the community this year will reinforce these key points:

- Your home should have a smoke alarm in all living areas and all bedrooms.
- Where there is more than one smoke alarm, they should be interconnected so that all alarms sound at the same time.
- Smoke alarms should be cleaned with a vacuum every year, tested monthly, and replaced every 10 years.
- We recommend smoke alarms with a 10-year lithium battery. Replaceable 9-volt batteries need to be changed yearly.
- While working smoke alarms are essential, fire prevention and knowing how to get out are equally important.

For more information go to

www.cfa.vic.gov.au/smokealarms



FROM DATA TO DECISIONS

CFA collects data from a variety of sources. Our data is critical to the decisions we make, particularly when they relate to helping our members improve the delivery of services to our communities.

CFA has a legislative requirement to report on all operational incidents, which are captured in a database called Fire and Incident Reporting System (FIRS).

The collection of the data starts when the public first ring Triple Zero (000). This information and additional incident information added by our dispatchers, is used to respond the most appropriate brigades and resources, and then when the incident is complete, to populate part of the FIRS report.

There's a requirement to complete the remainder of the report within 14 days of the incident completion date which, whenever possible, should be done by the incident controller or crew leader to ensure the highest level of data accuracy is maintained.

Some busier brigades have direct access to FIRS, but the majority phone the Service Delivery Reporting Centre. Either way, brigades are encouraged to always use the standard pro-forma for data collection so that all required information is collected at the scene. The pro forma is available on Brigades Online.

The data is collected and analysed by CFA and used to help make strategic decisions relating to:

- Fire station locations
- Service delivery (prevention, preparedness and response activities)
- Member wellbeing
- Equipment and resource allocation
- Truck and equipment design
- Training delivery
- Statewide operational trends
- Fire Investigation trend analysis
- Product safety recalls
- Brigade efficiency and health
- Design of community engagement programs
- Performance improvement initiatives
- Development of case studies to share lessons learned.

In fact, it would be fair to say that every area of our organisation relies on this data to make informed decisions. CFA FIRS data is also used by many external agencies such as:

- Victorian Government
- EMV
- Victoria Police
- Transport Accident Commission
- DELWP
- Energy Safe Victoria
- Metropolitan Fire Brigade
- Ambulance Victoria
- Melbourne Water
- Local government
- Insurance companies and loss assessors
- Research and academic institutions such as the CSIRO Bushfire & Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre, and Monash University Accident Research Centre.

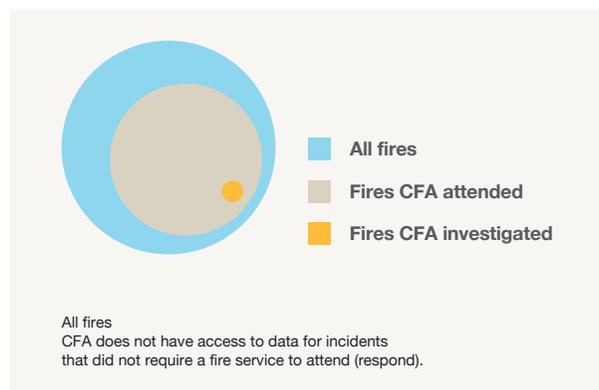
It's important to note that the data fields and structure are regulated by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC). CFA is a member of AFAC. This enables the collation of data at a national level which provides even greater analysis on a far wider scale.

Our members do a fantastic job in keeping Victorians safe. Collecting accurate data will ensure that we can improve on this critical community service. Some of the key areas to focus on and improve are:

- What the property is used for and by who
- Where the fire started
- The cause of the fire
- Whether smoke alarms were fitted, and whether they operated
- How much of the structure was involved in fire when the first truck arrived, and how much was saved.

This data helps us understand behavioural trends across the state and informs the design of intervention programs to reduce risk.

Call the Service Delivery Reporting Centre on **1800 62 88 44** for any advice or assistance completing fire reports. Every report counts. Make sure yours is accurate and complete.



Most common areas in the home where fires led to death or serious injury

South West			North West		West		North East	South East
Kitchen	Bedroom	Lounge	Bedroom	Bedroom	Lounge	Bedroom	Bedroom	
Unattended cooking	Heating systems Appliances/equipment	Falling asleep Child playing 0-16yrs old Heaters	Appliances/equipment, Heating systems Electrical distribution equipment	Appliances/equipment Special equipment	Heating systems Electrical distribution equipment Appliances/equipment	Appliances/equipment Special equipment Heating systems	Child playing 0-16yrs old	



A house fire is most likely to start in the kitchen between 6pm and 7pm. Unattended cooking is the main cause.

When fires result in death or serious injury, they are more likely to start in bedrooms than other parts of a house. The peak response time for brigades is 3am.



Teaching youngsters through songs

April Himmelreich, volunteer with The Basin Fire Brigade, is the creator and main performer of the Fire Safety Show. Performed alongside CFA mascot Captain Koala, her high-energy performances aim to educate children about fire safety. She shares her observations about how kids are learning about fire safety in the home.

"The core messages of my show rarely change such as needing a plan when you hear a smoke alarm or cleaning up around your home in the warmer months," April said.

"The biggest change I've seen throughout my performances is the resilience building in kids over the years – way more than in my generation.

"Kids have so many questions and stories during and after the show.

"I think their knowledge of how to get information is getting better too due to having so much access to the internet. They're also more aware of fires and warnings due to mobile phone apps and good television commercials.

"I've had to adapt my script to reference apps and new technology to build on that awareness."

April said the great thing about pantomime is that it can reach children with different learning styles.

"Everyone likes to learn differently and I aim to provide multiple ways to learn and pick up messages in all of my songs.

"Some will hear the words in the songs and stories and take that on board. Some will see my movements and actions. Some will look at the props I point to and others will remember what they heard and saw through the entertainment factor and recall it later on.



"In our song Beepa we sing about what to do if we hear a smoke alarm and point up to the ceiling to reinforce the message. After seeing a performance, the children may recall that song and point up to the smoke alarm in their own home which encourages further conversation with their families."

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN

Family saved by smoke alarm

A quick-thinking 12-year-old girl saved her family in November 2018 after being alerted to a fire in her home by a working smoke alarm.

Firefighters from Melton Fire Brigade arrived at the home on Aruma Avenue, Melton just after 7.30pm on Thursday 15 November to find the house fully alight and the family waiting outside the property shocked but uninjured.

It took crews an hour to control the fire, which was not thought to be suspicious.

Melton Station Officer Keith Taylor said the young girl's actions certainly saved her family's lives.

"Her actions highlight the importance of educating young people and the wider community about smoke alarms and what to do if a fire starts in the home," Keith said.

"The young girl heard the smoke alarm, investigated and after she discovered the fire she closed the door behind her and evacuated the rest of her family.

"While they did lose their home, they are alive today because they were able to get out before it was too late."

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN

Blue Wren Rise fire, Carrum Downs 2018

Summary

On 6 January 2018 a bushfire burned 29 hectares of the Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve in Carrum Downs and Skye. Several lessons were identified relating to incident management, interoperability and communications.

Overview

The Carrum Downs – Blue Wren Rise bushfire began at about 2.30pm on a day of Extreme Fire Danger Rating and Total Fire Ban in the northern part of the Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve. The temperature was 41°C, 11 per cent relative humidity, and the wind was a north-westerly averaging 40km/hour and gusting to 60km/hour.

The fire spread quickly through coastal heathland vegetation with smoke, embers and fire impacting residents and property. Several fires also started in vegetation on vacant bush blocks to the south-east.

The firefighting effort involved more than 300 firefighters, 43 firefighting vehicles, eight water bombing aircraft, and plant. Houses that backed onto the fire were evacuated and traffic was closed on all nearby roads. The fire damaged two houses, a number of sheds, fences, pergolas and outdoor household belongings. No one was injured during the fire.

Lessons identified

- It is important that transfer of control is effectively communicated across all levels of the fireground and incident management team to ensure reporting lines are clear and directions are understood.

- Using intelligence from the SCC, ICC and aircraft assists to develop a plan for incoming resources and ensures they are used effectively and efficiently.
- A high level of readiness in the ICCs ensures immediate management support to the fireground, while pre-identified strike teams allows for a strategic response of support, to maintain state-wide capacity.
- Using default communications plans that are accepted and understood by agencies at a local level reduces communications, particularly in the first few hours of an incident.
- Pre-planned incident management structures that include fireground requirements, such as division commander and sector commander roles, improves the implementation of strategy and tactics and improves information flow.
- Pre-planned staging areas, divisional command points and logical sector boundaries for high-risk areas improve our ability to effectively and efficiently task our crews.



Multi-agency exercise at Kangaroo Ground ICC

Overview

On 13 November 2018 exercise Praeclusio was held at the Kangaroo Ground Incident Control Centre. This level 3 pre-season multi-agency exercise was a new approach to pre-season incident management team training, modelled on the Hydra exercise used by Victoria Police.

Hydra is a plenary-style exercise that allows members from the incident management team (IMT) and emergency management team (EMT) to report on their actions in both the readiness and response phases during the exercise.

The Regional Commander and Regional Operations Coordinator led the planning team consisting of representatives from CFA, MFB, SES and FFMVic. The exercise, which took about six months to develop, was designed to test the capability and capacity of the Kangaroo Ground Incident Control Centre and personnel to ensure readiness for the 2018-19 fire season.

The exercise began with the normal level of readiness when there's an elevated fire danger rating that requires a core incident management team in place by 10am. This allowed for the various functional teams to prepare for the ensuing scenarios. Participants had an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the facility, check their systems and meet other members of the IMT.

Exercise format

9.30am – participants registered at the Kangaroo Ground ICC.

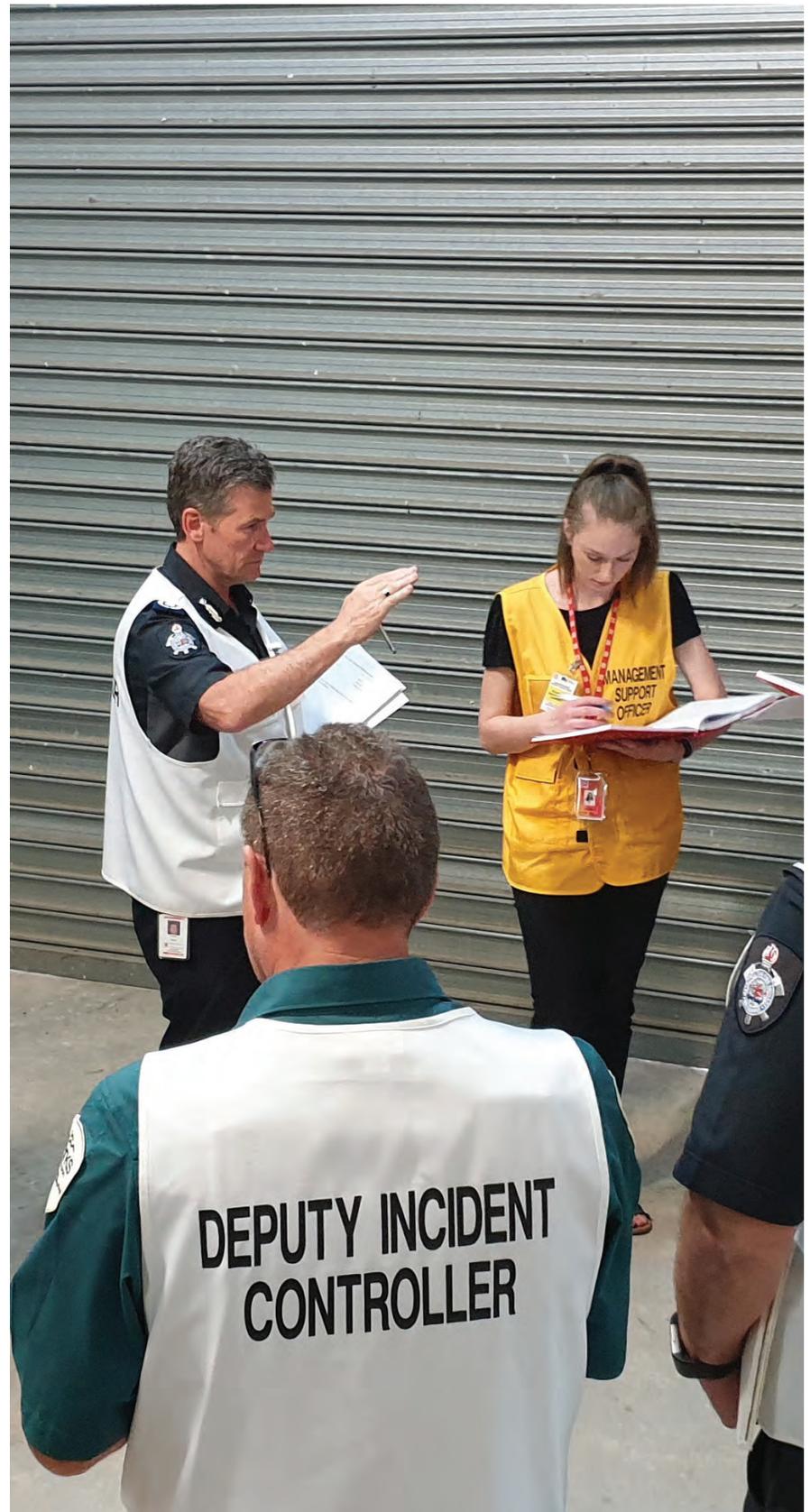
10am – exercise briefing:

- Plenary 1 exercised individual functional units during set-up on a readiness day.
- Plenary 2 explored IMT considerations at a point in time.
- Plenary 3 exercised individual functional units and incident EMT members responding to notional simultaneous events occurring in the primary ICC footprint.
- Plenary 4 exercised individual functional units in the debriefing phase.

The exercise was designed to allow participants to develop their skills in a safe learning environment with the guidance and support of qualified and experienced coaches/mentors assigned to each of the functional teams.

Objectives

1. Practise using emergency management platforms and systems (EM-COP, EM Webmail, EM-Drive, EM-Map Pack, EM-COP Log) in readiness, response, relief and recovery phases.
2. Practise establishing individual functional units at the Kangaroo Ground ICC.
3. Develop IMT functional team's response to considerations in readiness and response phases
4. Practise IMT collaboration between response and recovery agencies to ensure that relief and recovery considerations are addressed and activities initiated for impacted communities.
5. Identify agency business-as-usual impacts via the EMT that affect IMT capability.





The IMT managed two scenarios during the day: a simulated chlorine leak at the Winneke Water Treatment Plant (Sugar Loaf Reservoir) followed by a developing make tankers 10 grass and scrub fire at Wollert. Both scenarios were within the Kangaroo Ground ICC footprint and required the initial shadowing, data and intelligence gathering and subsequent transfer of control and management of each incident.

With the aid of pre-incident response plans and quick discussion an objective was set and strategies were developed. The exercise was well supported by all emergency service organisations and supporting agencies. These representatives were a great source of subject matter expertise and local knowledge. The Salvation Army played a vital role providing catering on the day.

Debrief

The plenary-style exercise was well received in the debrief session. Every so often the exercise would be paused to review the teams' preparation or response activities, and the facilitator asked participants to name three areas that were going well and three opportunities for improvement. This way of operating allowed issues to be identified, discussed and in most cases resolved immediately.

Overall, the exercise was a huge success, evident through the debrief process. Participants in each functional team appreciated having an experienced coach/mentor to answer questions and provide advice throughout the day. This valuable training offered an opportunity to broaden everyone's knowledge, hone their skills and further strengthen relationships.

Lessons identified

This exercise aimed to enhance members' knowledge of EM-COP and other IT systems by using real scenarios. Knowledge was gained by all members attending the facility through testing of equipment and capability.

The process of identifying issues early in the exercise and rectifying them straight away allowed for better learning and less stress on individuals.

Enhanced coordination and communication in managing multi-level scenarios run simultaneously required an increased awareness of risk and consequence and a high degree of overall management.

Providing an improved supportive learning environment broadened team awareness, increased participants experience and further strengthened agency relationships.



Maddingley gas explosion

Incident overview

On 15 February 2018 at 1.30pm CFA responded to reports of a gas explosion at Griffith Street in Maddingley. An apprentice plumber working in a storm water pit had triggered an explosion.

The force of the blast damaged the front windows of a nearby house and caused storm water pit lids (weighing about 100kg) along adjoining roads to be ejected from their surrounds. The apprentice was badly burned and transported to Bacchus Marsh Hospital before being taken to the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne.

Bacchus Marsh, Parwan and Myrniong brigades responded to the incident with support from Melton Fire Brigade. The first responding crews established an exclusion zone and a brigade request was made for a hazmat crew to help identify the substance. While this was happening, two nearby secondary schools were evacuated and staff at a nearby nursing home were alerted of the possibility of an evacuation.

En route the hazmat unit contacted the control point to discuss the job at hand and asked the following questions:

- What is the number and extent of injuries? Informed that one man had been injured by flash ignition/explosion.
- What was the possible cause of the explosion? Possibly an angle grinder in the pit.
- Had gas been detected and if so was it LPG or natural gas? Gas detected using Sirius detector.
- Had an exclusion zone been set up? Yes, police had a traffic management plan in place.
- Number of resources/agencies present? CFA, Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria.
- Had utility companies been notified? Yes, but yet to arrive.

The Hazmat unit requested for the on-duty scientific officer to be notified, and they arrived on scene at 2pm. The crew began atmospheric monitoring using two hand-held Sirius detectors (one for each breathing apparatus crew). This resulted in the reduction of the exclusion zone and the relocation of the control point.

The unit also used four AreaRAE detectors in various locations which were remotely monitored from the Heavy Hazmat vehicle.

Initial readings from the Sirius detectors showed a 100 per cent LEL (lower exposure limit) in the storm water pit where the worker had been injured and other storm water drains, indicating a substantial leak of an explosive vapour or gas. The concern was that the environment was still hazardous, so the unit requested for the exclusion zone to be broadened to an approximately 500-metre radius from the initial incident.

One of the priorities for the incident controller and hazmat unit was the safety of the nursing home, so one of the AreaRAE detectors was placed next to the nursing home. Fortunately the detector picked up a zero level for the duration of the event which gave the incident management team the confidence to recommend that the nursing home residents remain in the home. It was decided to move the elderly residents only if the LEL readings changed. Ambulance Victoria was on standby in case of a change to the environment.

The emergency management team included Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police, Moorabool Shire Council and utility companies. It was identified

that the storm water network was near a high-pressure gas line.

The atmospheric monitoring crew was confused by the readings as all indications pointed to a natural gas leak. As it's lighter than air it would rise into the atmosphere. Wind gusts may have caused the observed variable readings. If it was LPG, high readings would have been found in low-lying areas because the gas is heavier than air.

Over the next few hours, firefighters continued to take atmospheric readings with the source eventually being located at 10pm, when a leak was discovered in a natural gas line.

What worked well?

- A decision was made early to evacuate two local schools and a plan was put in place for the nursing home to avoid unnecessary stress for the residence.
- Several agencies had to work together. There was good communication between CFA, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, and Moorabool Shire Council. The liaison between the different crews (control, operations and monitoring) was also effective throughout the incident. Establishing the on-scene EMT and the subsequent information sharing and collaborative decision-making worked well. This greatly helped manage the complex incident.
- It was important to request the Hazmat unit early and seek advice from a scientific specialist about the effects of the substance.

Lessons identified

Gas properties Methyl mercaptan is added to natural gas to give it an odour, but the crew couldn't smell anything. CFA was later informed by the gas company that there have been cases where methyl mercaptan has filtered out of natural gas when the gas passes through soil or water. This means there could be a natural gas leak even when you can't smell it.



District 22 pre-season briefing emphasises recovery

In a new approach to pre-season briefing, the District 22 Operations Team focused on getting back to basics and asking their members to consider the recovery process. This was inspired by the Executive Consequence training recently attended by a member of the operations team. Two keynote speakers from the training program gave a first-hand account of their experiences during the 2009 fires, and were both invited to attend District 22's pre-season briefings. During the briefing they shared their experiences of the tragedy, and gave a thought-provoking account of their community's recovery process and the lessons learned from the fire.

"Don't underestimate the work that CFA does in the community" was continually emphasised. Communities that have been impacted by a disaster, whether it's fire, storm or flood, will invariably be confronted with similar challenges when beginning the recovery stage. In times of need, community members rally to support each other, and CFA members play a key part in this activity. They can assist in the recovery process and help build community resilience through providing leadership, trusted

information, and resources and equipment to affected communities.

A local family in Kinglake offered their 20-hectare property to establish what effectively became a relief centre for people in the affected area. Locals were provided nutritious meals and somewhere to store resources and equipment. It was also a place where people could talk, share their experiences and ultimately start the recovery process.

Local communities need to be asked what they need, not told what they should have. It's very important to understand and prioritise the recovery efforts to ensure people are receiving what they need. Throughout the recovery process, it was identified that women in the community banded together to share their experiences. These meetings led to the formation of Firefoxes Australia. See firefoxes.org.au for more information.

The District 22 pre-season briefing was also an opportunity to discuss the Chief Officer's expectations and the Seasonal Focus Briefing 2018-19, which included a presentation by a local CFA peer about critical incident stress and wellbeing services.

Participants commented that this pre-season briefing left a lasting impression. It brought the importance of recovery to the fore and linked it with preparedness activities through first-hand insights and subsequent lessons learned from a community perspective.



Greek deployment 2018

Summary

In July 2018 two wildfires in Greece claimed the lives of at least 94 people, and on 31 July Greece's Citizens and Protections Minister accepted the Disaster Assistance Response Team's (DART) offer to send personnel to Athens to carry out a post-fire assessment.

DARTs are coordinated by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and are deployed to crises overseas to help save lives and help communities recover. In the past DFAT has deployed Australians to offer help in the wake of cyclones, earthquakes and tsunamis.

Incident overview

At 12.30pm on 23 July 2018 a fire started in the region of Kineta, approximately one hour's drive west of Athens. The Hellenic Fire Service responded to the fire with a number of ground and aviation resources, including military helicopters. The fire damaged many houses but no lives were lost.

However on the same day just before 5pm, calls came through about a fast-travelling fire in Mati, north-east of Athens. This fire travelled at approximately 3.3 kilometres per hour downslope towards the township. It travelled 5 kilometres to the coastline in about 90 minutes. This meant suppression in the early stages was not possible because fire service resources were still engaged in activity at the Kineta fire.

The Mati fire claimed 94 lives. The greatest loss of life was in open areas, either when people were caught in vehicles or running from the flames towards the ocean. A number of people drowned trying to avoid asphyxiation from smoke and hot gases.

The Australian DART flew to Greece in July. The Rapid Damage Assessment (RDA) team comprised specialists from Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW), MFB, CFA and VICSES. The purpose of the trip was to assess the fire's impact and report the findings to Greek officials within a week. The team consisted of DFAT management, Urban Search and Rescue team, a GIS mapping specialist, and drone pilots.

The team marked the fire area and used the Fulcrum app on iPads to collect data. The app was customised by FRNSW for this specific task. Then they conducted ground assessments and used drones to map the damage.



The mapping produced 2-D and 3-D images similar to those on Google Earth showing the damaged area. This imagery was vital because it gave a comprehensive and current overview of the damage, and allowed authorities to effectively plan recovery and future town planning. It can also be used to help plan for future disasters.

The team also provided the Hellenic Fire Service with training in the use of drones.

What worked well

Working with equipment limitations The team used the Fulcrum app to collect data. The only challenge was that the iPads tended to shut down because of overheating on days when the temperature exceeded 36°C. The team found ways to reduce the likelihood of the iPads overheating. For example, they used portable lithium battery packs, because keeping the iPads fully charged reduced the rate at which their internal temperature increased.

Safety Consistent with the Australian firefighting environment, the team was trained to be aware of dangers such as asbestos, falling trees, building collapse and traffic hazards.

Overcoming the language barrier Despite having interpreters in the team, members were sometimes approached by residents when they didn't have an interpreter with them. They couldn't verbally communicate who they were or what they were doing. But they found that showing residents the Australia Aid logo (a map of Australia) on their high-visibility vests reassured residents who appreciated their help. This concept could also be applied to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Australia. It's important that emergency services personnel can reassure people even when there's a language barrier.

GPS tracking The GPS tracking capability used by all team members was invaluable when responding to the affected areas. Although it used the local mobile phone network and may not operate in all areas, it worked exceptionally well in this case.

Interoperability The team comprised members from Victoria and NSW. The team integrated well into a single cohesive task force and has stayed in contact since.

Lessons identified

Resource allocation A major challenge was that the Mati fire unfolded as resources were fighting the Kineta fire. It is vital that emergency services prepare for managing multiple incidents at once. This helps to ensure resources are allocated to where they are most needed. There are times in all communities across the world when resources are inadequate to deal with concurrent emergencies.

Unexpected hazards The team underestimated the danger posed by domestic dog attacks. All team members had several near misses and one team member was bitten on the foot when attacked by a dog. Situational awareness can be increased by not only thinking about hazards specific to the emergency event, but also the surrounding environment. This could come in the form of dog attacks as mentioned above or even violent community members.

Lack of inter-agency communication Communication between the international responding agencies was difficult. The Greek Police were not always aware of DART's presence in the country,, so the team was stopped and asked by police why they were in the area. Although the misunderstanding was resolved, the incident highlights the importance of communication between agencies to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Community emergency warning Greece doesn't have a community warning system such as the Vic Emergency app or SMS messaging. Even if it did have these systems, its effectiveness would be limited, especially in the smaller villages where many of the older residents don't carry mobile phones.

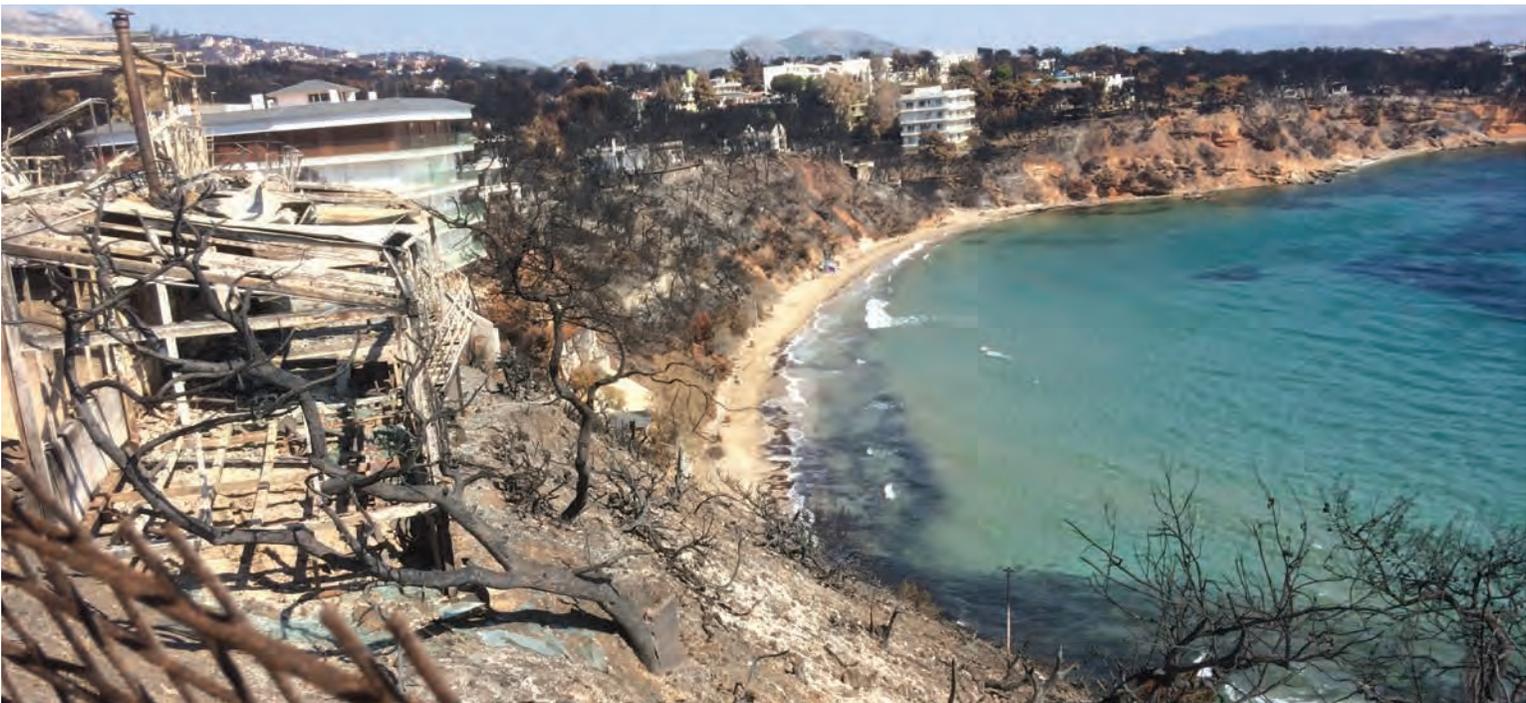
RDA systems FRNSW used the Fulcrum app to collect field data relevant to damage assessment. This collected significantly more data than the ARM360 device which was used by MFB at the time of the Greek fires. Since these fires, MFB has switched to Fulcrum.



Conclusion

An urban search and rescue team was deployed because it is specifically trained as a task force comprising multiple disciplines such as building damage assessors, drone pilots, a GIS mapper and self-sustainability. The team is also skilled at building rescue disciplines such as technical search equipment, breaching and cutting, and shoring and stabilising collapsed buildings.

Following these fires the Australian and Greek governments have worked closely to improve the processes for future assistance.



Night fire suppression – Rosedale fire 2019

Summary

On Friday 4 January, Victoria had Extreme Fire Danger Ratings in some areas and a number of bushfires started. As the day progressed, large fires were still burning at Strathbogie and Rosedale in Gippsland.

While preliminary planning had been undertaken to deploy the aircraft to the Strathbogie fire, just before 7pm the decision was made to deploy night operations-capable firebombing aircraft to the Rosedale fire.

Incident overview

At 7.45pm aircraft were at the Latrobe Valley Airport at Traralgon, the airbase for the fire. At that time the fire was about 2,000 hectares and was beginning to be impacted by a south-westerly wind change crossing the state.

At 8.30pm Helitack 349 and Firebird 322 commenced daylight reconnaissance of a likely area of operations, and Helitack 349 commenced water bombing. Helitack 346 had also completed its reconnaissance flights. All aircraft returned to Latrobe Valley Airport at about 9.15pm for final mission planning.

At 11pm aircraft departed Latrobe Valley Airport began firebombing operations. During operations Helitack 349 undertook about 40 water pick-ups and drops onto the fire and Helitack 346 undertook about 15. This partially reflected different water pick-up locations being used and the flight time between them and the target location.

During the operations, night fire suppression crews observed fire behaviour abating significantly as expected, which reinforces why night aerial fire suppression is more effective than during peak heat in the daytime.

As weather conditions changed, areas of the fire that couldn't be seen during the day because of thick smoke emerged as the smoke cleared. Within the current rules set for safe deployment at this stage of the night fire suppression trial, night operations could not be safely undertaken in these locations as crews hadn't had the opportunity to undertake effective reconnaissance during daylight.



At 1.05am on 5 January aircraft returned to Latrobe Valley Airport to refuel. At 1.15am Firebird 322 was tasked with mapping the fire extent and then departed again at 1.35am after refuelling. Mapping of the fire edge was undertaken with an onboard camera mapping device and an iPad used by the air attack supervisor. Night vision goggles were a huge benefit in undertaking the mapping task because the fire edge was obvious.

The diagrams of the fire extent were sent from the aircraft to the ICC and then directly to the sector commanders on the ground. At 2.28am further large mapping files generated by on board cameras was sent to the ICC.

Key outcomes from these operations

- Targeting and water bombing a spot fire in unburnt pine plantation reduced the fire to a point where ground crews could safely enter the plantation to contain the risk of fire spread.
- Ground crews were supported by holding a fire escape into pine plantation.
- The aircraft delivered sustained high-frequency water drops with about a four-minute cycle between drops for over 30 drops. This was primarily because of a good water source nearby.
- There was effective integration with ground crew activities and communications.
- Knowledge was gained about the attributes of different water pick-up sites.
- Aircraft identified a spot fire that had not previously been seen. Suppressing it enabled ground crews to contain it.
- Aircraft targeted a range of hotspots to prevent flare-ups and potential fire breakout.
- Important knowledge was gained about changes in the characteristics of remote dip sites over time as water drawdown occurs.
- There were challenges associated with frequent changes in target location particularly on the last night of deployment which impacted the aircrafts' ability to establish a smooth routine.
- Smoke and spray have not presented any challenges to date.
- While fatigue has not emerged as an issue within the operations undertaken to date, there are indications that crews were more fatigued during the last night of operations, exacerbated by the lack of a smooth routine due to frequent target changes.



Conclusion

The deployment to the Rosedale fire worked effectively and briefing processes and essential mission planning procedures worked well. There were opportunities identified for improvement, particularly relating to coordination of daytime reconnaissance flights and determination of agreed mission priorities prior to those flights.

The impact of changing weather and smoke conditions will need to be considered, such as areas of the fire line that may have been lost in smoke during the day that become visible at night.

The Rosedale deployment demonstrated that night firebombing is feasible and that operations were able to be conducted in a systematic and safe way with benefits for bushfire control objectives.

Aviation-related links

EM COP Aviation Section: <https://cop.em.vic.gov.au/sadisplay/desktop/sections.htm>

Aviation Briefing Notes: <https://files-em.em.vic.gov.au/aviation/Briefingnote-Aviation-Menu.htm>

Firebombing safety video: <https://files-em.em.vic.gov.au/public/aviation/Video/Firebombing-Safety.mp4>

State Airdesk: <https://firewebext.ffm.vic.gov.au/BurnsToday/aircraft/AircraftList.htm>

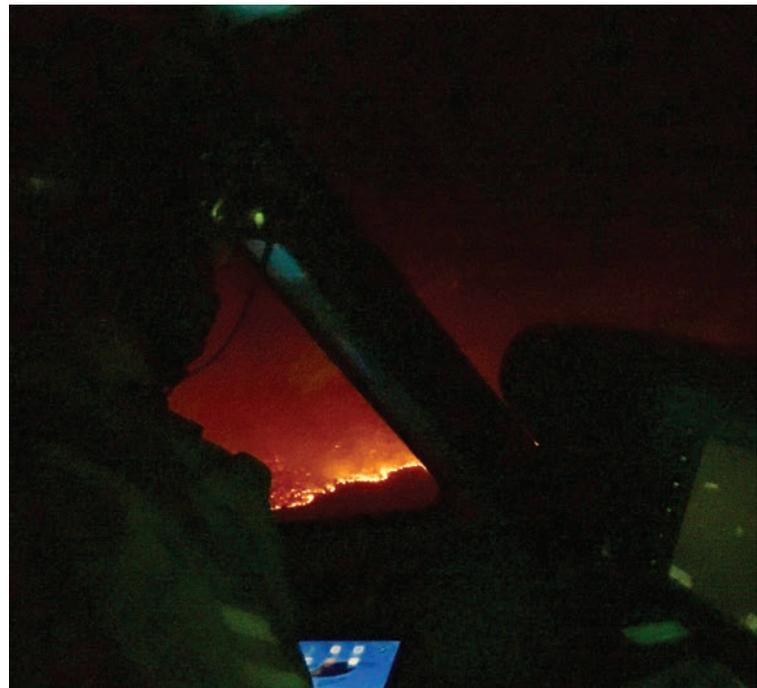


PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM

LMC

Lessons Management
Centre

lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au

CFA takes pride in roadshow

CFA Pride is a social space where LGBTI members can connect with each other for support and to encourage LGBTI volunteers. CFA's Inclusion and Fairness team is helping to make sure LGBTI members are supported in a safe and sustainable environment.

As part of an education and awareness program, the team set up a CFA Pride Regional Tour, which was funded by Emergency Management Victoria. The sessions were facilitated by a CFA Pride ambassador, whose role was to explain what it means to be a CFA member and also a member of the LGBTI community, and what CFA can do to make our organisation more inclusive for LGBTI people.

The presentations promoted CFA Pride, highlighted LGBTI issues in communities, and initiated discussions in an open forum with the ambassadors. The tour was an opportunity for all CFA members to learn more about the LGBTI community and the events that CFA Pride participates in throughout the year.

The sessions helped the audiences better understand the people who make up the community they serve, and encouraged open discussion about the challenges facing the LGBTI community.

Seven presentations were held in South East, North West and North East regions at the end of 2018, and the tour continued in South West (pictured) and West regions at the beginning of 2019.

Erica and District volunteer and CFA Pride founder Russell Wright was one of the ambassadors.

"I hope people who attended gained a better understanding of some of the real impacts felt by LGBTI people when an organisation or community is not fair or inclusive," Russell said. "Being welcoming and inclusive in the workplace or in the community can make a difference to those who identify as LGBTI. It's the little things that can make all the difference."

According to Russell, the overwhelming feedback from attendees was positive.

"Everyone got different things out of it. The sessions are bridging the gap and opening the door to more conversations, and through those

conversations we will gain a greater understanding about fairness, diversity and inclusion.

Another Pride Ambassador, Fiona Hogan from Poowong Fire Brigade, said it was a privilege to represent CFA on the tour.

"Working with a small group was very interactive and engaging. It was great to see people sharing their knowledge," she said. "The questions people asked were thought-provoking, and the sessions gave them new insights.

"I hope the future brings many more tours that allow us to increase awareness and acceptance, and to show brigade members that we will support them and help them become leaders and role models for all the emergency services."

Assistant Chief Officer Inclusion and Fairness James Dullard recorded a welcome video which was shown at the roadshow sessions. To watch the video go to: [youtube.com/watch?v=PxKnd6_JDNQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxKnd6_JDNQ)

STORY TERRI WRIGHT AND DUNCAN RUSSELL



PHOTO: LIBBY SYMONS

Gender Equity Working Group

CFA set up the Gender Equity Working Group (GEWG) in 2017 to help CFA become a more diverse and progressive emergency services organisation where diversity, inclusion and fairness are part of our everyday language, practice and intent.

The group consists of staff from the Volunteer Sustainability Team (one member from each region), a representative from the Inclusion and Fairness Team, and one from the Communications and Stakeholder Relations directorate. This expertise ensures that knowledge sharing and collaboration on projects occur across CFA departments, which means our projects will be more effective.

The GEWG's current focus is on programs to support women's inclusion in CFA. A great example was CFA's involvement in White Ribbon Day and the 16 Days of Activism campaigns in November 2019. International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

on 25 November marked the beginning of 16 Days of Activism, culminating in Human Rights Day on 10 December.

The GEWG used these internationally-recognised events to establish small yet practical projects within CFA. By 25 November the team had plans in place to ensure there was a CFA event in each region across the state. GEWG members worked with staff and volunteers to develop short videos and other communications for social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram. Small events such as morning teas focused on gender equity helped raise awareness among staff.

By coordinating these events, the GEWG ensured all messaging was consistent and in line with CFA's objectives and key messages.

STORY DEB SALVAGNO

International Women's Day

To celebrate International Women's Day CFA participated in an emergency services exhibition hosted by Emergency Management Victoria at Federation Square on Friday 8 March.

The event was an opportunity to recognise and showcase the varied roles women have in CFA including fighting fires, incident management and response, community education, training and development, team leadership,



senior management, and a variety of diverse support roles.

Coordinated by the Inclusion and Fairness Team, CFA's presence at the event was loud and proud. Our people spent the day showcasing the achievements and opportunities for women in CFA. This was done through sharing their experiences and interacting with curious members of the public keen to learn more about the opportunities that CFA brings.

We also promoted the *Celebrating CFA Women* publication that emphasises the important role women play in CFA.

DCO Stephanie Rotarangi and ACO Inclusion and Fairness James Dullard also stopped by the event to engage with the crowd.

There was a bean bag area for MFB story time, vehicle extrication displays, live CPR demonstrations, pipe band performances and a visit from Ember the emergency response dog (pictured right).

A gallery installation in the atrium highlighted the work of CFA women, and the marquee

display of firefighting equipment was a big hit with both adults and kids. On display were breathing apparatus, structural protective clothing and portable radios.

Events like this remind us that women are a critical part of Victoria's emergency services landscape and contribute to building stronger and more resilient communities – and that we are more powerful together.

STORY LIBBY SYMONS



PHOTOS: LIBBY SYMONS

Matter of Respect launches

The Matter of Respect (MOR) program launches this month.

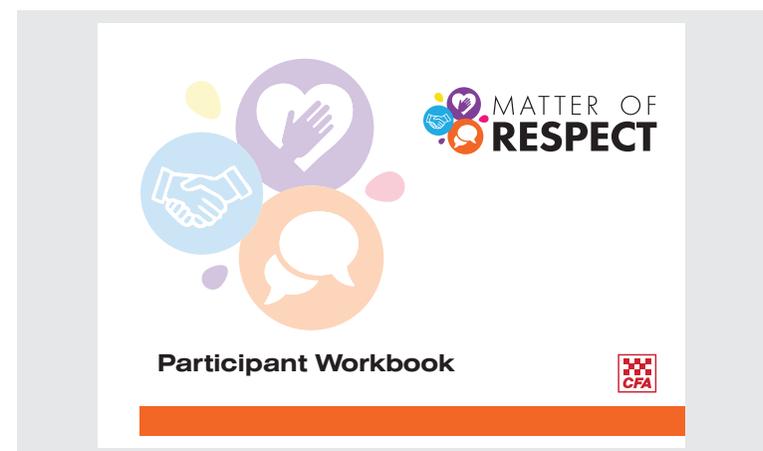
The MOR program is part of an initiative to support increased diversity, inclusion and respect at CFA. Over the coming months the program will be made available to all CFA people and provide an opportunity for participants to review CFA's values and how all members can demonstrate the value of respect in everything they do. In facilitated workshops, participants will discuss the benefits of having a diverse workplace, explore factors that support a positive culture and reflect on their own behaviours.

Assistant Chief Officer for Inclusion and Fairness James Dullard emphasised the importance of CFA members adopting our values.

"Real cultural change cannot only come from the top down, it has to come from all CFA people. This is about equipping CFA people with the necessary tools to build a resilient, safe and welcoming culture," said James.

Feedback gained during pilot tests was used to develop the final program so that it meets the needs of CFA and its members.

The MOR program started with a series of sessions at Burwood Headquarters in late March for the Executive and Service Delivery Leadership teams, plus a number of state-based workshops. The official launch at Whittlesea Fire Brigade will be held in late April, followed by sessions for regional leadership teams, district planning committees and regional inclusion and fairness advisory councils. Later this year and into 2020, the workshops will be offered more broadly to CFA people.



The Inclusion and Fairness team is grateful for the continued support shown by many CFA members, especially the cohort of MOR facilitators who represent the diversity of CFA's membership.

If you'd like to take part in the MOR program, talk to your line manager or brigade captain who can register their team's interest by emailing matterofrespect@cfa.vic.gov.au. To find out more about MOR, visit the Inclusion and Fairness team webpage at www.cfa.vic.gov.au/inclusion-and-fairness or email matterofrespect@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY NICKY HASLINGHOUSE

Katamatite valuing women

Nestled in the north around 240 kilometres from Melbourne is the country town of Katamatite. With a population of about 400 many may not have heard of it, but this close-knit community focuses on supporting one another.

Katamatite Fire Brigade is a prominent and important part of the community with 31 members stepping forward to respond to about 55 call-outs a year to bushfires, building fires and car accidents.

Twenty years ago the then captain Colin Gillespie identified a lack of weekday, day-time responders. But rather than doing the same type of recruitment drive that had been done in the past, Colin decided to hold community information sessions aimed at persuading stay-at-home mums, homemakers and those working part-time in the area to join the brigade. From the sessions and through word-of-mouth, 12 women showed interest in joining and six of those signed up.

Four of the original six are still heavily involved with the brigade. Three have remained operational and one has joined the brigade management team. At first they were only trained in wildfire firefighting, but the women

asked for more. Now they have completed training in low structure, car accidents and crew leader, and two have their medium rigid truck licence and completed Code 1 driver training.

Helen Matthies and Dossie Parnell are two of the original group of women. As they retell stories of their first strike teams, incidents they've attended and the camaraderie in the brigade, you can see the smiles on their faces grow.

"Even through the hard times of car accidents, the camaraderie is amazing. The supportive nature of everyone involved helps," Dossie said.

"Before joining, my husband and son were involved and I remember sitting at a running competition watching from the sidelines," Helen said. "I just thought to myself 'why am I sitting here when I could be participating?'" Dossie had the motto of "If you can't beat them, join them!"

The dynamics of the brigade have changed over the years as the members' children have grown. Katamatite brigade has always welcomed everyone, but now it has a wonderful family-friendly environment. In

recent years, the number of enquiries from young women and families in the community has increased significantly.

District 22 Operations Manager Tony Owen is thrilled with the progressive nature of Katamatite brigade.

"The strongest team is a team that has no barriers when it comes to race, gender or sexual orientation," Tony said.

Captain John Parnell has continued to use the recruitment model of his predecessor. He believes that it isn't about reinventing the wheel but about making improvements.

"We don't treat anyone differently. Everyone is equal and has the right to be heard," he said. When asked what he would say to other captains who may be struggling with day-time responders, he has these words of wisdom. "If you're struggling have a look at your community and talk to the women. Get involved and out there as you won't regret it. It will only make your brigade stronger and more welcoming."

This sentiment is reinforced by Helen. "Recruit the women in your community. They can become the backbone of your brigade."

STORY JESS SKINNER



Nancy King

Beverford & District Fire Brigade, District 18

faces of
CFA



PHOTO: MICHAEL KING

What are your CFA roles?

Firefighter, communications officer and community safety officer.

Why did you join?

My hubby and I were approached in our local tavern, and then a couple of days later the big red fire truck arrived at our house with the whole brigade on board. I never thought I could be a firefighter, but everyone was so friendly and welcoming that I decided to give it a go. It was a good way to meet new people and also to help our community. It was the best thing I have ever done and I haven't looked back.

What was the first incident you attended?

It was a grassfire in a paddock. It was just me and the driver on board the truck and I was packing my dacks as I knew I would be on

the back on my own. But thanks to the driver who had many years' experience, I was put at ease and was guided and mentored the whole time.

Which incident has had the greatest impact on you?

I was given the opportunity to go on a strike team to the Lancefield fire in 2015. It was such an eye opener – I wasn't used to the rough and steep terrain, and I saw how different brigades and agencies operate and how they are able to work together. The crew leader I worked with gave me wonderful support and looked after me and guided me the whole time. Although I was the only woman on the truck, I never felt left out or disadvantaged as the crew made me feel a valued part of their team, which gave me confidence.

What CFA training have you got the most out of?

All the CFA training I have done so far has been second to none. It's always good to learn new skills but most importantly retraining on the basics.

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

To have a go. If you want something and the opportunity is there just go for it.

Always listen to others as that's a great way to learn, and ask for help if you are unsure.

Always listen to your own intuition. If it doesn't feel right or you feel unsafe then stop and say something.

Respect others and always look after yourself and team members.

Who have been your mentors in CFA?

I have been lucky to have many mentors. My whole brigade has taught me many different and great things as well as giving me lots of encouragement and praise along the way. They have shown me what it's like to be part of a great firefighting team. This has made me proud of what I have been able to accomplish. I've also been lucky enough to be given advice and encouragement from group officers and firefighters and captains from neighbouring brigades.

What has been the highlight of your time in CFA?

Doing community work such as being involved with the Swan Hill Show, market days and mental health week. I help to educate people about identifying bushfire risks and fire safety, and also what it's like to be a CFA volunteer.

Also I love being involved with such a great small brigade. We may have only seven active members at the moment, but it's so rewarding being part of such a great team. We are a family and get the job done. We work well together and respect each other, which is very important and has helped me get where I am today.

INTERVIEW BY DUNCAN RUSSELL

Making a world of difference



National Volunteer Week, 20 to 26 May 2019, is an annual celebration to acknowledge the generous contribution of our nation's volunteers. This year's theme is 'making a world of difference'.

As part of last year's celebrations more than 60 CFA volunteers were honoured on the ground at the Country Round of the AFL. Our volunteers welcomed players from Essendon and Geelong onto the MCG pitch, and unfurled an oversized Australian flag while John Williamson sang *Waltzing Matilda*.

CEO Paul Smith said he was proud of the work done by our volunteers. "CFA volunteers are a quintessential element of country Victoria, and it was both an honour and fitting to have our volunteers celebrated at such an event," he said.

"This week is about recognising and celebrating the contribution all our volunteers make in the community."

In 2019 CFA will be running profiles of CFA volunteers on our News and Media website throughout the week-long celebration to highlight the amazing contribution CFA volunteers make to the community.

If you would like to nominate a CFA member we can showcase please email cfaevents@cfa.vic.gov.au

Also during National Volunteer Week CFA will announce the winners of our photo competition. The competition is open to all CFA volunteers and judges will assess how well the photos reflect CFA's values of safety, teamwork, adaptable, integrity and respect. If you want to enter the competition, go to www.cfa.vic.gov.au/photocomp (login needed to Brigades Online). The closing date is 30 April 2019.

STORY GEORGINA HILL



PHOTOS: JAKE PINSKIER USE 2 PICS

Wodonga opens new station

Volunteer and career firefighters moved from their former fire station on Smythe Street to the new state-of-the-art facility on 22 January 2019 after two years of planning, community consultation and construction.

Brigade members have settled in well to their new surrounds “We are thrilled to have moved into our fire station after more than 40 years of operating from the old site,” Wodonga Fire Station Acting Officer-In-Charge Sam Dennis said. “The day we moved went fairly smoothly, although we did have to attend a grassfire just behind the new station. All in a day’s work! “It’s been great to see how well our community has worked with us to adjust to the new location, and we’re really grateful for how supportive everyone from CFA and the community

have been throughout this whole process.”

The \$7 million station has five engine bays and 10 bedrooms to support firefighters in preparation and recovery from the growing number of incidents in Wodonga resulting from strong population growth as the fourth largest city in regional Victoria. The project was part of CFA’s 350 Firefighter Program (P350) – a Victorian Government commitment to improve service delivery through growing the workforce and enhancing infrastructure and equipment.

STORY BRIE SNARE



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM

Fun at the Australian Scout Jamboree

Milawa Fire Brigade volunteer Glenn Mercer and Tina Marchington from District 14 HQ (pictured) were among several CFA members who attended the 25th Australian Scout Jamboree in South Australia in early January 2019.

Having been involved in scouts for only the past two years, Glenn saw this event as a great opportunity to further his knowledge and skills as a scout leader. His son Luke also attended as a scout.

During the Jamboree Glenn was a member of the Police Scouter Group which provided security and emergency management functions around the clock to ensure the safety of all scouts, leaders and visitors. The team worked in conjunction with SA Police, SA Ambulance and SA Country Fire Service (CFS) members.

“Despite such a large number of people onsite (about 12,000 scouts and leaders) there were only a few minor incidents and no incidents occurred on the final Saturday when the

jamboree hosted 5000 visitors,” said Glenn.

“Working with CFS members benefited me personally, and I hope to use some of their ideas in CFA.”

While at the jamboree, Glenn noticed several CFA caps in the crowds and met a CFA member from Red Cliffs brigade in District 18, one from Mansfield brigade, one from Goughs Bay - Howes Creek in District 23, and Tina Marchington from District 14 HQ, who’s a scout leader at Melton. Tina worked in the catering area to ensure all 1200 service leaders were fed.

Glenn’s son Luke who attended as a scout (and is also a Junior at Eldorado brigade) participated in many of the activities including motor car racing, obstacle courses, trades (building things such as tables and chairs), high tech (radio use, electronic gadgets, drones), abseiling, land yacht racing and bike riding.

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL



The benefits of partnering with the community

Supporting CALD communities



CFA South East Region has partnered with the Australian Federal Police (AFP), Victoria Police, and Victoria State Emergency Service (SES) to deliver the Next Generation Youth excursion/incursion program.

The program, piloted in 2017 and now in its third year, brings together emergency services personnel and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to give them an insight into what emergency and other community-based services do.

The program aims to support communities that are potentially vulnerable in an emergency, encourage positive participation, and as a result, enable them to have a better understanding of possible dangers and what to do to reduce or mitigate risk.

CFA's Cultural and Diversity Engagement Officer Nada El-Masri coordinates the event on behalf of the partner agencies.

"Involving young people, particularly from multicultural families, in emergency services activities increases the ability of these communities to respond during times of emergency. It also helps to break down misconceptions about uniformed personnel and foster positive relationships and understanding," Nada said.

"The excursion day typically consists of setting up an emergency situation with a car accident and smoke in a building. The students play the part of the responding units and help with the evacuation of someone from

the building. The virtual reality gear also got a run and was very popular. Catering was provided by Dandenong Neighbourhood House using the Narre Warren Catering Unit and Rapid Relief Team.

"The excursion is followed by visits to the schools by all agencies where they discuss topics such as Triple Zero, home fire safety, drink driving, the role of agencies, cyber bullying and what to do in emergencies in more detail.

"The students who have participated in the program are quick to emphasise that they had a great time and feedback from the agencies and teaching staff has been positive," Nada said.

Dandenong Fire Brigade Senior Station Officer and Juvenile Fire Awareness and Intervention Practitioner Paul Caligari agreed saying, "It's an excellent program where CALD students are given the opportunity to interact with members of various emergency service organisations.

"Interacting in this environment allows the students to not only ask questions about the various occupations, but provides the ideal opportunity for each of those organisations to pass on any key safety messages that the students can then share with their friends and family."

Partner agency representatives also believe that engaging with young people through the program is an opportunity to encourage them to consider a career in the emergency and community-based services fields.

"It is great that this program has taken off, as it can be difficult to engage younger audiences and the program offers great opportunities for SES to speak with youth about our service for their own benefit, be that for awareness of what we can do for them or for the potential of becoming a member themselves," SES Section Leader Daniel Pasten said.

Victoria Police Senior Constable James Waterson said, "The Next Generation Program is an excellent opportunity for young people to gain an understanding of the various roles performed by our emergency services agencies. Victoria Police continues to support and attend the program, hopefully generating an interest in a career with Victoria Police."

"It's a unique opportunity for the AFP to interact with multicultural young people face-to-face," AFP Federal Agent Gerald Del Bono added. "We have to remember that many of the people we engage with from CALD communities have come from countries that have negative interactions with police. This program allows the AFP to not only show them what we do on a daily basis, but also break down any barriers and misconceptions that may be present."

The program has been a huge success. It expanded in 2018 to be included in the school curriculum at three secondary colleges in District 8, and in 2019 the program aims to engage more school-aged youth.

STORY ERIN BULMER

PHOTO: JAKE PINSKIER

Local church supports Porepunkah brigade

Porepunkah Fire Brigade shares a rich and long history with the Porepunkah Union Church.

The Wallace and Rayner families were instrumental in establishing the church, as well as being long-term inaugural members of Porepunkah Fire Brigade which formed in 1942.

As church numbers began to decline, the church committee made a decision to sell the building and dispose of the assets.

One hundred and ten thousand dollars from the sale of the church was kindly donated to Porepunkah brigade to help finance a new renovation for the station. The brigade also applied for funding under the Enhancing Volunteerism Grants Program.

The renovation will include an additional engine bay, change rooms, a new community meeting room, kitchen, and office/communications room.

Porepunkah Captain Mick Dalbosco said the works were fantastic news for the brigade. "Hopefully, our grant submission will be approved and we'll be able to use this funding alongside the

money donated by the church," Mick said.

"The donation from the church gives us the opportunity to make the fire station more accessible to the community and will hopefully encourage new members to join the brigade.

"It's sad for the church but also a positive result for the brigade and the town. Our current fire station is a 30-year-old shed, housing two tankers and a wide range of equipment.

"We were in desperate need of a station upgrade and are very thankful to the church for this generous contribution.

"We value our partners in the community such as the church, The Porepunkah Pantry, The Porepunkah Community Op Shop, The Bright Hospital Op Shop, The Porepunkah Pub as well as several other small businesses.

"The support shown to our brigade by all local businesses and individuals has been amazing. These organisations recognise the value of an active fire brigade and are willing to support and assist whenever they are asked."

STORY NANCY THOMPSON



Above: (Left to right) Colin Bertuch, Coralyn and Peter Steel (Union Church Committee members), Mark Wallace, Mick Dalbosco

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BORDER MAIL

Building resilience

The changing climate means bushfire threat is constantly increasing. Almost a third of Victoria's 5.6 million-strong population lives in regional Victoria and thousands more are making the move to regional areas every year.

Tourism to regional Victoria also continues to grow with more than 16 million travellers in 2018. This means more people are being exposed to a bushfire threat.

The Victorian Government's Safer Together initiative is a new approach to reduce the risks of bushfire by focusing on how well actions reduce risk, not just the amount of activity undertaken. The Community Based Bushfire Management (CBBM) approach supports this concept at a local level by bringing communities together with land management agencies including CFA, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and Parks Victoria to find the most effective strategies to reduce bushfire risk.

Land management agencies ensure efforts cut across private and public land,

based on where and how they can most effectively reduce risk. Last year the Balmoral community worked with CFA, Parks Victoria, DELWP and land managers to produce a first draft of the Balmoral Integrated Bushfire Risk Reduction Plan.

The community and land management agencies held a number of workshops and forums to identify and discuss the commitments that each land manager planned to undertake to help reduce the bushfire risk in the area. Balmoral Fire Brigade and other agencies will continue to work on this plan.

Bushfire management is an ongoing and shared responsibility, and at the core of this new approach is making Victoria a safer place for our communities by combining local knowledge and expertise with world-leading science and technology.

For more go to www.safertogether.vic.gov.au

STORY LORENA GIBSON



Rural Challenge addresses violence

Gender inequality is at the core of violence against women. CFA is proud to be a part of the Rural Challenge Partnership, which aims to eliminate violence against women by promoting and supporting gender equality in communities across rural and regional Victoria.

The Rural Challenge Partnership began in October 2016. The partnership group comprises Macedon Ranges Shire Council, City of Greater Bendigo, Women's Health Loddon Mallee, CFA North West Region, CFA District 2, Sports Focus, Centre for Non-Violence, AFL Central Victoria and AFL Goldfields.

Women's Health Loddon Mallee and the Centre for Non-Violence used their expert knowledge and skills to help develop and deliver the Rural Challenge Gender Equality Leadership Program. The program builds the capacity of men and women community leaders through a series of

discussion-based workshops and mentored action planning. The program aims to empower CFA brigades and football-netball clubs to implement organisational and cultural change to embed and promote gender equality.

The program goes beyond just trying to increase the number of women in clubs and brigades. It focuses on building an inclusive culture to help make community organisations safer and more welcoming, which will in turn encourage more diverse participation in each community.

Malmsbury Fire Brigade Captain Tony Stephen has been a long-term advocate of inclusion and fairness values, and his brigade completed the Rural Challenge Gender Equality Leadership Program. He said the program was beneficial because as a team they were able to identify different opportunities and work together to make a difference.

"We need a culture where we are inclusive and where everyone feels valued and respected, and through football-netball clubs and CFA, we can work to embed principles of gender equality and help prevent violence against women," Tony said.

The Rural Challenge Gender Equality Leadership Program has been working with CFA brigades and football-netball clubs in Macedon Ranges Shire and the City of Greater Bendigo since 2017. Ten community organisations participated in the initial program including Kangaroo Flat, Lancefield, Maiden Gully, Maldon, Riddells Creek, Macedon and Taradale fire brigades, and Kyneton, Lancefield and South Bendigo football-netball clubs.

For more information about the Rural Challenge Partnership go to theruralchallenge.com/

STORY LORENA GIBSON

Community-building through kids

Gordon Fire Brigade has had a long and successful partnership with its community which is continually evolving as the needs of the brigade and community groups change.

Fifteen years ago Diane Lawson, now the captain of Gordon Fire Brigade, approached the local primary school to run the Fire Safe

Kids program. The program continues to run today and is also on the curriculum for both the other local primary school and kindergarten.

Through the program the kids learn how to call Triple Zero (000), learn about home fire safety and understanding the fire risks in their local community.

Roger Lowery, community safety coordinator at the brigade, now runs the program at the schools with help from other brigade members.

"Kids love seeing emergency services personnel and really learn from the program. The best bit is that they take the fire safety messages home and educate other members of their family," Roger said.

With a town population of around 1,200, Roger believes they reach over 80 per cent of the community through the partnerships.

As well as running the program, the brigade strengthens relationships and trust by visiting the schools at Christmas with Santa on the back of the truck.

This partnership continues to grow, and for the past two years the brigade has partnered with the schools and other community groups to organise and run the Gordon annual community fair.



"Being a small community, fundraising can be difficult so it makes sense to join forces," Roger said.

"More than 1,000 people attend the event and enjoy rides, local produce, art and crafts, and an opportunity to meet local brigade members. All these activities help to connect the community and a connected community is an informed and resilient community."

STORY GEORGINA HILL



New look Champs in 2020

We're taking on board many of your suggestions from last year's survey about our State Championships. In an historic decision for the 140-year-old Urban competition and 70-year-old Rural competition, the Rural State Competition Committee and the Urban Competition and Rules Committee have agreed to run the Urban Senior Championships with the Rural Senior and Junior Championships at Deakin Park in Mooroopna over the weekend 28 and 29 March 2020.

CFA sees this as a wonderful opportunity to get behind these changes and work with the committees and volunteers to mount an exciting celebration of CFA around the Championships.

"Our objectives include getting the Championships onto a long-term sustainable footing and restoring them as a major event on the CFA calendar," Executive Director Volunteers and Strategy John Haynes said.

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford said the decision to align the competitions is a major one for Victorian firefighters.

"The Championships have always been much more than a competition; they strengthen fire brigades, enhance leadership skills and can provide recruitment opportunities," Andrew said.

"This is an historic moment and one that we see as ensuring the sustainability of the State Championships for long into the future."

In 2020 the Urban and Rural competitions will run their usual events, but the Urban

Championships will now be a two-day event rather than the traditional long weekend event. This change was prompted by the strong opinions of members who completed the survey.

The District 22 team, which includes Operations Manager Tony Owen, Mooroopna Fire Brigade members and members from surrounding brigades, is excited about the opportunity to stage this major event and showcase CFA to the local community.

"There's an energised team from around the district coming together to plan and deliver these Championships," Tony said. "As an innovation the committee is planning to include a community challenge event to promote fire awareness and bring community closer to CFA."

Councillor Kim O'Keefe, Mayor of the City of Greater Shepparton, is delighted to welcome the CFA VFBV State Championships to her community.

"CFA is a critical part of regional and rural life and we value the continuing selfless commitment of CFA members to ensure our safety," she said. "We are extremely proud to host this event and my team is right behind the District 22 host team to ensure its success."

CFA corporate displays and participation will be strong with the aim of connecting with members who are participating or competing in the Championships. "Whether its technology, equipment, community safety, training or workplace health and safety, there's much to share with our members," John said.

Gerry Neyenhuis and Rob Waterson, chairs of the Rural and Urban Committees, are excited about the future. They expect the 2020 Championships to be a huge success and a great opportunity for a number of past competing brigades to return to the Championships and for some new teams to enter. Gerry and Rob encouraged members to think outside the box when it comes to putting together a team. If a brigade doesn't have enough interested competitors to enter a team on its own, it should test the waters with neighbouring brigades or their group to see if they can enter a joint team.

"The important thing is to compete and share in the camaraderie at the Champs," Gerry said. "Contact VFBV if you need support or advice to get a team together and ready for 2020," Rob added.

Regular updates about the 2020 State Championships in Mooroopna will be shared with CFA people on CFA News & Media ([news.cfa.vic.gov.au](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)).

"This is a first step in a partnership with VFBV to set out a five-year plan to ensure the State Championships are an annual celebration of CFA and are sustainable in the long term," John said.

If you have ideas on what should be considered in the five-year plan, email championships@cfa.vic.gov.au. Your input will be considered by the planning team.

STORY TERRY HAYES



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF VFBV

Flexible volunteering model

When it comes to the make up of its membership, every brigade has different needs and every person who wishes to volunteer has differing interests, skills and availability. To reflect this, CFA is currently piloting a flexible volunteering model in North East Region that will lead to new ways for non-traditional volunteers to support their local brigade.

In the event of a large-scale fire or campaign fire, local communities often rally to support threatened communities. But for those people who aren't members of CFA, volunteering to help has not always been straightforward.

A flexible volunteering model will improve CFA's ability to connect with and attract time-poor volunteers, encouraging people to contribute to their local brigade on a short-term or ad hoc basis, such as helping with a particular project or filling a gap in skill sets.

Members from Indigo Valley, Barnawartha and District 24 Headquarters brigades are working with CFA's Volunteer Sustainability Team to pilot approaches and frameworks for flexible volunteering, and help determine how flexible volunteering could be managed in individual brigades.

The project will aim to create a volunteer model that allows brigades to make the most of community goodwill while minimising many of the risks that flexible volunteerism can present. The benefits of harnessing the power of volunteers include having access to more resources and local knowledge, and bringing together and strengthening the community.

The model will outline roles for people who wish to volunteer to complete a specific project as well as those who would like to support brigades in a non-operational capacity during an emergency to improve surge capacity. This could see people volunteer to source grants and fundraise, help with IT, provide local knowledge support, or provide administrative support for example.

The goal will be to improve brigade structure, attract additional volunteers, increase inclusion and diversity, and build communities that are more connected and capable to prepare and respond to future emergencies.

Volunteer Sustainability Manager Ali Martin said the traditional model of volunteering needed to evolve, and through the pilot CFA would gain information on the risks, barriers and opportunities flexibility could bring to brigades.

"Every brigade faces its own challenges when it comes to recruiting and retaining their volunteers. We live in a state with one of the fastest-growing and diverse populations in Australia, and many brigades may also no longer reflect the community they serve," Ali said.

"Whether it's declining population, increased growth, changing demographics or economic pressures – it's clear that a one-size-fits-all approach to attracting volunteers is no longer the way forward if we want to meet the needs of our communities now and into the future.

"And with our role in the community continually expanding, our ability to attract and develop volunteers who want to deliver broader services is also essential to our ongoing success."

New research highlights that people's willingness to volunteer and interest in volunteering is increasing, but the way people choose to give their time has changed.

"This has given us new ideas that we need to put into action; we need to embrace these changes in volunteering trends," Ali said.

"Many brigades are inundated with offers of help during a large incident or emergency and at the moment we don't have a structure in place that allows brigades to effectively manage these types of volunteers.

"There are risks associated with not making better use of the specialist skills, local knowledge and experience that exists within our communities.

"A flexible model of volunteering will provide a process where spontaneous volunteers will be protected, given clearer direction and have their skills used efficiently, especially in times of an emergency.

"It's a step towards arresting the decline in traditional volunteering – supporting brigades before, during and after incidents and allowing us to better cater for community needs.

"It will also benefit the community by bringing people together, strengthening relationships, creating connections and partnerships, and building resilience."

The Flexible Volunteering Pilot will continue in District 24 throughout 2019 which will include an evaluation to determine the future of flexible volunteering and how it could be rolled out statewide.

For more information about this pilot contact Project Officer Michelle Critchley on **0409 938 563**.

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN / TONY CATTERMOLE





The importance of recruitment and retention



Several volunteer recruitment and retention resources and processes are being refreshed, such the public website pages, how-to guides, CFA image library and the volunteer enquiry system. Workshops around the state also continue to draw attention to the issues of, and opportunities for, recruitment and retention.

We recently updated our image library (digitallibrary.cfa.vic.gov.au) with many new images of our volunteers. As a thank you to the brigades that participated in the photo shoots, CFA offered the choice of a free A-frame, two banners or 50 calendars using the new images. These brigades were grateful to receive some extra resources they can use for either recognition or recruitment.

"Thanks for the banners. They are great and they've had their first run already at a community group meeting," Malmesbury Fire Brigade Captain Tony Stephens said.

During the first year of the project, the focus at both state and regional level has been to collect and analyse data, though some districts have already initiated projects to help their brigades retain and reengage existing members, and recruit new members when needed.

Below, we've given a round-up of what's been happening around the regions. It's very encouraging to see each region's enthusiasm to create positive change.

SOUTH WEST REGION

Thanks to support from the project, Emma Taunt from the Volunteer Sustainability Team and Bellarine Group Deputy Group Officer Andy Longmore created the first of a series of short videos. The videos aim to build brand awareness, increase community understanding and celebrate how CFA volunteers support the local community.

"With social media at the centre of most people's lives, we saw it as an opportunity to broaden our reach to the community," Emma said.

"The coming together and filming of the video was a buzz. One cool morning we travelled from location to location to capture all the footage. There was much laughter, firefighting banter and enthusiasm in the air.

"Each member acted out a reality of their normal life – for example, working in the garage or coming in from a surf and having a coffee with friends as the pager alarm goes off – before the members met in the station and set off to a job. The day ended with the same feeling as the video message: coming together for our community.

"Since the video's release in October, there have been more than 15,000 views and we received positive comments in person and through social media.

“The versatility of the video means it can be used for recruitment through to celebrating volunteers. Although best suited for coastal brigades, we welcome other locations to use it as well.”

Further research on the reach and impact of recruitment and retention will be completed later in 2019.



Far left: Sarah Boore (Wallington brigade), Pete Burnett (Barwon Heads brigade), Sean Blake (Wallington brigade)

PHOTO: BRYAN HYNES

Left: Little people fire truck

Above right: Eureka Group

Below right: Wollert brigade members



the barriers and enablers for young members to step into leadership roles in the more remote areas of the Wimmera. So far they have talked to volunteers from 12 of the 13 groups in District 17. At least one young member from each group and as many young women as possible were interviewed. A workshop is being planned to discuss the results and establish a youth reference group to help inform decision-making in the district and more broadly across the region.

NORTH EAST REGION

A number of events are being planned including recognition events and youth and captains' forums to bring together volunteers so they can share experiences and learn from each other.

“Some great work is being done across our region by both staff and volunteers and we need to make sure we recognise and share this,” Therese Morris from the Volunteer Sustainability Team said.



SOUTH EAST REGION

In District 11, Mount Taylor Brigade Captain Geoff Crane organised new brigade signage for the school bus stop. Additional banners and posters were produced to advertise in other areas of the district. At the Pakenham Brigade Open Day, it was suggested that a little-people fire truck for the kids to play on would attract more families to the brigade.

“We engaged the local Pakenham Men’s Shed to assist with the build,” Brigade Administrative Support Officer (BASO) Lisa Hicks said.

“The little fire truck, equipped with little ladders, hose reel, steering wheel and lights, had its first outing in March. Our sincere thanks to all those involved at the Pakenham Men’s Shed.”

WEST REGION

Recruitment and retention workshops held in Horsham and Wendouree were an opportunity for staff across West Region to come together and consider priority areas and opportunities to better support our volunteers. An initial area of focus was to bring together district BASOs and regional BASOs to participate in a youth engagement workshop to improve knowledge and skills.

Some other key projects are the District 17 youth engagement project; direct support for the Edenhope community through the Rural Decline Action Plan; and future planning with brigades in the Eureka Group in District 15 to support the changing environment in the high-growth area.

The brigade and group leaders of Eureka Group took part in a facilitated forum to identify a way to streamline how it manages the volunteer workforce, including recruitment, induction, and identification of skills development. A second forum is likely to be held to capitalise on the opportunities for collaboration between the brigades in Eureka Group.

As part of the District 17 youth engagement project, Sue Martin and Shane Cramer interviewed 43 young members to better understand

NORTH WEST REGION

Kirsten Dudink from the Volunteer Sustainability Team has been working with Wollert Fire Brigade.

“Wollert is in a high-growth corridor and is transitioning from a predominantly rural area to a rapidly-expanding urban environment,” said Kirsten.

One of the brigade’s priorities over the next few years is recruitment by engaging new residents moving into the area who may consider volunteering with the brigade.

“I’ve been supporting them over the past two years with their recruitment strategies. One of the brigade’s members is a graphic designer who recently created some great recruitment videos. The funding from the project will also help them to develop additional creative recruitment resources such as flyers, social media tiles and shortened video clips.”

STORY SASKIA VAN BEVER



A CFA family

Mother and son Christine and Nathan Carty live in Goornong in north central Victoria. Members of Goornong Fire Brigade, they are passionate about their community and CFA and love working alongside each other on the fireground. They told *Brigade* magazine about their lives.

Christine

I'm very community oriented. Over the years I've volunteered and been president on pre-school committees, school committees and school boards as well as sporting and community committees. I joined CFA 16 years ago but have only been active for the past five years as I was busy raising our family of three boys. I did my Minimum Skills when I was 47 years old. As well as being a firefighter, I've been brigade secretary for three years and I enjoy the role. I would like to be a lieutenant one day but my main aim is to remain healthy enough to be an active firefighter.

I really enjoy being in CFA because it allows me to express my inner tomboy. I suppose growing up on a farm encouraged that quite a bit. I love driving the truck, getting covered in grime and ash and physically pushing myself. When I'm at an incident or a fire, I don't have to think about all the other aspects of my life. I am there, totally present in the moment doing my best to support the team to achieve a goal.

I also enjoy learning skills that are totally different from my everyday life. I love learning, and joining the CFA has let me learn so many skills I would not have had access to otherwise. I appreciate that I'm part of a huge community that has the same goal - to protect their community. I enjoy it when we do group training and we get together with lots of other CFA members. It's great to meet new people and swap stories.

Our entire family is part of the brigade and we are always talking about fires, turnouts and the like. My dad was in Goornong brigade. My husband Jason is the current captain, Nathan is a volunteer firefighter, our future daughter-in-law, Catalina, is in training for her Minimum Skills, and our 15-year-old son Theo is a Junior member. Our youngest son Jerome is also a passionate Junior and has been around the brigade since he could walk. Having our entire family involved means we always have something in common.

I only became an active firefighter because Nathan turned 16 and wanted to qualify. He encouraged me to go along. I felt very intimidated because I was a 47-year-old, five-foot-two female and nervous about how I would cope physically. But I got through and now I love being able to go to turnouts with my husband and son.



Left: Nathan with Jamie Francis doing training at the Goornong silos

Far left: Christine with her son Nathan

When we're on the fireground we don't treat each other any different to anyone else, but it is comforting to know that my family is with me. When we go home we can talk about how things went and support each other in our learning.

I home-schooled Nathan from Year 8 as he had some issues with his hands, and we developed a close bond. Now that Nathan is engaged and working, our relationship has naturally changed but we are still great friends and spend time together whenever we can. We have lots of laughs on the fireground together and we know we always have each other's back.

Nathan

I've lived in Goornong my entire life and I love living here on the farm – it's a great lifestyle. I had a bit of a different life growing up. I had to leave school when I was 13 due to issues with my hands. I studied by distance education until Year 11 and am currently completing an Advanced Certificate in Zoo Keeping.

I own and run my own wildlife demonstrators business called Wildlife Connections and love being able to take the animals into schools and

educate the kids about our amazing wildlife. I'm also an artist and have had a number of exhibitions over the years.

I joined the brigade when I was 16 years old and immediately started training to become a firefighter. I completed the training five years ago and have loved every moment since. What I enjoy most is being able to grow personally and learn new skills. I also enjoy pushing myself on the fireground and working in a team with other members of our brigade.

I appreciate having my family with me in the brigade. I like working alongside mum especially on the fireground. We work well together and we have turned out to a number of incidents by ourselves. I am also enjoying spending time training my fiancé Cat to become a firefighter, as well as helping to train my youngest brother as a Junior. Everyone has a lot of fun and it's a good way to really get to know people.

To me CFA is a great way to be able to help the community in a way that also helps you grow as a person. It's great to be able to help out members of the community in such an impactful

way. I want to continue my training and learn as much as I can. I'm looking at doing a breathing apparatus course this year and eventually I might become a lieutenant.

As mum helped me through distance education we are fairly close but since I have been working more and have become engaged I don't have as much time to spend with her as I used to. I'm very proud of mum because even though she was reluctant to do her firefighter training, she completed it and now loves turning out to fires.

While she needs some help every now and then with getting things from high places (as she is vertically challenged), she does an amazing job on the fireground and behind the scenes as the brigade's secretary. Last year she was awarded the Brigade Member of the Year which was very well deserved. I know firsthand how much work she puts in when she's at home as well as on the fireground.

CFA is always a great way for us to spend time together.

INTERVIEW BY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN

Carrying out rescues in pitch black, battling different conditions on each call-out, and making sure all members come home safely are some of the similarities between Oscar 1 and a typical brigade. The difference is Oscar 1 usually completes rescues underground, sometimes hundreds of metres under the earth's surface.

Based in Bendigo, this team of volunteers are skilled in using long duration breathing apparatus, level 3 first-aid, gas detection, underground search and rescue, vertical rescue, and confined space rescue.

A unique skillset is required of the team's members but as Captain David Priest explained, group cohesion is key.

"Our guys are going down into the ground with 30 to 40kg of gear on them at once, so you do have to be physically able. But more than that, it's knowing how your team works," David said.

"Our people know each other really well. We've all got to know each other's capabilities, and as a consequence we're interchangeable when it comes to a job. Usually we have teams of six. You might be a rigger, a medic, a gas detector, doing grunt work, and then a captain and a vice-captain. I have no problems giving those roles to different individuals.

"You really have to trust the people you're working with in the underground environment ... and we do."

Common responses for the team include underground fires and vehicle accidents in commercial mines, rescuing people and dogs, and assisting police with knowledge, investigations and rescues. They also support other brigades.

While these are regular incidents, David noted he had also received some more unusual calls in his 20 years as leader of the team: a request to release a trapped wedge-tailed eagle; cattle that had fallen into mine shafts; a motorbike that had fallen down a shaft; and assisting a woman who tried to retrieve a rare type of fern from inside a mine.

Although the group receives a low number of call-outs each year compared with other brigades, it plays a vital role as the only volunteer mine rescue team in Australia. Active since 1999, it's also the only CFA brigade with underground mine rescue capability.

Group Training Coordinator Alun Hughson, a former operations officer in North West Region, believes Oscar 1 will become even more important because of urban sprawl.

"When we talk about why Oscar 1 exists, the basic reason was so we could manage all the disused mines around Victoria. There are thousands of them and they're all different sizes," Alun said.

"As towns become more spread out, areas that used to be bushland become recreation

areas. There could be more and more people going through the bush who don't quite have the knowledge of the area or the unexpected dangers that people had in the past."

Sometimes though, as Alun reflected, even those with local knowledge of an area can get into trouble.

"We had a rescue at Chewton [near Castlemaine]. The gentleman knew the area very well and he decided to take his friends to look around. He tripped on a rock and fell 30 metres down a mine shaft.

"Brigade member Kylie went down and performed first-aid while hanging on a rope 35 metres down into the mine. His leg was in a bad way – it was a precarious situation.

"We have wrap-around stretchers for tight spaces, so we used that. We raised him a further four or five metres into another side drive, and brought him back up that way because it was slightly easier.

"Coincidentally, only months earlier a dog fell down the same shaft, so we were familiar with the mine."

One of the group's first rescues, which turned into a double rescue, could have been a lot worse.

"In Rushworth on New Year's Day in 2005 we had a bloke about 15 metres down, stuck on what's called a bird's nest – an area with a



**Oscar 1:
a lot like
other
brigades**

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF OSCAR 1

light covering of debris inside a mine. Another emergency services worker insisted on going down, but unfortunately he fell through the bird's nest. Luckily, we made him keep his safety line on. We had to haul him out first before we could get the casualty out.

"Later on at a debrief, DELWP maps showed that that particular mine was actually 120 metres deep."

The group actively trains and takes part every year in the Victorian Mine Rescue Competition. Last October they won the Rope Rescue Challenge at the competition; the only non-industry team and the only volunteer team participating.

"The rescue teams from all over Australia are our peers. Oscar 1 is accepted by them and can integrate easily at any major mine or urban search and rescue incident because they train and learn from each other and the equipment is the same."

There are 22 members in the group, which seems a small number considering the size of Victoria. David said the key ingredient to the group's success is getting the right members rather than a lot of members.

It's important to note that all members of Oscar 1 are also members of other brigades – something that benefits those brigades, according to David.

"I think people might choose to join us because we're a bit different," he said.

"We offer the chance for a different skillset, learning rope skills, mine knowledge, which rocks are safe and which aren't, all that sort of stuff.

"They might choose us because they're interested, but more than that they just want to help. Their brigades don't lose a member when they join us; they actually get someone back with a great set of skills that they didn't previously have."

STORY TIM MCGLONE



Kids lead the way in Strathewen

The carnage of the 2009 bushfires reduced the primary school in Strathewen to ashes. Yet it is that same school 10 years later that's leading the way to ensure the town is ready for fire every summer.

Strathewen is a small township that sits about 50km north-east of Melbourne. It lost 27 of its 200 residents on Black Saturday, as well as its fire station, community hall and primary school. Strathewen's Bushfire Education Program aims to arm the community's youngsters with the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions in the event of a bushfire. In 2016, the first year of the project, students produced a claymation video on Fire Danger Ratings, which was followed by a picture story book.

This year another claymation video was produced focusing on key aspects of bushfire education. The students worked with a variety of community groups to produce the video, including Arthurs Creek/Strathewen Fire Brigade.

Arthurs Creek volunteer Lisal O'Brien (pictured far right in the photo below) has been heavily involved in the program. She said that while the video is aimed at the school's students, it isn't just the kids who are learning.

"We experienced a significant disaster in 2009 and many of the school's students and families

are still managing distress years later," Lisal said. "Our students have learned where Fire Danger Ratings come from and how they are calculated.

"They've learned how to use a number of fire behaviour analysis tools, as well as fuel loadings, tree bark types and general fire behaviour.

"Students now know what's needed to keep their families' properties fire ready, and they are proud to go away and share their knowledge with family and other community members."

Some of CFA's leaders contributed to the video, put to work during a visit to the school in 2018 as constructors of the claymation characters that featured in the video.

Chief Officer Steve Warrington, Deputy Chief Officer Stephanie Rotarangi, as well as members from CFA headquarters, local brigades and local police stations were among those who helped out.

CFA Wildfire Instructor Jamie MacKenzie (in the centre of the photo) helped to get the program off the ground as part of CFA's Survive and Thrive program. This program is a bushfire education program for primary school students in Grades 5 and 6. It's delivered through a community-based partnership between a local

CFA brigade and a local primary school, with Anglesea and Strathewen primary schools the current beneficiaries.

"It's the relationship and links to the community which are most important," Jamie said. "I was first involved with Arthurs Creek/Strathewen a couple of years after the fire as part of a case study. Back then there was a level of fear and distrust going around.

"Speaking with people like Lisal, they didn't want the kids from the area growing up in that sort of environment.

"This is now the fourth year these guys have been a part of the program, and it's been such a great response from not only the kids but the rest of the community too.

"The main thing we wanted to do was to use knowledge to dispel fear. These kids are growing up with the knowledge to make the right decisions."

Jamie and Lisal played a key role in teaching the students bushfire basics, and Jamie features prominently in the video.

There is little doubt, however, that the kids are the stars of the show.

STORY TIM MCGLONE



PHOTO: DIANE PHILLIPS, STRATHEWEN PS

Bayswater's new station now open

The new \$2.84 million Bayswater Fire Station officially opened at the end of February 2019. This state-of-the-art facility was much needed to service the growing suburb of Bayswater and its neighbouring communities.

The four-bay station has more modern facilities and more space compared with the old station. There's space to train, as well as storage areas, meeting rooms and a computer hub.

Attending the opening were brigade members, guests from the community, and government representatives who listened to guest speakers ex-captain Alan Hodgkin and Alan Waters before taking a tour of the station. Alan detailed the brigade's proud history and progress from having a tarp and tin shed (and a lawnmowing goat) to the current impressive building.

In her speech Captain Diana Ferguson said the brigade was lucky to have so many high-quality members.

"Nearly half our membership is operational firefighters, with the rest being non-operational or support members," she said. "The dedication and time these members give to their brigade is exceptional. Our non-operational and support members are the backbone of this brigade. They quietly go about their business and step up whenever the need arises."

Bayswater brigade was formed in 1969 and celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Board member Peter Shaw, who is also an ex-captain of the brigade, presented Diana with a certificate to acknowledge the community contribution the brigade has made over the years.



The brigade responds to more than 470 call-outs each year and has more than 80 volunteers who support surrounding brigades when required.

The new station was funded by CFA's capital works program and a contribution of \$138,000 raised by the local community and Bayswater brigade members.

STORY GRACE LARKIN



PHOTOS: GRACE LARKIN/CHRIS GROVE

Firefighter training update

The General Firefighter (GFF) training package will be launched soon following a successful pilot during March and April 2019. General Firefighter is essentially a repackaging of the existing Minimum Skills, and will be the base requirement for a new firefighter to respond to an incident under supervision.

The Trainer Guide and Drill Information Sheets (part of the foundation Skill Drills) are complete, including online PDF versions, and these were piloted in late February and early March. Following feedback from brigades and groups, printed versions are being produced. Every brigade will be given a copy.

We completed a series of videos in January which were used in February to test the foundation skills drills. The videos will soon be uploaded to the Learning Hub on Brigades Online and are also available on a USB memory stick so they can be easily accessed by all brigades.

The eLearning modules are being developed and a draft was released for preliminary testing in late March. Next it will be piloted with selected brigades and groups, with the aim of launching eLearning with the full GFF course in early May.

As an alternative to completing the eLearning modules, brigade members can take face-to-face facilitator-led sessions just like they do now.

For more information contact Project Team Leader Jamie Mackenzie: 0438 673 109.

STORY JAMIE MACKENZIE



PHOTO:

HOW TO BUY CFA Branded Clothing



CFA members can buy a range of CFA-branded clothing and other items online. Men's, women's and children's clothing includes:

- polo shirts
- shell jackets
- fleece jumpers
- hats (fleece beanie and bucket hat) and scarves
- babies' t-shirts, bonnets and bibs.

You can also buy CFA-branded umbrellas, torch, wallet and more.

Go to <https://online.lithocraft.com.au/cfaapparel> and click **Register for Apparel** if it's your first visit.



PHOTO: JOEL READ

Iveco heavy tanker driving tips

Since 2012 CFA has introduced about 90 Iveco heavy tankers into service across the state. These trucks have significantly improved our operational capability compared with earlier versions, but they have some different operating systems to get used to. The following information is included in the truck's training package, but it's worth emphasising these three points.

Tip 1: park brake start

These new trucks are fitted with automated manual transmissions so when the vehicle comes to a stop the clutch disengages. In all situations when the vehicle comes to rest the park brake must be applied whether the vehicle is on a slope or on flat ground. To do a park brake start in either 'auto' drive or 'semi' drive modes, build your engine revs to approximately 700rpm to a point where you can feel the clutch engaging and the vehicle wants to accelerate. At this point, you release the park brake, maintain throttle and drive off in a controlled manner.

Tip 2: exhaust brake

The vehicle has an exhaust brake that is activated by two settings on the righthand steering wheel stalk. The exhaust brake is either on or off. On setting 1, the exhaust brake will come on only when the service brakes

are applied. When the exhaust brake is on, an orange indicator light activates on the instrument cluster.

On setting 2, the exhaust brake automatically comes on when you take your foot off the accelerator. You will know when you are in setting 2 because the orange indicator light will flash. The light is a reminder to the driver that the exhaust brake will activate when you release the accelerator.

Only activate setting 2 when no accelerator is applied. If you are still pushing down on the accelerator when you put the exhaust brake to setting 2, the vehicle will activate the exhaust brake and override the accelerator as a safety precaution. In this instance, return the exhaust brake to setting 1 or 0, take your foot off the accelerator and then reposition the exhaust brake setting to 2.

When driving off-road, the exhaust brake must be set to setting 2 and the transmission set to 'semi' drive mode. This ensures that when going downhill you can maintain maximum vehicle control after selecting the appropriate gear for the conditions. The exhaust brake helps with deceleration to maintain vehicle speed, especially if descending steep and/or long slopes.

Tip 3: off-road downhill starts

When driving off-road, the first two driving tips need to be implemented. However, if descending a technical off-road slope and the vehicle is in low range, first gear (semi mode) and with the exhaust brake in setting 2, and you have to slow right down (or even stop) to manoeuvre around an obstacle, the vehicle will disengage the clutch to ensure the engine doesn't stall.

When you've passed the obstacle and you take your foot off the service brake, the vehicle speed will rapidly increase. The transmission will need to match vehicle speed and engine speed to ensure a gear selection can be made. During this period, the vehicle's clutch is still disengaged and to keep the vehicle speed controlled the driver will have to react by reapplying the service brakes.

As described in driving tip 1, if you've slowed the vehicle to a point where the clutch has been disengaged, do a park-brake start and drive away from the obstacle in a controlled manner to ensure the clutch is engaged.

To watch a video about these driving tips, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyxgLFWQvH8>

STORY JOEL READ

Fire behaviour trailers refitted



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM AFMS

In late 2018 after extensive design and engineering work CFA delivered five fire behaviour training trailers across the state. The trailers contain a burn table that can simulate fire behaviour in different terrains in a rural setting.

The trailers are fully self-sufficient with external lighting and a range of audiovisual equipment, which means they are suitable for a variety of activities including brigade training, community fire safety education and local presentations.

A training package is currently being developed to give members the skills and knowledge they need to operate the burn table.

Trailers will be able to be booked through local district training coordinators.

The trailer's main features are:

- LCD TV, DVD player, PA system with microphone (accessed through a side compartment)
- internal and external battery-powered LED lighting

- laptop stand and connections
- fire behaviour training burn table and all required accessories including replacement hessian, model cars, burnable houses and coloured spray paints
- electric winch to make it easier to load and unload the burn table
- bollards and barriers to demarcate the training area from spectators
- fire extinguishers and a first-aid kit.

STORY CFA TRAINING TEAM

Trailers build chainsaw capability

New chainsaw training trailers in West, South East and North West regions will allow an additional 300 volunteers to train in chainsaw cross cutting techniques each year.

Chainsaws can be used for cutting up tree limbs, gaining access and egress from the fireground and mopping up after fires, making them one of the most important and used tools in CFA.

The addition of these three trailers increases the number across the state to five, which means each region has a dedicated chainsaw training trailer to support the delivery of the Chainsaw Crosscut qualification for up to 10 participants at a time.

The trailers carry everything needed to learn chainsaw maintenance, operation and safety. This equipment includes chainsaws, tools, spare parts, protective equipment, fuel and consumables.

To book chainsaw training for your brigade contact your local district headquarters.

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN



CFA Juniors at Gumbaya World

The cool and wet conditions in late November 2018 didn't dampen the spirits of the 150 CFA Junior members, Junior leaders, their friends and family who gathered at Gumbaya World for a day of waterslides, wildlife and fun.

Organised by Kerri-ann and Mark Simpson, Junior leaders at Nar Nar Goon Fire Brigade, the event at the newly-refurbished water park in Tynong North attracted brigade members from all over the eastern part of the state including Olinda, Loch, Maryknoll and District, Boolarra, Morwell, Warragul, Trafalgar and Hastings.

The weather may not have cooperated but that didn't seem to hold anyone back. Morwell Junior leader Jackie Dalrymple summed it up by saying, "It was the best day ever. From singing in the bus, to animals in the rain and super sliding. The weather never stopped us for one minute."

While the day was intended to be a fun day out for Junior members, Mark Walshe from Traralgon let slip that it wasn't just the kids taking advantage of the park's attractions. "I'm not sure who had more fun on the waterslides, Trafalgar Juniors or the Junior leaders and parents!"

Trafalgar Junior Brigade reformed in 2018 following a 15-year break so this event was a great opportunity for the brigade to meet other Junior leaders and members and hear about what their brigades are doing.

Meanwhile, Jeanene Howard from Olinda Fire Brigade hinted that there may have been some regrets. "The Juniors didn't care at all that it was raining as they were in the water anyway. And while the parents and leaders were comfortable under shelter enjoying a chat, I suspect that next time the adults will take their togs and towels too," she said.



The rides, waterslides and wildlife were a big hit with everyone but just having the opportunity to get together and celebrate was the big drawcard.

"It was truly what the CFA is about: friends supporting each other and the community in which we live," Mel Torpy from Hastings Fire Brigade said. "There were so many new friendships built and old ones rekindled."

All the brigades who attended were grateful to Kerri-ann and Mark for all their hard work in arranging the event and making sure everyone was well looked after. And an extra big thanks to Mark for putting together an entertaining video of all the fun. To watch the video search for CFA Junior Fun Day Gumbaya World on YouTube.

STORY ALEKSANDRA WAKEHAM

Swan Hill Juniors help run Australia Day BBQ



As part of local Australia Day celebrations, members of the Swan Hill Junior Brigade joined forces with their senior brigade counterparts to serve their local community bacon, eggs and sausages.

Swan Hill brigade cooked up a storm at the annual Australia Day Breakfast, hosted by the local Australia Day Community Committee and Swan Hill Rural City Council.

Junior Brigade Coordinator Denise Jordan explained that several years ago the brigade thought about what they could do to increase the number of Junior members continuing into the senior ranks. Their first step was to actively seek out opportunities for senior and Junior members to work collaboratively – particularly at community events.

“One thing we began doing was inviting Juniors

and their families to get involved in general brigade activities such as community events, fundraising and brigade social activities,” Denise said.

Not only do events like these give Junior members a chance to play an active role in building the brigade’s profile in their community, they also help build relationships within the brigade. This makes the transition to senior membership less intimidating.

It’s been a successful strategy. Five current Junior members are looking forward to signing up when they reach their 16th birthday. And an unintended but perhaps unsurprising bonus is that as the kids become more involved in brigade life so do their parents. This has resulted in at least one extra senior recruit already.

STORY ALEKSANDRA WAKEHAM

Calling all aspiring uni students

Are you a current CFA brigade member in Year 9, 10, 11 or 12 (or have finished Year 12) who wants to go to university?

If so, you need to be aware of La Trobe University’s Aspire Program (see latrobe.edu.au/study/aspire/i-aspire) which offers significant benefits to those who volunteer in their community. CFA is a partner with La Trobe for this program, which has been running for four years.

The program has several benefits including:

- an early conditional offer into your nominated course for students in Year 12, as long as you meet the minimum ATAR score (and any other course prerequisites). You will know before doing your final Year 12 exams that your place is reserved and it doesn’t rely on getting a better score than other applicants for that course
- specialised support programs for your final Year 12 exams
- early access to the library and campus resources
- induction to the Enrichment Program to help you get the most from the university experience
- a dedicated hub for Aspire students on campus
- access to special events for you and your fellow Aspire students to introduce you to campus life.

For those who’ve already completed year 12, the minimum ATAR benefit still applies along with access to the campus Enrichment Program and the Aspire Hub.

The Bundoora Campus Open Day for 2019 is on Sunday 5 August. Go to openday.com.au/event/latrobe for the dates of open days at other La Trobe campuses.

In 2018 applications for Aspire opened at the beginning of June and closed at the end of August. (2019 dates were not available at the time the magazine went to press, but they are likely to be the same.)

Students in Years 9, 10 and 11 can register their future interest in Aspire on the La Trobe University website: latrobe.edu.au/study/aspire/contact-us.

STORY SHANE CRAMER

Duke of Edinburgh awards

Amberliah Duffy and Tegan Hutchinson from Kalorama-Mt Dandenong brigade are the first Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) Award recipients to complete their program through CFA.

The internationally-recognised program, being piloted in District 13, acknowledges young people for their participation, community engagement and personal achievements. It's open to 14 to 24-year-olds, regardless of their background. There are three levels – bronze, silver and gold – and at each level participants complete four sections: Voluntary Service, Skill, Physical Recreation and Adventurous Journey. The award can benefit their future employment and study opportunities.

Both Amberliah, 16, and Tegan, 20, have completed their bronze award, and Amberliah is now planning on doing her silver level.

Amberliah (pictured right with Captain Michael Motterham) who's been in CFA for five years, said completing the DoE award was an amazing opportunity and she encouraged

other young members to take up the opportunity if they could.

"It was really great to be able to complete the DoE as part of my CFA experience," she said.

"One of the best parts was helping my Junior leaders to run the Junior brigade and training nights, and also helping with the planning of brigade activities. I also spent five days in Canberra learning about current-day politics and Australia's wartime history."

Tegan (pictured below) who joined the brigade to gain new skills, meet people and challenge herself, said participating in the DoE program was an adventure and a constructive way to give back to the community.

"I loved that it was a challenge, something different where I had to take the initiative and tailor my experience to my likes and interest, while expanding my skills," she said.

"My Adventurous Journey was particularly special. I spent a week on a houseboat in Echuca, learning how to steer and park the boat, operate the generator and other

appliances, read maps, and navigate the waterways."

The brigade's Junior Brigade Coordinator Gavin McNamara initiated the DoE pilot with CFA's Volunteer Sustainability Team.

"I was working with cadets undertaking their DoE through my role in the Australian Army Cadets, and decided to ask if Juniors were able to sign up to complete their DoE award through CFA," Gavin said.

"Our brigade supports the program as it recognises that the members involved and those who've completed it are going to be a more active member of their community. Those who undertake the DoE Award will often continue their award activities after they finish the program. This is not only beneficial to the member, but also the community as a whole."

In addition to offering the DoE Award, CFA is also trailing the Compass Award in District 13. For more information about both these award programs, email juniors@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN



Through the ages – Montrose



1



2



3



4



5



6

- 1 Colonial Court Dinner Dance
- 2 Brigade training
- 3 1980s house fire
- 4 Current fire station
- 5 Quarry visit 2016
- 6 Jacko in his butcher's shop
- 7 Old station watchroom
- 8 Leith Road fire station
- 9 Ford tanker
- 10 1980s brigade vehicles
- 11 Brigade photo 1963
- 12 Good Friday collection
- 13 Brigade running team
- 14 Restoring Furphy water cart



COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM AFISM

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