

# Brigade

autumn 2016

Protecting lives  
and property

[cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au)



▼ Sensational saves during busy summer





04

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**Sensational saves during busy summer**

**COVER PHOTO: SCOTSBURN FIRE**  
BY KEITH PAKENHAM

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## Acting Chair John Peberdy



# Ration packs replace Christmas lunch

**The protection of lives and property kept many of you from your families through the Christmas and New Year period. Shifts at integrated stations have been especially busy with arrangements for other brigades to step up falling into place.**

Some volunteers swapped Christmas lunches for ration packs. The day was, of course, most dramatic for members of Wye River who battled as fire burned into their community, causing devastating house loss but – most importantly – no loss of life. It's a testament to all those working in the Colac Incident Control Centre and local members that the community had advance warning and heeded the advice to leave, driving out of town in an orderly fashion.

The same was true of the large December fires of Scotsburn and Barnawartha-Indigo Valley, where there was also destruction of property but no lives lost.

CFA and other agencies are always under scrutiny, as we should be. We should expect an inquiry of some sort to follow a major fire and will always welcome the lessons to be learned.

The 'regular' work flow doesn't stop for bushfires, of course, and CFA has had a particularly busy period for technical rescues, rescues from confined spaces, trenches and heights. In a seven-day period from 18 January to 24 January, CFA conducted five technical rescues and rescued four people and a dog. (There was also a young boy a week earlier who had to have

his arm released from a toy vending machine. Pakenham Station Officer Graeme Symons was in attendance and said, "We gave him a CFA teddy after he was freed, so his efforts weren't entirely in vain".)

Such rescues usually involve an interagency response, when all the relationship building that goes on behind the scenes brings enormous benefit to distressed community members. Congratulations and thank you to all skilled members involved in rescue work.

The 10-day 2016 Challenge program welcomed members from 21 brigades across 13 districts. The January cohort consisted of two groups – one made up of 16-17 year olds and one for those aged 18 or above. Both completed a similar program of adventure-style outdoor activities (including abseiling, rock climbing and caving) that stretched participants and emphasised teamwork, leadership, setting goals and understanding stress reactions.

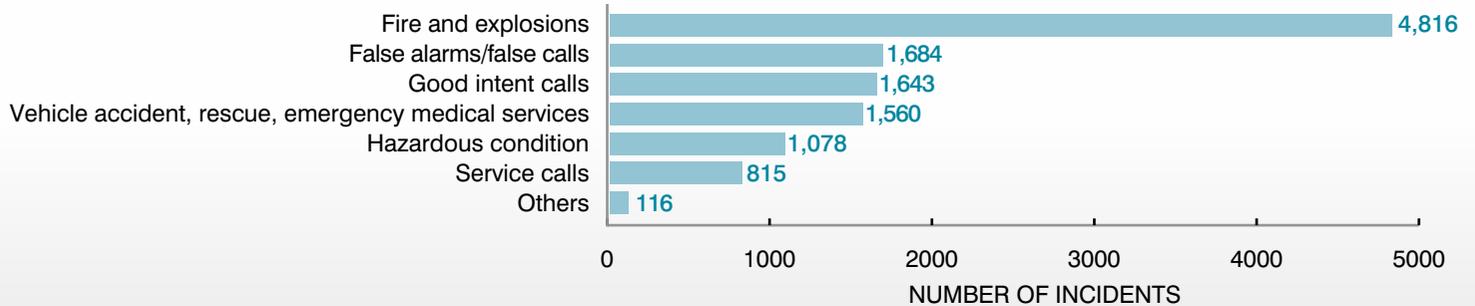
For 21 years, members attending Challenge have described it as a life-changing experience. It was my privilege to attend the final dinner in mid-January to hear each 2016 participant articulate their development over the program. It was very gratifying to see all the proud participants graduate, ready to return home armed with new skills and a stronger sense of their capability and resilience.

The Fiskville Parliamentary Inquiry in January mainly focused on the testimony of CFA people, past and present. Thanks to all who have given evidence.

# Incident summary

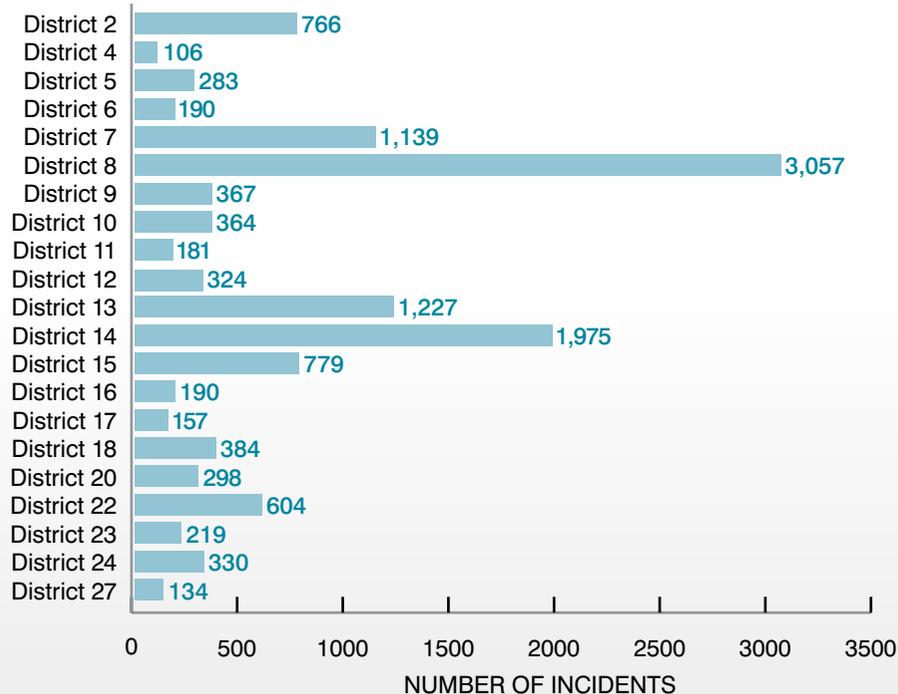
## STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY TYPE

1 October – 31 December 2015



## STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

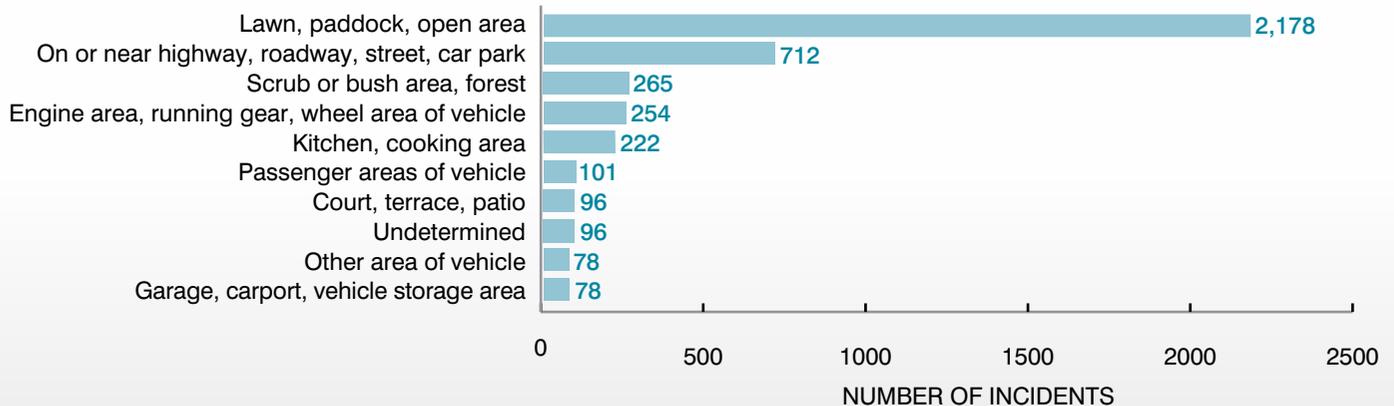
1 October – 31 December 2015



Brigades are reminded to submit their fire/incident report as soon as possible after attending an incident. Brigades on strike teams also need to submit a report. FIRS Call Centre, 1800 628 844, is open daily 8am-11pm.

## ORIGIN OF FIRE

1 October – 31 December 2015



# Wye River: triumph amid devastation

**Below:** Wye River brigade Captain Roy Moriarty

PHOTO: PETER CECIL



## The Wye River CFA

December 26, 2015 - 📍

No words can describe the emotions that we are feeling as a brigade. No words can describe the courage that the crews that came to help us displayed yesterday, throughout the night and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. It is gut wrenching, but your words of support are very much appreciated and will be passed on to our crews. Our own members were brilliant and gave everything they could yesterday along with the amazing work of DELWP firefighters and other CFA brigades. Not everything went our way but everyone involved should be very proud of what they gave to our amazing community. #wyekennettsep #notbroken

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FROM WYE RIVER FIRE BRIGADE'S FACEBOOK PAGE, 26 DECEMBER 2015



As for the Wye River brigade members, their plan was always based on the assumption that they would be alone with no help and only their tank water.

"We want people out of town while we stay to protect our major infrastructure," said Roy, "which includes the general store with its generator, the surf club bunkhouse and our fire station and the surf lifesaving club which both have sprinklers. The club is on a concrete block with a disability ramp and a first-aid room, and our brigade has paid for its sprinklers, fire pump and generator. We can draught water out of the river there."

Twas the night before Christmas and Roy sent out a text to check on availability for the next day. The numbers were grim: only eight firefighters and four community volunteers. By the following day, however, another eight community volunteers had been recruited from the caravan park.

"By Christmas Day, the fire was four kilometres away up the hill," continued Roy. "It was very windy up there but it was protected and relatively calm by the coast. The police had doorknocked Sep[aration Creek] then us and I set off the town evacuation siren at about 11.30am. Everybody had the chance to collect their valuables and two of our community volunteers guided traffic out of town.

"We'd all envisaged a million questions but everybody just took direction and got out. There were plenty of Christmas lunches left in ovens but there wasn't really any drama.

### Strange to say, but 116 houses are destroyed in a Christmas Day bushfire – including the houses of four brigade members – and yet the story is a positive one.

"There was an orderly evacuation and no loss of life," said Wye River Fire Brigade Captain Roy Moriarty. "We still marvel at it."

Perhaps it's not so difficult to understand such a sentiment when so many communities and brigades have suffered deaths in the face of bushfire. No loss of life is the gold standard.

The difficult-to-access Wye River-Jamieson Track fire was started by lightning on 19 December 2015. It had burned over 2,500 hectares by the time it was declared contained on 21 January.

"It was a long, slow burn before Christmas Day," continued Roy. "The original lightning strike was in inaccessible country and couldn't be ringed by dozers so it was then burnt out to Jamieson Track. We were out most days with DELWP blacking out the edges.

"The MEBU [mobile education bus] had been in town handing out information since the 21st. On the 23rd we had good attendance at a community meeting which included Incident Controller Alistair Drayton and Lappo [Craig Lapsley], police and ambos. The message was to be on guard, be alert, fire in the vicinity, weather coming. We were concerned but thought it would stay in containment lines.

"By that stage, the emergency services already had an evacuation plan."

In fact, the combined local volunteer genius of CFA and Surf Lifesaving had formulated a full-scale emergency plan several years earlier to contend with their patch on the Great Ocean Road a long way from back-up. Their Community Volunteers' self-reliance initiative – a 2011 Fire Awareness Award winner – involves recruiting both regulars and visitors in the caravan parks who can organise or comfort or who are hands-on, to support an emergency response.



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM

"I thought we wouldn't have enough manpower to cover all our assets but that morning the cavalry arrived before the firefront! We got three strike teams including the Coastal Group which got into Sep from Lorne – we knew they'd be on top of everything – and Wye got about 50 DELWP slip-ons. They'd tried to hold it on the upper roads before getting to us. The Great Ocean Road is the back line; there's nowhere else to fall back to.

"I was working as the sector commander under the DELWP divisional commander and he said, 'If you saw what was coming over the hill...'"

The fire front hit at about 3pm and time started to blur for Roy. Houses were lost soon afterwards and helitacks were seen working over Separation Creek with buckets on 60-metre lines to enable pinpoint dumping.

"The pitch black and the roar of a fire: we didn't have them," said Roy. "We didn't have the winds. We didn't have the embers everywhere. We had the high flame but nobody seemed to think it was like 2009.

"When the houses were burning I heard explosions and the big trees coming down made big vibrations, but I think we were all pretty calm. I didn't see any panic. Everyone just did their job.

"DELWP were in the two caravan parks and their slip-ons were up narrow driveways and along winding road. One tanker was on our fire station, two were on the surf club and another two were looking after the pub."

(Note: many members consider saving the pub a key CFA deliverable!)

"It's now CFA regulations that new houses have 10,000-litre water tanks and they were a real asset.

"We thought we'd had a win because we expected no help and every house gone. I put the sprinklers on my house and headed down to the fire station. I didn't expect it to be there when I got back, but no houses were lost in my street. We didn't lose one house on Pub Hill which is our driest hill.

"Everybody, every agency, our brigade, our [Corangamite] group, our old [Coastal] group, other groups, our district, DELWP from all over Victoria, helicopters... I'd never entered helicopters into our Township Protection Plan and there they were working and we didn't even have to organise them."

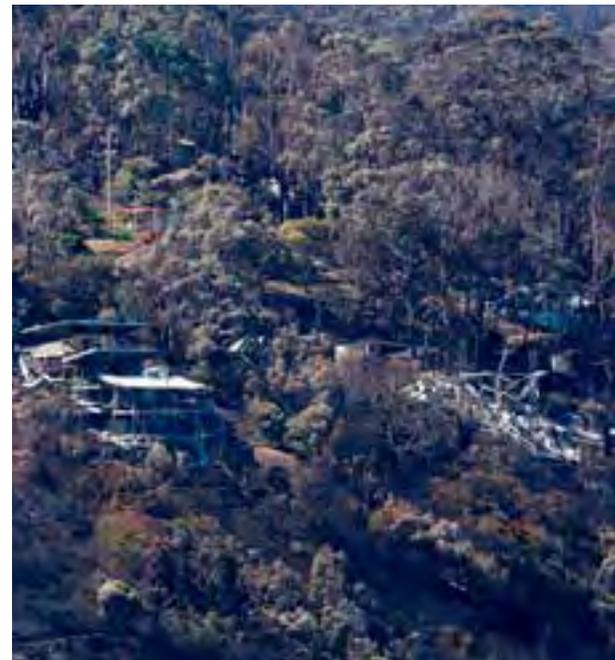
Eighteen aircraft were used on this fire including helicopters, air tankers, Aircranes and, for the first time in Australia, a 7,500-litre-capacity Chinook, the enormous twin-engine helicopter used by the American military.

One aircraft carried a forward looking infra-red (FLIR) camera to identify hot areas around the fire perimeter. These were laid over the map of the fire and used to generate tasks for ground crews including alpine specialist 'arduous' firefighters from New Zealand.

Into January, ground crews strengthened 150 kilometres of tracks and road networks as breaks to be used as fall back lines should

the fire jump current containment lines. This included 12 kilometres on foot along the edge of the fire in terrain as steep as 40 degrees.

Roy summed it up. "We did the best we could in such a terrible situation. I'm proud of the fact we ran the community meetings prior to Christmas to inform people. With the help of the Property Advice Visit Service [PAVS] doorknocking recently, I believe this has helped save lives."





**Left:** A strike team from Corangamite group takes a break

PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

## PAVS ALONG THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD

Backing up the year-in, year-out work done by Wye River Fire Brigade to ensure its community is well informed about risk, is the PAVS team. Like other PAVS teams, they target towns on Level One of the Victorian Fire Risk Register where all houses are doorknocked.

Lisa Parker (pictured below right) is a PAVS team leader in the South West, and was one of the team that doorknocked Wye River and Separation Creek in February 2015. South West PAVS training has been extended to ensure that volunteers are also part of the team mix.

The team has now completed the PAVS doorknocking service from Moggs Creek through to Lorne and will return within the year.

Lisa explained the process.

“When residents are home, we have a conversation about how prepared are you, what’s your fire plan, what’s your back up-plan, do you have the Fire Ready app on your phone, are you aware of the Fire Danger Ratings and what’s your trigger to leave.

“During the visit, we give each household an information folder with a checklist which we go through with them. Included are questions that give their local brigade vital information such as do they have a water tank with CFA fittings and can a fire truck access their property.

“As we walk around their property, we use the checklist to suggest possible changes like removing branches that touch the roof and using pebbles rather than plant-based mulch.

“It’s about getting them to work with us. People are receptive when we work together.”

Anyone not home at the time of the visit is left the same householder checklist, a *Leave Early* booklet, *Your Guide to Survival* and an information sheet.

The South West team comes across a lot of householders who went through Ash

Wednesday and know that bushfires don’t just happen to other people in other places.

“Leaving early was a very strong plan all the way along the Great Ocean Road,” continued Lisa, “and most of them had a leave-early kit. Most people we spoke to planned to leave when the rating reached Severe with a lot of others planning to go to the beach.

“People are so positive about what we’re doing. They’re so open to learning.”

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: COURTESY OF LISA PARKER

# Cave rescue near Buxton

**INCIDENT:** Confined space rescue

**DISTRICT:** 12

**DATE:** 21 November 2015

**BRIGADES:** Buxton, Marysville, Monbulk, Dandenong, Taggerty



**Crews worked hard in difficult conditions to free a bushwalker trapped in a cave in the Cathedral Range near Buxton.**

A group of walkers set out for the top of Mount Sugarloaf via the Wells Cave track. A feature of this walk is Wells Cave where people must squeeze through to continue the walk. Unfortunately, one of the walkers became wedged in the squeeze section and couldn't be freed by his friends.

Buxton, Marysville and Taggerty brigades, Dandenong High Angle Rescue Team (HART) and Marysville SES responded. Dandenong HART notified Victoria Police Search and Rescue (SAR). Victoria Police is the control agency for this type of land rescue with support from CFA and SES.

Monbulk steep angle rescue team was also called for extra support.

When Dandenong HART and Monbulk Rescue arrived at the scene, it was decided that HART and Monbulk crew leaders should walk up the track to the trapped man while the rest of the team staged the gear for the walk in. It was about a 45-minute walk to the cave up a steep, rough track which included a section of near-vertical rock scrambling.

The man was wedged in the cave about four metres from the top exit point. In consultation with two SES members and an Ambulance Victoria paramedic, HART came up with the plan to use a mechanical advantage (pulley system) attached to a high anchor. An improvised tube tape harness was used to secure the man. This rescue approach was endorsed by Victoria Police SAR who were on the way to the scene.

When the rigging was complete and checked, the teams decided to wait for a MICA paramedic to arrive to check the man for any crush injuries before attempting to free him.

Victoria Police SAR, Monbulk steep angle team and MICA arrived, and it was confirmed the man wasn't injured. HART, SES and SAR worked together to operate the pulley system to free the man from the squeeze. He was able to walk out of the cave and was escorted down the track.

Monbulk steep angle rescue team provided a rope rescue system through one section of the track where there was a 10-metre section of near-vertical rock that had to be climbed down.

This successful rescue demonstrated a great working relationship between all agencies when dealing with an all-hazards approach.



STORY DANDENONG STATION OFFICER BRAD TREWAVIS

# Crib Point's double whammy



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM

**The total fire ban of 18 January had crews on alert. With the wind up on the Mornington Peninsula, crews aggressively attacked a fire burning in thick scrub, with a helitack called in.**

"The Hastings TIC [thermal imaging camera] proved that it was pretty much out and I cancelled five tankers while the other five blacked out," said Bittern Captain Andrew Brown, the initial incident controller. "All over red rover; then we noticed another column of smoke about 500 metres away. Two FCVs were deployed to get a bearing on it while vehicles were restowed."

The fire was in relatively thick scrub in the grounds of the BP refinery and spotting 100 metres ahead. Twenty tankers, two helitacks and five pumpers for protection of houses with reticulated water were called.

"There was the potential for houses to be under threat quickly," continued Andrew, "so we issued an emergency warning which was soon extended to HMAS Cerberus and Stony Point. I'd never had to put one out before but it was crystal clear that there was no time to escalate the messages gradually.

"From history, access in and out of Crib Point is very bad and some roads had been blocked off since early afternoon. We thought of traffic chaos but, unfortunately, it's the nature of an emergency warning.

"The helitack was overhead and we asked it to attack the head but they couldn't see it because of the smoke."

Andrew sectorised the fire. The incident action plan was to let it burn to the bay and protect the flanks. At the control point at Crib Point Fire Station, experienced Operations Officer Neil Schlipalius provided mentoring as Andrew handed over control for the first time.

"It was via a mobile phone conference call and my head was spinning," said Andrew, "but I've had feedback that the handover was smooth. It was a good learning curve."

Ivan Smith had been in the Dandenong incident control centre from 10am as the incident controller for this hot-start day. He and his team had seen crews "get hold of that earlier Crib Point job and strangle it.

"Then it really took off hard from nothing to significant in a short space of time," said Ivan. "We could see the plume of smoke from the ICC and see the change in vegetation and fire behaviour in the column" and control was transferred.

"The first few hours were frantic as we tried to absorb all the messages that had gone out to the public, understand the work crews had been doing on the ground and their objectives, and put in place some



longer-term objectives. The immediate objective was to not let the fire cross Woolleys Road.

"We had a Phoenix plot from the SCC [State Control Centre] and we were worried about the wind change. It ended up being a consistent change although it was quick to follow its track round to the east.

"As the fire really picked up a head of steam, it did cross Woolleys and ran into houses. We had 27 appliances and three aircraft plus spotters there and they saved 275 houses. We moved from three to two sectors overnight and kept 10 appliances patrolling.

"A resident went missing for a while and caused a lot of concern, but there was no loss of life, residents evacuated and damage to critical infrastructure was limited. It reinforced for us how important it is to transfer control so quickly.

"An 83-hectare fire is very small in the Victorian context, but there were 1,500 people mixed up in it. The nature of our fires is that they're up quickly and over quickly, but the threat to life is enormous. It's really on for young and old for two or three hours and there are so many decisions to make in that time."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

**Right:** David Mortimer, Anthony Jones, Jordan Knight and Peter Obeth



## Strike teams help SA families



**At the end of November, a large Victorian contingent travelled to Mallala, north of Adelaide, to help fight a bushfire.**

The main fire was contained fairly quickly after CFA crews arrived, so members worked hard attending to burning hay sheds, piles of smoldering chook poo (used as fertiliser), smoldering stumps and a few small outbreaks.

We gave local SA Country Fire Service crews a well-earned break, reassured the local community, and helped the community in any way we could while patrolling and mopping

up along the fire edge. CFA and DELWP firefighters worked as one and the whole Victorian contingent made a big difference.

There are no words to describe the damage and devastation. Seeing the speed at which the fire spread was very sobering. There were many stories about crews going above and beyond to help families.

Our tankers came across a property with damage as far as the eye could see. This family lost sheds, machinery, a fair amount of crops and hay stock. There was also a large, smoldering hay shed close to the house next

to some very expensive, surviving machinery. My strike team helped pull apart the hay and wet down the hot spots.

While we carried out this task, we found out the family had recently attended a funeral for a family member. Also, the family had donated what was left of its fields and feed to farmers who'd lost everything. Our crews wanted to do as much as we could for the family so we stayed at the scene to finish the job and comfort the family as best we could.

STORY ADAM KAMENEK, DISTRICT 13

# December scorcher flares



PHOTO: KEITH PAVENHAM

**During a late December weekend of high temperatures and strong winds, fire services responded to more than 600 incidents, including major fires at Scotsburn, Barnawartha, Epping, Wandin and Wonthaggi.**

A total of 22 Emergency Warnings were issued on 19 and 20 December 2015.

## SCOTSBURN FIRE

The Scotsburn fire, south of Ballarat, started on Saturday afternoon and burnt 4,600 hectares. By Sunday, there were more than 500 personnel, 70 fire trucks, 45 slip-ons and eight aircraft working hard to contain the fire. By Monday morning, there was a mineral earth break around almost the entire fire perimeter.

Dozens of homes were saved but, unfortunately, 14 homes were lost.

### The first responders

When the Scotsburn fire broke out, Buninyong Captain Marc Cannan was on one of the first trucks to reach the scene.

His crew went to a home directly in the path of the fire, to warn the occupants who hadn't known a fire was nearby.

"They opened their door to a wall of fire coming over the trees," Marc said.

The fire was fast moving and unpredictable, changing direction as the wind swirled around. As fire circled the house, the couple took shelter inside and the crew protected the property and doused spot fires.

"The fire took all of our air; we were gasping with just a bit of hard work," Marc said.

It was a sustained defence for around 20 minutes before the fire passed, leaving the home unscathed and its owners eternally grateful.

### When practice makes perfect

When the crew of four on Smythesdale Tanker 2 was driving to the Scotsburn fire, they knew it wasn't like the other jobs they'd been chasing that day.

"We were sent to Pryors Road where resources were stretched," said crew leader Wayne Bourke (who admits he felt very protective of houses along a road where some of his students from the secondary college live).

"About 20 kilometres out from the fire we saw the plume of smoke. We laid the ground rules on the way: if anyone was uncomfortable they just needed to say so and we'd be out of there. We talked about how we'd operate the pumps and very clearly established our roles. If anyone was away from the truck, someone would step up to their position without being told, and we would have line of sight on each other at all times.

"We all looked for escape routes along the way and said, 'Let's be aware of our entrapment procedures'.

"It's all situational awareness and it's become part of our nature: go out together, come back together. Whether we're going to a bin fire or an MVA, we talk on the way about what we'll do if something goes wrong."



**Left:** Elaine brigade's new members (left to right) Tristan Mair, Brady Dunne, Natasha Ford, Anthony Young and Matthew Wetherall

PHOTO: SHANE DUNNE

**Below:** Smythesdale Tanker 2 crew (left to right) Simon Turner, Lachie O'Brien and Wayne Bourke

PHOTO: ALYSSIA MORISON

The crew doorknocked to check on residents and ask about their fire plans then, back on the road, driver Lachie O'Brien said, "Something's wrong".

"The fire had been moving well away from us with no smoke," continued Wayne, "but here was flame where we didn't expect it. We became uneasy. There'd been no indication of a wind change and then a few leaves came our way. It all changed so dramatically and fire raced along the road. It went from nothing to like starting up a blow torch. We'd identified a green paddock further back and drove there. Visibility dropped to arm's length and we came under strong ember attack."

The four deployed their crew protection system, turning on the sprays with a full 3,000 litres of defence. Lachie called mayday while Wayne notified the strike team leader of their location and the conditions and declared the crew all well.

For five to seven minutes they kept talking until conditions eased somewhat and they emerged uninjured.

"It was very unusual fire behaviour," said Wayne. "The ferocity and unpredictable changes of fire direction.

"I'm pretty proud of the crew. We contacted peer support and they've done their job.

"Our newest crew member said, 'See, training does pay off' and it's something we're really strict about. We have three tankers and every operational member has to complete Safety and Survival on each tanker.

"As our captain says, 'If anything goes wrong it's going to come back to our training records.'"

### Elaine newbies on the front line

Elaine member Russell Ford is one proud Junior leader and group trainer and assessor. His daughter Natasha was one of five newly-minted members (pictured above) just through the recruit training program (previously Minimum Skills) who turned out on the Scotsburn front line. In fact, one of the houses she helped save was their own.

"It had always been our plan to stay and defend," said Russell. "The front went right over the top of our house and took off the downpipes. Natasha was really calm and just did her job. She knew what to do. She knew what was expected."

Brady Dunne was another of the new recruits on the home front line.

"I was at home alone when the pager went off," he said, "and I ran a few hundred metres to the fire station because I can't drive.

"On that first day, another new recruit and I were on a truck with two relatively-experienced members. We did asset protection 100 metres from the main blaze and it was insane how fast it moved.

"The strongest memory is when the smoke was so bad we had to go into crew-protection mode. Before that I was thinking, 'Mark, get us out of here!'"



## BARNAWARTHA FIRE

Barnawartha – known as Barny to the locals – lies to the north-east of Wang. On Sunday 20 December 2015, it lay at the centre of Victoria's fire emergency with the local fire danger index higher than it had been on Black Saturday.

Of the nine brigades in the Rutherglen Group, seven fire stations and the Chiltern local command facility (LCF) were manned. They might have been thinking they'd gotten off lightly until the late call came through: a tree limb had fallen on to a powerline.

"Then it was just pandemonium," said Rutherglen Group Officer Andrew Russell. "We were behind the eight-ball from the first minutes and that 10 minutes saved by crews being at their stations meant a huge amount. When the pager went off it was like a gunshot and there were more people on the fireground quicker than I've ever seen."

He was radio operator in the FCV with the initial incident controller, Barny Captain Howard Smith, when the call was made to "Make tankers 50".

"We realised this wasn't a Level 2 incident," said Andrew. "There were micro-climates and a 100 kilometre an hour wind change on the way. The best thing we did was handball it to the Level 3 ICC in Wodonga.

"We had initially sectorised the fire into west and east of the Hume. DGOs Geoff Barter and Trevor Cheeseman managed the west and Howard and I managed the east before handing over to Captain Frank

Harbottle from Springhurst. We stayed on the east because we were very conscious of the south-west wind change and the risk it posed to Wodonga. Our priority was to hold and black out the north-east flank with what resources we had.

"We had DGOs trying to track the fire and find its head. We knew we were in trouble and went into solid asset protection. Houses were under threat and there were reignitions everywhere. There were some close calls; some cut-and-runs."

As the fire moved up the Indigo Valley, members turned out in their private units to black out behind fire trucks, with about 40 of them backing up Captain Frank. He calls it "the most dynamic fire I've ever been to".

"They were often chasing their tails, blacking out a fire edge before a wind change created new fronts," continued Andrew, "but that work was paramount.

"We were doing our damndest to save houses and people and we did. It's unfortunate that four houses were lost but many were saved. Some of that was sheer luck and some was good management but, at one point, I was wondering what it was going to take to stop this thing. We were chucking everything at it including a buffer of 30 trucks at the head as a buffer for Yackandandah."

As night fell, about 12 millimetres of rain fell at Barny and 20 in the upper valley.

All the captains and other senior brigade managers at an early January debrief agreed that, while the

rain was welcome, the work done beforehand by crews saved the day.

The debrief also included a 'fog-of-war' discussion: when there's a fast-running fire, who has the information to give clear directions to assign crews to sectors; prioritising asset protection versus forward spread; communicating the red flag warning to private units; the security of the group area *not* burning; crews in trouble not calling a mayday; and every fire being in the edge of the map book!

Operations Manager Paul King praised all crews who "used discipline and experience to make sense of chaos. The A team was on the fire."

"The cranking up of the LCF played a key role in resourcing, dispatch and setting up the staging area at Barny," continued Andrew. "Neighbouring groups and brigades came to our aid. For every firefighter, there's another person in the supply chain organising food, water and logistics.

"We backed each other: no question. I was humbled by the level of response and its cohesiveness."

The fire reached 6,732 hectares with a 180-kilometre boundary.

STORY LEITH HILLARD

**Below:** The 'A Team', senior North East Region fire leaders at a Barnawartha debrief

PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD



CEO

Lucinda Nolan

follow Lucinda on  @cfaceovic

# Shaping our own future

**My first few months at CFA have certainly been a steep learning curve, filled with new experiences that have given me a better understanding of our organisation and where we need to head.**

Travelling across the state and meeting with many members has helped me learn about who we are, what we do well and some of the challenges we face. And hopefully my yellow turnout gear isn't looking so bright and new.

What is the same everywhere I visit is the extraordinary passion and commitment shown by volunteers, paid firefighters and support staff as they work to keep Victorians safe.

I've visited many CFA locations some of them being Werribee, South Morang, Dandenong, Narre Warren, Yarram, Swifts Creek, Geelong City, Kingston, Main Ridge, Ocean Grove, The Basin, Clunes and Lara fire stations, plus district offices in Geelong, Ballarat, Warragul, Dandenong, Melton, Bairnsdale and Sale.

I visited Paynesville Coastguard; learned more about CFA's training facilities during my visit to West Sale VEMTC; saw the staff keeping trucks in good working condition during my visit to a district mechanics' workshop; and met some of our newest firefighters at the two CFA recruit firefighter graduation ceremonies.

These visits don't just give me a chance to meet many amazing people and hear what it's like in the field, but give me a real understanding of CFA's broad operations, what people do and how it all fits together.

It reinforces for me that, to continue to be effective and meet our mission to protect lives and property, we must be a unified organisation.

Whether you are a volunteer, a paid firefighter or support staff, we all work for one organisation – CFA. We couldn't operate without working side by side, as one, and we will continue to support all members equally.

One issue that is regularly raised with me is the need for us to improve training. This is why the Executive Leadership Team has made training our number one priority for 2016.

We want you to have the skills needed to do your roles safely and with confidence, and training has a critical role in ensuring this.

We need to get training right – from needs identification, priorities, type, format,



scheduling, delivery and benefits. We need to improve our learning and development opportunities for the front line – both volunteers and paid firefighters – and for staff in non-operational roles.

This training action plan is being developed and will build on previous work and reviews. Once drafted, we will share it with you and seek your feedback.

These visits have also reaffirmed for me the need for us to take control of our own future, which is why we are working on what we have termed a Red Paper – a document that will outline CFA's needs during the next decade.

I believe it's our own people who know better than most what CFA needs to continue delivering for Victorians.

It will set out what our goals and objectives are and guide our decisions around what resources and capability CFA will need in the future to protect lives and property.

It will be shaped by our own research, member views and feedback and other observations, as well as work already completed such as the Service Delivery Strategy.

You can find out more about the Red Paper at <http://cfa.engagementhq.com/red-paper>.

It's been another summer of complex challenges and our members have responded with exceptional professionalism and commitment. Fires at Wye River, Scotsburn, Barnawartha and

**Above:** Lucinda visits Dandenong Fire Station

PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

**Below:** Lucinda on the Wye River fireground

PHOTO: JAMES FOX



Crib Point in particular have presented a range of problems for members to tackle: everything from community evacuations to rapid-onset fires, burnovers to red flag warnings.

All our CFA members – both front line and support staff – have again embodied CFA's values and spirit. You stand as the leaders of communities around Victoria, responding, educating, giving of your time and your expertise to protect your communities.

## CHIEF OFFICER

 [facebook.com/CFAChiefOfficer/](https://facebook.com/CFAChiefOfficer/)


# Joe Buffone

**My immediate focus when I started as Chief Officer in November was on our preparedness and readiness for the fire season. I'm proud of our collective efforts to contain fires quickly and while the total number of fires against comparable years is consistent, the number of hectares burnt is significantly less.**

This is evidence of our preparedness and the importance of aggressive, determined initial attack with crews on the ground having done an incredible job.

After an early start to the fire season, we've seen 14 major incidents, two interstate deployments, more than 140 houses destroyed, thousands of livestock and around 27,000 hectares burnt. Although we regularly report the losses, it's more difficult to quantify what we've saved. CFA is supporting a project that will develop evidence-based predictions so that agencies can provide positive reporting in a standardised way. This will not in any way seek to diminish the impact that a home or property destroyed by fire has on the community, nor the emphasis on recovery, but will demonstrate in a tangible way the importance and effectiveness of response agencies and a community that is prepared and shares responsibility for its bushfire risk.

It is due to the efforts of all emergency services practitioners and those of the community who heeded the warnings and advice that there have been no serious injuries and no loss of life this summer. While there have been some issues with heat stress, direct strategies including the use of rehabilitation units have been effective in combating these issues quickly.

The Wye River–Jamieson Track fire that started from a lightning strike in dense inaccessible terrain has been the most significant fire this season. On Christmas Day, driven by strong winds, the fire impacted both Wye River and Separation Creek. For more than 34 days, hundreds of firefighters, and numerous aircraft and trucks fought to bring the fire under control. On 14 February, I returned to Wye River and walked parts of the fireground. It was still very dry with some small hotspots remaining. It is always said that you should walk a mile in someone's shoes to see, feel and understand before judging. This is very steep and difficult country.

It was great to see the renewal of tree ferns and emergence of new growth. Just like the community which is now well into recovery and renewal, the green symbolises hope in the blackened landscape. The local brigade continues to work hard. I thank the captain and his team for their ongoing active leadership in the community. In visiting a number of affected areas, I've witnessed firsthand the power of community.

The fires near Dereel on 13 February and Mt Bolton on 23 February are a reminder to us not to be complacent as the fire season is not over. I sincerely thank everyone for their efforts so far throughout this season in making our communities safer.

## ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North West Region



# Gavin Thompson

**It's been an interesting first month in the job. Sitting from afar, I knew North West Region (NWR) was big. Now that I'm immersed in the region, I'm gaining an appreciation of the region's size and the complexities our people face. Despite this, it's great the way so many of you roll up your sleeves and just get on with the job.**

I got to see firsthand in week two just how well the broader emergency management team comes together with the Kyneton Edgcombe Road fire.

That evening I attended the Gisborne incident control centre where the fire was being managed from. It was pleasing to see the room functioning with CFA people (both staff and volunteers) and personnel from other agencies. There were representatives from DELWP, Parks Victoria, State Emergency Service, Victoria Police, local municipality and utilities. This was a sign that the state mantra of 'we work as one' is well and truly adopted in NWR. As I moved about the ICC I also observed the great teamwork displayed by all, and if it wasn't for the uniforms I would've been none the wiser as to the number of agencies involved.

The following week I had the opportunity to attend the fireground where Group Officer and Incident Controller John Pearce and Operations Officer Andy Waterson took me on a tour. This highlighted that not only had the ICC been working at a high level, but the firefighters on the ground had done an outstanding job in pulling this fire up. While there was one house lost, the end result could've been much worse. To all involved in this fire fight, well done!

While the above is a specific example, I know the same applies across the region. After discussions with a couple of the operations managers and some group officers, it's clear that the earlier-than-normal start to the fire season meant our people have worked harder and for longer periods. To all of you, I say thank you for your efforts this summer. They don't go unnoticed and are truly appreciated.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate North West Region members who were honoured in the Australia Day Honours. Peter Bishop from Mildura brigade, Colin Squires from Truganina brigade and Daryl Wagstaff from Maryborough brigade received the Australian Fire Service Medal.

To those of you I have met, thank you for being so welcoming. To those I'm yet to meet, I look forward to our paths crossing and hearing about your stories and opportunities for us to improve what we do to make NWR and CFA better.

Finally, I'd like to thank Operations Manager Chris Eagle for his hard work and leadership provided to the region after Mike Wassing departed and before I started in the role of Assistant Chief Officer. Well done and thanks Chris.

## ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER West Region



# Peter O'Keefe

**Fire Danger Period 2015-16 was predicted to be a long and potentially dangerous one, and with the rapid development of the Scotsburn Fire on 19 December 2015 the predictions proved correct.**

The fire started at around 3pm and quickly burnt through scrub and bush, destroying all in its path. The response to this incident was great testimony to the commitment and determination of our firefighters to do their very best in adverse conditions, with many firefighters being personally impacted by the fire.

The season has had a number of significant fire weather days with a corresponding number of fires with significant potential occurring. Rapid and aggressive attack quickly suppressed these outbreaks. I would like to thank all crews for their continued rapid response and great work in bringing these fires under control and minimising the impact on the community. Well done to all!

There has been much discussion and documentation about the need for CFA to plan so that it is best positioned for the future. This planning must firstly focus on identifying the risks faced by brigades, districts, and regions. When these risks are documented, we can then determine the priorities and the potential solutions. This process is critical to ensure the business planning process is aligned to brigade/community risk, and will then provide direction and guidance to corporate planning.

At the local level, I ask you to focus on developing plans that address risk. Whether you are developing training plans, working with the community or thinking about a group exercise, ask yourself whether what you are planning focuses on our risks and will this activity ensure we, or the community, are better equipped as a result of our actions.

Districts are currently working through a number of activities to ensure that our risks are identified, prioritised and addressed. This process will take some time, however this will ensure we are all focusing and working together so that the community is better supported before, during and after emergencies. I again ask that at every opportunity you consider what risks you face on the front line and how we can support you in solving the local issues.

West Region's new structure is now complete. There are many new people who bring a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to our team. I ask you to take the time to introduce yourself to them and make them all welcome to West Region.

As the weather starts to shift and we move to the cooler part of the year, please take time to consider the change in focus from bushfire to the increased risk in the community from heating, and cooking. What will you and your brigade do to ensure the community's safety and minimise the risks?

Stay safe in all you do and keep up the great work.

**Twitter: @CFAWestACO**

## ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South West Region



# Bob Barry

**As we approach the end of summer, I would like to pause and reflect on the journey South West Region has been on since late October last year.**

The first half of the fire season was very busy. It began in the early morning of 31 October, when significant lightning across Glenelg Shire resulted in CFA and DELWP responding to many fires. These were controlled over two days and aerial detection flights were used to spot any further fires which had not been reported.

On 3 November at around 8pm, CFA was advised of a potential fire in a stock transport vessel. The *Awassi Express*, which has a capacity of 17,000 cattle and a deck fodder storage compartment larger than 800 tonnes, caught fire in the hopper while berthed in the Port of Portland. CFA crews discovered that the front starboard side of the fodder storage was on fire and spreading to the rest of the storage area. Suppression activities included the use of CO<sub>2</sub> and nitrogen injection, A class foam and water, and the pellets were removed to allow complete extinguishment.

This highly-complex incident was managed by a Level 3 IMT with fireground crews requiring breathing apparatus qualifications being sourced from the district, region and state. Fire operations were concluded after 12 days with the ship being handed back to its owners and the Port of Portland.

On 7 November, a fire was reported at the Kaladbro Swamp around 30km north-west of Dartmoor in District 4. The fire appeared to be the result of a lightning strike which ignited 11 hectares of peat in a 400-hectare drained peat swamp. After five weeks of intensive hard work and good management, the fire was handed back to the land owner. (See page 23 for details about this fire's containment).

Then on 19 December came the Delaneys Road and Jamieson Track fires. The Jamieson Track fire escalated on Christmas Day and impacted the Separation Creek and Wye River townships, destroying 116 homes without loss of life or injury. As I write this column in February, this major fire is still going after 50 days and at its peak required extensive resourcing from across the state.

As the summer draws to a close, I would like to pay tribute to all CFA staff and volunteers, DELWP partners, police, other emergency services and supporting government agencies for their dedicated and professional support.

At the end of the season and following the appropriate after-action reviews, I'm sure the hard work and initiative of all those involved in the fires will be fully recognised and appreciated as we continue to protect Victoria together.

## ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North East Region



# Garry Cook

**Given the timing of this article going to print, I will naturally be dedicating a reasonable amount of space to review the fire season and the successes or otherwise that we have experienced across North East region.**

Sure, we had some fires that tested our resolve at every level and we had others that, through some sheer brilliance by our people, never got to show their full potential.

The weekend of 19-20 December was as bad a couple of days as we've experienced since Black Saturday in 2009. The fires at Wandin North in District 13 on Saturday 19 December, and Barnawartha/Indigo Valley in District 24 on Sunday 20 December demonstrated just how extreme the conditions were, with the latter consuming 8,000 hectares in a matter of hours.

On the flip side, the use of the state's firefighting aircraft fleet was the best I can recall, with pre-determined dispatch (PDD) and support of the large air tankers proving successful time and time again. Rapid deployment of air attack in support of ground forces meant a number of fires were suppressed before getting to any significant size.

The second half of the summer maintained potential, but isolated heavy rainfall combined with stable weather meant activity was thankfully less than we anticipated.

I want to thank all the big team in North East Region, volunteers and career personnel, who presented for duty and delivered another remarkable result in protecting the Victorian community during the past few months. A job well done.

I do want to move this conversation to consider our training processes within CFA. Regardless of the role we undertake in our organisation – front line firefighting, community education, occupational health and safety, welfare, administration and the list goes on – the one constant activity we are all involved in is training. Our new organisational leaders, Chief Executive Officer Lucinda Nolan and Chief Officer Joe Buffone, have been very clear that a priority activity for CFA is to review how we go about this critical piece of work at every level.

I am extremely supportive of this action-orientated approach and, while we know there is a lot to be done in this area, work has already commenced and we will see much more to come over the next months.

One of my priorities in supporting this approach is to ensure we generate a training experience that maintains standards, but is flexible in delivery and able to meet the needs of our members – their experience is the ultimate test of success. This will take effort, commitment and a level of tolerance while we move through this work, but to do nothing is not an option.

Stay safe.

## ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South East Region



# Trevor Owen

**Brigades across South East Region have been busy responding to grass and scrub fires across the state and interstate. In reviewing the findings from some of our recent after-action reviews, I'm encouraged that many members are embracing the opportunity to learn and develop solutions about how we can improve.**

When I was a senior volunteer, I clearly recall a wise station officer telling me there is always something to learn from every call attended.

Over the summer, CFA and other fire and emergency service agencies are well recognised for protecting the community from bushfires. Ironically, it's often the other emergencies that go unnoticed that save lives daily. CFA services have continued to expand over many decades and, while we are highly regarded for our bushfire expertise, it's important we don't lose sight of our specialist skills such as technical rescue and emergency medical response.

The transition to the new district and region structure has now entered the next phase, with most of our staff now well settled and secure in their management teams. There's still a significant amount of work occurring to transition the business workflows (systems, processes and tools) from the previous structure.

I ask members to demonstrate patience and understanding as we continue to work with our staff over the coming months, to fully introduce the new structure to improve front line service delivery.

Senior managers from the regional leadership team will be attending and participating in district planning committee and VFBV district council meetings on a rotational basis. This will give senior volunteer members the opportunity to engage with managers who are seeking to listen, learn and improve the way we deliver our services.

The members of District 27 continue to step up in what continues to be an exciting and refreshing opportunity in our new district. I'm proud of what the volunteers and staff have achieved.

Members have demonstrated great leadership under very trying circumstances. Considering what has been achieved in such a short time, I continue to be impressed by the professionalism of those who have invested in what continues to be a success. Keep up the great work!

Social media continues to grow and I'm keen to explore further opportunities using these systems and tools to communicate with our members. The intent is not to replace existing communication media, but to offer another communication dimension that many members use every day. My team and I will promote CFA activities across the region, districts, groups and brigades using Twitter and Facebook.

**Twitter** <https://twitter.com/CFASouthEastACO>

**Facebook** <http://www.facebook.com/CFASouthEastACO>



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

# TLC for BRTs

**While CFA members love their trucks, CFA vehicle insurance claims have almost doubled in the past decade. New CFA research has looked into the causes of our vehicle accidents and how we can reduce them.**

CFA photographer and 30-year volunteer Keith Pakenham has a 30,000-strong database of CFA vehicle images, including pretty much every truck from the original Bendigo brigade 1912 Commer (aka the Horace Lansell) to Lakes Entrance Fire Brigade's recently-delivered 2015 medium pumper.

"Firefighters are passionate about their BRTs [big red trucks]" said Keith. "Just drive past any station on a Sunday morning and look at the trucks washed, sparkling and ready for action.

"There's incredible interest every time we run a story about a new vehicle or prototype. They're truly the lifeblood of the firefighter."

Project Manager Kristy Twining is also channelling CFA's passion for its vehicles, albeit in a very different way. Over the past year, Kristy and her project team have immersed themselves in the world of pumpers, tankers, FCVs, slip-ons and pool cars as they look into the reasons behind the significant increase in CFA's motor vehicle insurance claims.

"The number of emergency vehicle claims has almost doubled since 2006. At the same time, the cost of claims has almost tripled," said Kristy. "Even when we factor in the increased number of trucks operated by CFA over that

time, there's still a significant upward trend in vehicle claim numbers. It's a similar story with our corporate vehicles."

The findings from the team's analysis were recently published in *Reducing the Incidence and Impact of CFA Motor Vehicle Claims Project (RIIMVC) Stage 1 Final Report*.

The report details everyday incidents arising from the challenges of driving under CFA conditions.

"We've got urban brigades turning out in rush hour traffic, rural brigades driving over tough terrain on unfamiliar properties, and corporate vehicles covering long distances with the constant threat of hitting a kangaroo," said Kristy.

"From our analysis, we know where incidents are most likely to happen, at what times of day and

the types of vehicles most likely to be involved."

For example:

- a majority of vehicle claims occur off-road while responding to an incident
- almost 10 per cent of emergency vehicle claims occur at Code 1
- Code 1 claims are almost 80 per cent more likely to occur at an intersection than other claims
- reversing is the second most common cause of vehicle claims
- engine bay door claims account for 10 per cent of all vehicle claims
- a quarter of engine bay door claims occur on Sundays.

STORY PAUL HUGGETT



# Australia Day 2016 Honours

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



## COLIN SQUIRES

As a member of Truganina brigade, Colin Squires is run off his feet attending more than 300 call-outs a year. Colin reckons he's attended over 7,000 incidents since joining CFA in 1957.

"You know if you get something in your blood it's very difficult to get rid of it," he said of his life-long commitment to the brigade.

Colin's wife Jill is a long-standing Truganina member who helps coordinate the Juniors program, and his four children are all involved with one being a past captain and one a current captain.

The area has seen a change in demographics and increase in cultural diversity. Colin has played a significant role in establishing links between each culturally and linguistically diverse sector of the community.

During his time with CFA, Colin has been captain for close to a decade and a VFBV delegate for 20 years.

He counts the February 2009 fires as one of his most memorable experiences. His brigade was asked to operate the staging grounds in Kilmore and Whittlesea. "I reckon it was a major achievement to run that facility and help the local people and everything that went with it for 18 days straight," Colin said.

## COLIN BOOTH

Colin Booth joined Narre Warren brigade in 1980 and climbed the ranks from fourth lieutenant through to captain, a role he held from 1990 to 1996.

Tragically, Narre Warren brigade lost six of its members in the Ash Wednesday fires who were not only Colin's crew members but also his friends. The devastation of that event changed how the brigade operated.

"The brigade pulled together after Ash Wednesday and we did everything in our power to not let that ever happen again," said Colin.

"The way we train and the management team we have now is better – everything is done better and we've got the support to do it."

Colin has had several roles during his 35 years with CFA including 17 years as a fire investigator. Another major focus has been bringing in a new generation of firefighters to the brigade.

"We're getting more and more Juniors now who are becoming seniors, which is great. In fact, eight of our Juniors recently became seniors."



## JOHN HAYNES

During his 30-plus years with CFA, Deputy Chief Officer John Haynes has never been the type of person to rest idly in his job.

"I like challenging the status quo and looking for new and improved ways to support our front line firefighters," John said. "Some people get upset by the way I continually challenge things, but I do it with the hope of improving the organisation."

John started with CFA as a Junior at Traralgon Fire Brigade, then as a volunteer at Wangaratta Fire Brigade. In 1985, he joined CFA headquarters as assistant regional officer.

His reach within the organisation has spread far and wide through numerous projects that have shaped CFA's service, including his work to develop incident control centres and incident management teams.

He was also on the Equipment Design Committee which oversaw the creation of the 4.4R fire truck – a self-contained, remote-controlled tanker he described as the future of firefighting.

John's toughest work has undoubtedly been investigating major fires such as Linton, involving the deaths of CFA members. These dark realities led to changes in training, equipment and crew protection standards.

"I've seen a lot of change and contributed to a small portion of it," John said. "I've also been lucky enough to have some exceptional mentors along the way including volunteers, district mechanical officers and regional directors."





PHOTO: MARK SLATER

### GRAHAM HEALY

There's barely a region of Victoria Graham Healy (pictured above with Emergency Services Minister Jane Garrett) hasn't served during his 50-plus years of energetic dedication to CFA as a volunteer and staff member.

"The medal doesn't belong to me," said Graham, "it belongs to my wife, family and all those I've worked with. They contributed to the whole bit and, ultimately, the award is to CFA not the individual."

Graham's remarkable career began in 1956 as a 13-year-old working on the railway's hazard reduction gang near his home town of Bungaree. He volunteered with brigades from Ferntree Gully to East Gippsland before joining the ranks as a regional officer. Graham retired after reaching assistant chief officer in the 1990s.

But it's his continuing contribution as a Level 3 incident controller which still excites his passions, most recently around Christmas when he led the team combatting the Barnawartha fire (see report on page 12).

"I really want to keep progressing ICs and the role of IC. The role of IC 3 is much the same as at Level 1, just bigger and more complex, and needs skilled people to be mentored and coached to keep up the numbers," said Graham.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

### RICK OWEN

Rick Owen has been a CFA volunteer and career firefighter for more than 30 years, starting in 1980 as a Junior at Dandenong Fire Brigade. He became a senior volunteer at Dandenong and was second lieutenant before pursuing a full-time career in 1993.

While at CFA, Rick has been a fire safety officer, instructor, station officer and senior station officer. He's currently on secondment at the Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre at Craigieburn as officer in charge of the recruit program.

When CFA received new gas detection equipment, Rick saw it and asked if he could look after it. He then undertook extensive trials with the equipment, and his findings have changed the way CFA operates.

"Our hygiene and protection of the public and our firefighters has been one of the main changes at CFA," Rick said.

"Through our gas detection equipment, I've helped discover when it's safe for residents to return to houses following a fire and when it's safe for firefighters to take off their BA.

"We used to only use gas detectors for gas leaks and hazmat incidents, but we now use them for everything. Our new equipment has more sensors which gives us a bigger range of results."



PHOTO: COURTESY OF DARRYL WAGSTAFF

### DARRYL WAGSTAFF

"It's an individual honour," said Maryborough Fire Brigade Captain Darryl Wagstaff of his AFSM, "but it's also a collective award for all those I've worked with over the years."

In fact, Darryl cites the camaraderie within CFA as one of the main things that has kept him hooked since he joined as a 10-year-old in 1973.

"You get such satisfaction from working together with people who are so well trained," said Darryl. "There's nothing more gratifying than being called out to an emergency where people are in distress and working through it to leave them in a safe place."

Darryl believes there's a strong parallel between his job as a funeral director and being captain of the brigade.

"We serve the community in their time of need," he said. "We put a plan in place for a family when they're in need of outside help."

Darryl has been captain for 27 years and is still enjoying the challenges. He's also a District 2 VFBV state councillor and has been a delegate to regional councils since 1984.

"It's great to be a mentor in the brigade and have young, enthusiastic people come in and learn from your experience."

### PETER BISHOP

When 53-year Mildura Fire Brigade veteran Peter Bishop found out he was being awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal, he told his wife Lyn, "This is our award. She had a tear in her eye, like me."

There's no denying Peter's exceptional volunteer service to CFA and his wife's outstanding support. The figures tell the story.

Peter has been a senior volunteer officer for 38 years. He served 10 years on the CFA Board and was an executive member of the Victorian Urban Fire Brigades' Association (VUFBA)

for over 26 years. He also twice served as president of the Association and has been a Juniors leader and coach for 12 years. He has been involved with the championships since 1962 and was a committee member of the VUFBA welfare fund for 23 years.

"I kept a record of my travels for CFA," said Peter. "In hours, I was away from home for three and a half years. I've gone around the world 22 times – it comes to 905,000 kilometres – and flew to Melbourne and back 1,065 times."



Above: Peter Bishop (far right) at the opening of the new Mildura Fire Station

## Brigade communication made easy!



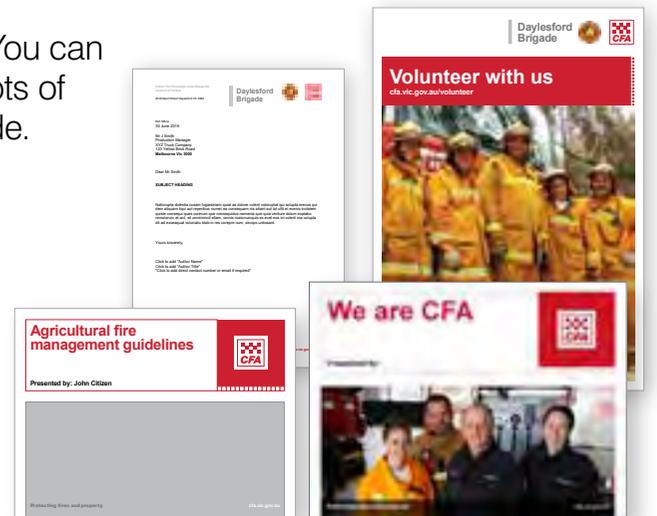
CFA's Template Toolkit is a resource for all members. You can access a wide range of branded templates to create lots of promotional and administrative material for your brigade. Templates include:

### Corporate materials

- CFA logo and images
- CFA's visual and writing guides
- letterheads
- certificates
- email signatures

### Marketing materials

- promotional email templates
- newsletters
- A3 and A4 posters
- advertisements
- and much more



To access these, look for the Template Toolkit icon  at [cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au) or email [cfapromotions@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:cfapromotions@cfa.vic.gov.au) for more information.

Protecting lives and property | [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au)

## CFA to review child protection policy and practices

### CFA takes its interaction with and protection of children very seriously.

We've implemented policies and procedures within a series of safeguards, guidelines and education materials to ensure child protection in CFA is everyone's responsibility.

Child protection is not just a concern for brigades with Juniors. Providing a safe environment for all children who come into contact with CFA is equally important. CFA is actively involved with children through the Juvenile Fire Awareness Intervention Program, Fire Safe Kids, Fire Safe Youth, our mobile education buses, Advance and Victorian Certificate of Advanced Learning (VCAL).

We also interact with children at emergency response, public presentations, festivals and CFA family events.

For people to confidently manage and report issues regarding child protection, we need

to ensure that every member has access to information, knows what to do and where to go for help. But having policies and procedures on the intranet that few people use or understand is of very little use in protecting children and the members who work with them.

Given the recent scrutiny of organisations that work with children and, in particular, the failures of organisations to protect children from harm, CFA has made the decision to commission a review. This review is being conducted by Ernst and Young, and will involve a comprehensive review of our policies, procedures, systems and organisational culture in regards to child protection.

The review will include wide consultation with staff and volunteers across the state through a survey and one-on-one and group discussions. All survey results and interview responses will be handled with confidentiality and sensitivity to ensure accurate and useful information is

gathered. It won't include individual names and circumstances.

"You don't have to work directly with children to participate in the survey," said Executive Director Learning and Volunteerism Kate Harrap. "Every member has a role to play in the protection of children and all feedback is valuable.

"I encourage everyone in CFA, both volunteers and staff, to contribute to a thorough outcome by participating in the review."

To complete the survey go to: [go.srnet.com.au/cfa](http://go.srnet.com.au/cfa).

The survey closes on 1 June.

For more information about the review phone Sherri McKerley on 9262 8670 or email [s.mckerley@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:s.mckerley@cfa.vic.gov.au).

STORY SHERRI MCKERLEY

# Learning from incidents

## Somerton tip fire

### SUMMARY

In the early hours of 20 November 2015, a blaze erupted in a waste recycling facility in Patullos Lane, Somerton. It was a large and complex fire which burned for several days. Significant work by several agencies, working as one integrated team, contained and then extinguished the fire. Attending agencies were CFA, MFB, Victoria Police, SES, EPA, Ambulance Victoria and a specialist compressed air foam system (CAFS) support team from ACT Fire & Rescue.

There was a lot of media and public interest in this fire because smoke from the burning debris had the potential to impact communities and water run-off contaminated creeks.

### LESSONS IDENTIFIED

**Consequence management focus** An early appreciation of the significant consequences of the fire was a valued part of the planning. Community, environment and local businesses were identified and actions taken to minimise the impact where possible. These included appointing an environmental officer as part of the team, assessing the impact on Merri Creek, monitoring contamination and fire water (millions of litres) and closing Hume Highway and local businesses.

**Formation of incident emergency management team** The team comprised the responder agencies plus local government, water authorities, VicRoads, community interest groups from Merri Creek and adjoining property owners who were affected. Gathering stakeholders from the affected parties greatly helped the decision-making process for this incident. The ability to tap into the networks linked to these groups assisted in understanding the consequences for the community and developing control priorities.

**Incident management team established on fireground** The decision was made to use a Level 3 IMT control structure reporting through line of control for a major fire. It was based at the incident ground. This team coordinated command vehicles from several agencies to develop a control centre, with IMT functions allocated to each command vehicle.

Using command vehicles to support the incident response was generally very good. However, the set-up would have been more efficient with better vehicle identification and orientation – it wasn't obvious what role was being performed by each vehicle. Further work needs to be done to expand the concept of using command vehicles in a Level 3 incident control structure.

**Multi-agency response** After the initial size-up of the incident, the early multi-agency response that recognised the seriousness and potential complexity of the fire resulted in a positive outcome. This allowed for rapid escalation of the incident.

**Insufficient water supply** There was an insufficient water supply which meant hoses had to be linked to transport water from three hydrants. Also, a trenched hose lay was needed across the Hume Highway. These actions added to the incident's complexity. An officer was appointed to develop a comprehensive hydraulics plan which identified a number of water supply options that reduced the resource requirements while maximising the amount of available water.

**Foam** The use of Class A and CAFS foams was successful in some parts of the fire because it limited the water application rate and reduced the amount of smoke produced. But the production of Class A foam in a CAFS system was limited because of the equipment and because the use of CAFS is limited in CFA. We need to expand awareness.

**Smoke and plume modelling** This provided useful intelligence in planning but, given the need to accurately interpret the model, additional guidance was required on the fireground. There were limitations in accessing and interpreting the model and an initial conflict about the appropriate model to use for this circumstance. Given safety and community concerns, it's important to get reasonable predictions of smoke travel, the contents of the smoke and areas likely to be affected.

**PCC cleaning turnaround** There were delays in recommissioning CFA's personal protective clothing because some items had to be tested and cleaned before recommissioning. This needed to be managed better, particularly for those members who had the capacity to work several shifts.



PHOTO: TREVOR ROBERTS



PHOTO: STEVE CROCKER, MFB



PHOTO: STEVE CROCKER, MFB

**Demobilisation plan** The incident involved a lot of external equipment and particular effort was made to link resources to the right owners. This allowed the resources to be tracked and accounted for correctly during the incident. The demobilisation, however, did have some limitations in the sequencing of release. It has been identified that a table top exercise should be developed and incorporated into district training programs for future logistics and IMT workshops.

**Public information** The public information and warnings worked extremely well in providing timely warnings to the community. Community information is vital during an incident like this in providing advice about the risk and consequences of the hazard to the community. Overall, the emergency management agencies played an important role in community engagement.

**Intelligence** Using an MFB drone with remote cameras greatly benefited this incident. The drone is piloted by remote control and carries a camera into the air above an incident. It can transmit real-time images to the incident controller via a portable monitor, which enhances the incident controller's ability to make timely and effective tactical decisions. It also means management teams can locate and monitor the position of their crews and resources.

**Use of heavy plant** The assistance of a DELWP plant manager on site ensured that heavy equipment such as excavators and dozers were used efficiently.

It was identified that there is a need for plant operators to have a better understanding of the potential effects of smoke exposure and the importance of monitoring carbon monoxide (CO). During this fire, some operators were not aware of the risks associated with exposure to smoke and decontamination requirements.

**Aircraft for firefighting** An air attack aircraft was also used because of the size of the fire in the early stages, and water from CFA and MFB

aerial trucks couldn't penetrate the fire. When the aircraft was deployed, the fireground crews and trucks stopped temporarily for safety reasons. The process was carried out successfully.

**Response and recovery** Transition to recovery was complex because of the ongoing clean-up. However, the response and recovery agencies worked cooperatively during the period of transition and gave each other appropriate support.

**Asbestos management** The fire was difficult to contain due to the amount and types of combustible material involved. The site was believed to contain asbestos, so safety procedures and health monitoring for CO exposure were implemented. A considerable effort was made to ensure crews had adequate respiratory protection and a decontamination process. These arrangements were put in place to mitigate the risk of asbestos to firefighters and staff on site and to mitigate the risk of asbestos leaving the site.

Atmospheric monitoring was also actively engaged to determine the potential exposure to the public and firefighters working in closer proximity to the fire under the smoke management protocols.

## CONCLUSION

Although this incident had a number of complications – proximity to industry, access to water supply, interference with road networks and significant media attention – everyone worked extremely well together to ensure the incident was managed safely for the responders and community. By taking into account the lessons learned, fire agencies can overcome similar challenges in the future.

The ongoing effort from crews, incident management and emergency management partners was instrumental in handling this incident. The crews worked around the clock to bring this incident to a conclusion as quickly as possible.

# Strathdownie Kaladbro Swamp peat fire

## SUMMARY

On 7 November 2015, a peat fire was reported at Kaladbro Swamp around 30 kilometres north-west of Dartmoor in south-west Victoria. The fire appeared to be the result of a lightning strike to a fence which ignited the peat in 12 hectares of a 400-hectare peat swamp, to a depth of up to three metres. Firefighters from CFA, the South Australian Country Fire Service, DELWP and Parks Victoria went to extraordinary lengths to contain the peat fire, with support from other agencies including Department of Health and Human Services, Glenelg Shire, Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police, the Environment Protection Authority and the property owner.

## WHAT IS A PEAT FIRE?

Peat is partially decomposed plant matter formed in wetlands and harvested as fuel. Unlike regular fires, the problem with peat fires is they can burn for long periods of time – months, years and even centuries. Also, it can take up to seven or more litres of water to wet a portion of peat the size of a one-litre milk carton. These fires can go into the soil and travel underground, which makes the firefighters' task much more difficult because they can spread very slowly and surface anywhere.

## INCIDENT OVERVIEW

During early morning on 31 October 2015, there was significant lightning across Glenelg Shire, and CFA and DELWP responded to many fires caused by lightning. These were all brought under control by

2 November. Aerial detection flights were used to detect any further fires which hadn't been reported.

On 7 November, a fire was reported at Kaladbro Swamp. A lightning strike on a fence ignited the peat in a 400-hectare drained peat swamp. Containment works immediately began including the construction of a containment trench around the perimeter of the fire to restrict further spread.

The initial response to this fire was within normal CFA response arrangements: a Level 1 incident reporting to the district rostered duty officer in District 4. The fire was managed for the first 10 days within the group structure, with control strategies developed to initially contain the fire.

Crews responded using tankers to contain the fire edge and to construct a channel using excavators to provide a physical barrier. This was to prevent the fire spreading into large areas of forest plantations (including both pines and blue gums) within 500 metres, and rural agricultural areas with scattered buildings. The relatively low depth of peat meant this was successful, because there was a good clay base just below the peat. Later in the firefight, these excavators were used effectively to dig out the peat, turn and break it up so water and foams were more effective. This work significantly reduced the suppression time.

Although the peat fire has been under control since the end of November, it may still be burning underground and local communities need to remain vigilant. CFA continued to regularly monitor the area through the summer.





### LESSONS IDENTIFIED

**The use of a foam class in a lower concentrate** Foams with the lowest proportioning rates between 0.1 and 0.5 per cent generally have relatively fast drain times, which release solution for rapid wetting. The lower concentrate was used on this fire, which penetrated the peat at a faster rate. See the table below for proportioning rates, foam type and drainage times.

Proportioning/ induction rate (per cent)	Foam type	Drainage time
0.1 – 0.2	<b>Foam solution</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milky fluid</li> <li>• Lacks any bubble structure</li> <li>• Mostly water</li> </ul>	Not applicable – not used as aspirated foam
0.1 – 0.3	<b>Wet foam</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watery foam blanket</li> <li>• Small to large bubbles</li> <li>• Lacks any body</li> </ul>	Fast
0.3 – 0.5	<b>Fluid foam</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium/small bubbles</li> <li>• Clings together in a tight, free-flowing blanket</li> </ul>	Moderate
0.6 – 1	<b>Dry foam</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry shaving cream texture foam blanket</li> <li>• Medium/small bubbles</li> <li>• Mostly air (limited use)</li> </ul>	Slow

Source: CFA Learning Manual: Use of Class A Foam in Wildfire Operations and Non-structural Applications

#### Straight tips provided better penetration than fog branches

Using the straight tips:

- gave a long reach to penetrate flames
- was least affected by wind
- was less affected by radiant heat
- attacked the seat of a fire.

In comparison, fog branches (not used on this peat fire):

- produce extremely fine particles of water that form a mist or fog stream but has the shortest reach
- are affected by wind
- can impede visibility
- use more water than the jet/straight tip.

**The use of thermal imaging cameras** Thermal imaging cameras were used at the peat fire. They allowed the crew to see through smoke to assess the extent of the fire, improved safety and, most importantly, they identified hot spots burning underground which could surface anywhere.

**Compressed air foam system equipment** CAFS was used to help crews apply firefighting foam to the fire. It worked well by penetrating the ash layer, preventing oxygen from combining with fuel and disrupting the chemical reaction required for the fire to continue. The sustained blanket of foam allowed steam underneath to remove heat from the peat.

**Strategy to construct a trench/moat** The trench was constructed to form a physical barrier to contain the peat fire. Firefighters excavated to the depth of clay so that the fire couldn't burn and spread underneath the trench. They then flooded the area with water and this strategy was a huge success.

**The use of P2 particulate filter masks** P2 filter masks were necessary for all crew members because of the huge amount of dust and ash around the peat. Unfortunately, as their breathing became restricted, the crew needed to change masks frequently because the disposable masks have a short life span.

**The use of Bollé goggles** With dust and ash surrounding the peat, Bollé Nitro goggles protected the crews' eyes well. They provided better protection than the standard goggles because they didn't allow the fine dust particles to enter the goggles via the vents.

**Water supplies** Containment and control of the fire needed huge and reliable quantities of water over an extended period of time. As there was no surface water available at the site, two large irrigation bores were constructed next to the fire and fitted with high capacity submersible pumps and delivery pipes by the property owner shortly after suppression commenced.

**Carbon monoxide** These fires can release significant quantities of carbon monoxide gas (measured at up to 300 parts per million). Appropriate measures should be implemented early to monitor gas exposure for crews, contractors and nearby communities, and to introduce appropriate work practices and equipment to ensure their safety.

### CONCLUSION

Peat fires are not common in Victoria so CFA members have little experience dealing with them. However, the first crews on scene implemented direct attack on the entire perimeter to contain it.

The fire was brought under control in 10 days thanks to the great efforts of the crews coupled with the cooperation of the property owner.

# ESF scholarships benefit the sector

Ever had a great idea that could make a big difference to CFA and the emergency services sector, but need time and money to make it a reality?

CFA Aviation Officer Wayne Rigg and Benloch Fire Brigade Second Lieutenant Carl Gibson are two of many who've received an Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) scholarship to do research that benefits the emergency services sector.

Wayne's area of study will be to explore the use of aircraft to speed up the response of technical/specialist rescue teams and equipment on the ground. His study will document ways to bridge gaps to build capability within Victoria.

The findings of Wayne's research will be used to make changes in CFA and Victoria to achieve an all-hazards aviation capability, to meet the needs of membership of the Aviation User Network, as identified in the *Fire and Emergency Aviation Capability Plan 2014-15*.

**Right:** Wayne Rigg and Carl Gibson with ESF's fundraising bear. To buy the bear visit [esf.com.au/bear](http://esf.com.au/bear)



PHOTO: SUE PIGDON

Carl was awarded his scholarship in 2013 to investigate novel approaches to improve the operational performance, resilience and safety of emergency services personnel.

When the ESF was founded after the 1983 bushfires, its main role was to provide immediate welfare to the families of emergency services workers killed or injured in the line of duty.

Over the years, the ESF has expanded its services to benefit all volunteer and

member agency staff across the emergency management sector. As well as scholarships, it now offers welfare support; learning and networking opportunities; leadership and personal development; and an annual conference and exhibition.

More details about the ESF scholarship program and information about previous scholarship projects can be found on the ESF website at [esf.com.au](http://esf.com.au).

STORY SUE PIGDON



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# The Chief lays out a vision

**Chief Officer Joe Buffone is scheduling a range of visits around the state to inform CFA members about his short and medium-term priorities.**

"My vision for CFA is a modern, inclusive, contemporary and unified fire and emergency service where volunteers and career personnel have the skills, equipment and support to do their job," said Joe.

"Volunteers and career staff each have their own unique skillsets. By focusing on building on the strengths of our career and volunteer workforce, by respecting and acknowledging our differences in local knowledge, technical proficiency, backgrounds and capabilities, we will move toward a truly unified workforce.

"The introduction of a workwear uniform for volunteers in an identified leadership cohort aligns to this objective."

A unified workforce is just one of several objectives that Joe wants to focus on in the year ahead.

The Chief said that to some degree we tend to focus mainly on bushfire, but this season CFA has been involved in some very complex and long-running incidents. These include a livestock carrier fire at Portland, a landfill blaze at

Somerton and a peat fire at Kaladbro Swamp in South West Region.

"These examples highlight the diversity of services that CFA provides the community from greater Melbourne to the far corners of remote rural Victoria".

He further recognises that CFA averages thousands of jobs in the urban environment including structure fires, rescues, emergency medical response and hazmat incidents, and states he wants a focus on urban capabilities and risks.

"Our members, both volunteer and career, have done a tremendous job this season," he said. "We saw the outpouring of gratitude and support for CFA firefighters through some of the bigger fires we've had with community engagement well demonstrated."

Community cohesion is another of the Chief's priorities this year.

"I acknowledge that our members live and work within affected communities," continued Joe. "Some have had their homes and properties directly impacted by fires this summer while they've been working to protect the assets of others. This should be recognised and we're working to ensure that these members are getting the right support."

The Chief is also impressed with how CFA is continuing to build partnership with other fire and emergency management agencies.

"We are now getting closer to a seamless, integrated approach to our response and recovery around major incidents. 'We work as one' has been successfully tested this summer through our systems, processes and continuing strengthening relationships. Aligning to the sector transformation and strategies will further drive the 'we work as one'."

The Chief has not just had a chance to observe operations but also talk with front line operational CFA members and hear firsthand what can be improved.

"Training requirements and delivery is a common theme," he said. As a consequence a training action plan is being developed. "I've received some invaluable insights and suggestions relating to operational training that will be incorporated into our revised approach to training delivery.

"Our training also needs to be tailored to membership demographics and local risk profiles, be more flexible and have greater focus on simulating real scenarios like burnovers."

STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

**Right:** Joe Buffone (far left) with Midland Championships Association President Greg Murphy, Kerang brigade member Clare Murphy and Graeme Jilbert at the Greater Midlands Fire Brigades Competition

PHOTO: DARREN GREVIS-JAMES



# Thinking of modifying your fire station?

**For brigades thinking about an extension, a new shed or upgrading their amenities, CFA has introduced a new service to help brigades scope and cost their proposals.**

This free service applies to brigade work up to the value of \$75,000 through the Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP), or where the value of the project exceeds \$75,000 and the brigade proposes to fully fund the initiative.

The new procedure also helps CFA fulfil its responsibility to provide a safe workplace and ensure that all building works comply with relevant planning and building codes and government guidelines.

A brigade must register its project with CFA and apply for local approval before proceeding. When registering, the brigade is asked to supply a brief description of the proposed works, a cost estimate and how it will be funded. CFA's Land and Building Services team will then carry out an initial desktop review of the proposed scope of works,

inspect the site (if required) and assess the cost estimate before the brigade applies for local approval.

Subject to local endorsement of the proposed works, VESEP applications can then be submitted and, if successful, CFA Land and Buildings will help with more detailed scoping of the project; arrange external consultants; prepare and oversee planning and building approvals; obtain and validate quotations and tendering (where applicable); and carry out contract management and commissioning.

Locally-endorsed brigade-funded projects should be submitted through the local planning process to the region's Assistant Chief Officer and then to the Manager Infrastructure Planning for approval.

If you want to register a project or get help to plan a project, phone VESEP Minor Works Project Manager Bruce Rowley on 5833 2425 or [email b.rowley@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:b.rowley@cfa.vic.gov.au).

STORY DIANE FROST

## Smoke alarm campaign

CFA and MFB are once again encouraging Victorians to change their smoke alarm batteries when they change their clocks on Sunday 3 April, and also replace smoke alarm units that are more than 10 years old.

Brigades will be partnering with local businesses and groups to set up information displays and other activities to remind communities that only working smoke alarms save lives. Campaign material will be in the Template Toolkit section of [cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au).

# Millgrove fire refuge opens

**The Millgrove community fire refuge in District 13, which incorporates Wesburn-Millgrove Fire Station, was officially opened in mid-December 2015.**

Community fire refuges are buildings that have been built or modified to withstand a bushfire. They are a place of last resort if you cannot safely leave the area.

The \$1.6 million facility includes a three-bay fire station with improved facilities such as more space and better security for trucks and other operational equipment, more storage and upgraded areas for training, meeting, general administration and preparing food.

It houses four vehicles: the permanent Hino 2.4C tanker, Toyota LandCruiser slip-on, Ford Ranger FCV and Tanker 9 on loan for the summer. There's also a trailer with a quick-fill pump.

At the opening, Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley said expanding the bushfire survival shelter options for the

community was a recommendation of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

"Refuges are important in isolated areas where the safest option of leaving early may not be practical," he said. "Refuges will only be activated when fire is threatening a community and should only be used as a last resort when other plans have failed."

This is the fourth community fire refuge to be built in Victoria, with other refuges at Ferry Creek and East Warburton (which both operate as schools) and Blackwood, which is also a combined fire station and refuge. A fifth refuge is being planned for Lavers Hill, south-west Victoria, which will be ready for the 2016-17 summer.

The planning and building of community fire refuges is a collaborative effort between government, agencies, business and local communities, and heavily relies on local knowledge.

STORY KAYLA MASKELL



PHOTO: KAYLA MASKELL

# New trucks for CFA

**It's an exciting time for CFA. We're building a number of new vehicles which will improve our capability and make things easier and safer for our firefighters.**

More than 140 new firefighting vehicles will be built for CFA this year. These include vehicles under the capital replacement program and Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP).

As usual, there's a wide variety of builds and we highlight some of the more significant ones over the next three pages..

## MEDIUM PUMPER

The new medium pumper will be mass produced in Ballarat. It includes all the features that many of you would have seen when the prototype toured the state last year. We were given a lot of great feedback from the prototype tour and much of this has been included in the final version of the medium pumper.

Twelve will be built this year, and we plan to build more in coming years.

The new medium pumper has:

- a Scania 4x2 crew cab chassis with automatic transmission
- 2,500-litre water tank
- 4,000 litres/minute water pump
- Class A foam capability
- in-cabin breathing apparatus
- full stowage inventory

## HEAVY TANKER

This year we'll build 40 new heavy tankers on a newer, larger cab chassis. This tanker can carry more water than previous versions and also has a larger and quieter pump. It also includes a number of recent innovative features that have become standard on our recent medium tanker.

It will be built on a new Iveco cab chassis, with 15T capacity, automated manual transmission plus more power and torque than ever before.

Features include:

- 15T Iveco Eurocargo 4x4 crew cab chassis with automated manual transmission
- 4,000-litre water tank
- 1,200 litres/minute water pump with water-cooled diesel engine
- Class A foam capability
- full stowage inventory
- 0-450 litres/minute front-mounted monitor with joystick control inside the cabin.



## MEDIUM TANKER

More of our successful medium tankers are rolling out the door. More than 250 have been built over the past four years. The vehicle continues to evolve and a number of changes have been made since its launch. For example, we've moved to a quieter, water-cooled ultra-high-pressure pumping system.

The most recent production includes a new six-speed automatic transmission that will make it easier to drive and, hopefully, will convince some of our younger members – who may not be used to manual transmissions – to give it a go.

Its main features are:

- 13T Hino GT 4x4 crew cab chassis
- 2,350-litre water tank
- 900 litres/minute water pump
- 25 litres/minute 100bar ultra-high-pressure pump
- Class A foam capability
- full stowage inventory
- 0-450 litres/minute front-mounted monitor with joystick control inside the cabin.



**Above:** Scania 4x2 crew cab medium pumper at the factory

PHOTOS: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

## COMPRESSED AIR FOAM TANKERS

In 2014, CFA successfully used compressed air foam (CAFS) technology to suppress and ultimately extinguish the Hazelwood mine fire. CFA relied very heavily on the support from Tasmania and ACT fire services which had recently invested in CAFS.

Over the next 18 months, CFA will build two CAFS vehicles which will be larger than those used at the mine fire. We expect to take delivery of the trucks by mid-2017 and they are likely to be located in the Latrobe Valley.

Everything about these vehicles is on a large scale from the size of the water tank to the pump and foam capability. An all-wheel drive 8x8 cab chassis will be used to maximise manoeuvrability in the muddy mine environment.

At the time of publication, CFA was at the tendering stage so we can't publish drawings of the CAFS vehicle. We'll keep you updated on progress in *Brigade* magazine.

The truck will include:

- 8x8 cab with automatic transmission
- 10,000 to 12,000 litres water
- 300 litres Class A foam
- 4,000 litres/minute water pump
- 5.66 m<sup>3</sup>/minute (200 cfm) air compressor
- 175kW water-cooled diesel engine
- 2,000 litres/minute CAFS capability
- forward and rearward thermal imaging equipment
- 0-2,000 litres/minute front and roof-mounted monitors with in-cabin controls.

## CREW CAB LIGHT TANKER

The recent introduction of a new GVM 4x4 small truck on to the Australian market means that a crew cab light tanker is now an option for CFA. Building on the success of the VESEP single cab vehicle, CFA is now introducing an equivalent crew cab variant.

It features:

- 7.5T Isuzu NPS 4x4 crew cab chassis
- 1,700-litre water tank
- 450 litres/minute water pump with water-cooled diesel engine
- Class A foam capability.



## BULK WATER CARRIER

CFA will be building two bulk water carriers for the north-west of the state where access to water is often difficult.

Based on the NSW Rural Fire Service Cat 13 platform, it will be built on a Hino 6x4 cab chassis. This is not a tanker. Instead, we have maximised the water-carrying capability.

- Hino FM2630 6x4 single cab chassis with automatic transmission
- 11,000-litre water capacity
- 1,000 litres/minute water transfer/quick-filling pump.

**Above:** A NSW bulk water carrier built on an Isuzu FVZ 6x4. CFA's bulk water carrier will use a Hino FM2630 6x4

PHOTO: SUPERINTENDENT RICHARD PETCH



## BELGRAVE HEIGHTS AND SOUTH ULTRA-LIGHT TANKER UPGRADE

Under last year's VESEP program, Belgrave Heights and South brigade built a new prototype big fill/ultra-light tanker on an Iveco Daily crew cab chassis. A bit of recent tweaking has further improved what is now a very impressive and capable vehicle.

It includes:

- 5.2T Iveco Daily 4x4 crew cab chassis
- 700L water tank
- 1,000 litres/minute PTO driven pump with stationary or 'pump and roll' capability
- Class A foam capability
- Electric rewind live hose reel
- Lockering and full stowage inventory

**Right:** Belgrave Heights and South ultra-light Iveco Daily 4x4 crew cab

PHOTO: AARON CARLTON



## TRAILER PUMP

During the 2014-15 financial year, CFA trialed a new prototype trailer-mounted pump in districts 5 and 20, with the intention of replacing the ageing Godiva pumps.

The prototype, pictured right, generated a lot of discussion and feedback, much of which has been included in the final build of four units under the VESEP program.

CFA is reviewing future designs to gauge the need for a smaller single-axle version.

The tandem axle version will include:

- 1,500-kilogram tandem axle trailer
- 1,800 litres/minute pump with water-cooled diesel engine
- optional Class A foam and live hose reel
- full stowage inventory including welfare recovery gear
- pre-connected suction hose.



## TOOMUC FIRE BRIGADE'S G WAGON

Under this year's VESEP grant, Toomuc brigade will be receiving a new Mercedes-Benz G Wagon ultra-light. Closely based on the design used by DELWP, it's a 4.495T G Wagon, with a 700-litre water tank, on-board pump, Class A foam capability, lockers and stowage.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DELWP

# National Equine Database

**CFA has partnered with an Australia-first project that aims to provide better protection of horses and other companion animals during bushfires.**

The self-help National Equine Database (NED) has been developed by Panton Hill Fire Brigade member Jenna Kelley, who is also the founder of the Walking Forward Disaster Relief Team.

The database, launched in mid-February, works by linking horse owners with property owners with the capacity to temporarily house animals during bushfires and other emergencies. It's an innovative approach, encouraging self-reliance, reducing the strain on emergency services and councils and promoting forward thinking.

While it's started small, the database has the capacity to expand across the country, putting animal owners together with property owners away from their particular risk area on days of predicted peak fire danger.

Jenna said the idea came about from not having anywhere



accessed at [www.tepscon.community](http://www.tepscon.community).

STORY LEITH HILLARD

to evacuate her thoroughbred to on days of significant fire danger.

"The loss of animals and family pets from a fire is devastating," she said. "Moving large animals from harm's way isn't always possible during the chaos of a fire. That's why planning ahead and knowing your trigger to move before fire breaks out is the best option. "We advise people to check their forecast up to three days ahead and move their animals for a maximum of three days. They should have checked the property they are moving them to in advance and have a clear idea of the property owner's fire plan.

"I leave an evacuation kit with my horse, dog and cat that includes barrier cream, saline, gauze, wire cutters and a spare lead rope and halter."

NED can also store animal identification details and other records to help prove ownership.

The database can be

## VFBV survey

The annual VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey opens soon. If you gave your email address last year, you'll receive it automatically. If not, send your name, brigade and district to [vfbv@vfbv.com.au](mailto:vfbv@vfbv.com.au) or call 9886 1141 for a paper survey.

A record 2,500 volunteers took part last year. The survey report goes to VFBV and CFA Boards, senior management, the Emergency Management Commissioner and the Minister, so it's a very powerful opportunity to influence action. The 2015 report is at [vfbv.com.au](http://vfbv.com.au).

## Learning through research

**New research from the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC will develop new tools for land managers and tackle some of the most challenging policy, governance and communication issues confronting emergency management.**

Two Hazard Notes recently released describe the findings so far.

*Research for Better Land Management* notes that a better understanding is needed about the trade-offs involved in the management of landscape fire and prescribed burning, as public and professional expectations of fire

agencies and land managers continue to rise. Tools that standardise risk assessment across different vegetation types, management objectives, agencies and communities are useful to ensure threats are recognised and treated in the same way. The research underway in this area will improve the effectiveness of prescribed burn programs by giving land managers better tools.

Learning from the past and predicting the future is difficult, especially when it comes to managing risk. The factors in major disasters are uncertain, while the science around these

disasters can be complex. *Raising the Bar on Risk Reduction Policy and Planning* aims to provide a foundation for ensuring that responsibility for risk can be understood and shared transparently among everyone.

These Hazard Notes, along with many more covering topics such as communications and warnings, scenarios and loss analysis and sustainable volunteering, are available at [bnhrc.com.au/hazardnotes](http://bnhrc.com.au/hazardnotes).

STORY NATHAN MADDOCK

# Shane Mynard Morwell Fire Brigade, District 27

faces of  
CFA



PHOTO: PAUL FIXTER

## What is your involvement with CFA?

I'm the Officer in Charge [OIC] of Morwell Fire Station and operations officer in District 27. I used to be a volunteer at Traralgar and was made a life member. I ran in the Champs up until last year but I've had to resign.

## Why did you join?

My family was involved in the fire brigade and I started as a Junior at 15 in Traralgar. It's a small country town and everyone was involved. I enjoyed the camaraderie but I was also interested in the firefighter side like learning basic fireground practice and how to operate trucks and pumps.

## What was the first incident you attended?

It was a car fire near our local tip. The second was a car accident, a fatality. About seven

cars were involved. I wasn't put in the heat of the moment. I was guided and mentored and that meant that I was able to make a contribution.

## What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

There was a coal fire in the Hazelwood open cut in 2006 when I was a new officer, but the 2014 mine fire had an even bigger bearing on the community. The public looks to you and you get a lot of questions you can't answer. It was one step forward and three steps back.

I was the duty officer on Black Saturday and [Traralgon Fire Brigade Officer in Charge] Peter Lockwood was the incident controller. We went through Juniors together and then shared the experience of being put on the stand for the [2009 Victorian Bushfires]

Royal Commission where we felt like a target. I rely on Peter a lot now.

I received the Chief Officer's Commendation along with Pat Quinn for the 2014 mine fire and the National Emergency Medal [NEM] for 2009. My family deserves the NEM more than me.

## What CFA training have you got the most out of?

The Level 2 Firefighter course was four days where we got away, trained, did drills and shared information and experiences with no exams at the end. It sharpened my skills but it was also a chance to learn things from others that you can't learn from books.

About 10 years ago, I did a prescribed burning course with Roger Strickland which was really enjoyable. We learned about the effect of different vegetation on fire behaviour and it made a lot of sense of some of my experiences. The explanations were so clear. Thanks Roger!

## Who have been your mentors in CFA?

My father Ron was brigade captain and he gave me a lot of guidance. Other Traralgar members also gave me a lot of encouragement.

John Donovan is now a Station Officer at Mornington and he's been a big influence in my career. I was keen and asked a lot of questions and he encouraged me to keep the dream alive.

## What lessons do you pass on to younger members?

I learned to listen as a Junior. If you didn't, you'd get a foot up the bum and be told to pull your head in! Discipline is very important and respect your elders. You earn respect, you don't demand it, so it's important to respect people who've been there before.

I just encourage people to have a go. If you want something and the opportunity is there, go for it. Don't look back and regret it. Destiny is by choice, not by chance.

INTERVIEW BY LEITH HILLARD

# EMR making a difference

**The number of CFA brigades involved in emergency medical response (EMR) now sits at seven integrated and three volunteer. To get a sense of their workload, they responded to 61 EMR events in January 2016 alone.**

EMR brigades co-respond with Ambulance Victoria (AV) to a select group of Priority 0 calls, best summarised as 'not conscious, not breathing or breathing uncertain'. If the brigade is first on scene, they provide medical treatment of symptoms until paramedics arrive and the patient is handed over.

EMR tasks range from setting up spine boards and ventilation through to starting compressions and CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) to administering oxygen and defibrillation.

Shepparton Fire Brigade has been involved since CFA introduced EMR in 2011 and attends an average of 125 EMR incidents a year. Leading Firefighter Ryan Kervin is the acting coordinator with 31 of the current career firefighters trained up.

"The local paramedics really appreciate our attendance and even ask for us," said Ryan, "and we're there to assist them, not to take over. The safety of people is always our highest priority and EMR is all about improving survival rates of patients."

The members complete a refresher every four years and a minimum of four skills maintenance sessions with a paramedic educator each year which cover all aspects of EMR practice.

"There's definitely job satisfaction," continued Ryan. "Even if there's not a positive outcome, the ambos acknowledge that it's better to do something rather than nothing. Sometimes a good outcome might be a patient stabilised so their family gets to say goodbye. That's huge."

"Another benefit is if one of our members becomes unwell at a scene perhaps from smoke inhalation."

But Ryan admits that EMR can take its toll on members. "There's the opportunity for individuals to pull back and of course we've called peer support in as well as talked through incidents with AV," he said. "Most of all, we look after each other and talk a lot about jobs; just keep chatting."

Berwick Captain Craig Sanderson also pulls no punches: EMR can be confronting.

"With road accident rescue you don't necessarily touch a person, but with

EMR there's contact and that bond is formed," he said. "You're also often responding into the home so you might be surrounded by distressed family members and are predominantly dealing with them."

"On the other hand, it brings an extra dimension to what you're doing for your community. Two paramedics on scene can only do oxygen and CPR but when we arrive they're freed up to put in IVs [intravenous lines] and begin drug therapy. Treatment options expand because we're there."

"You can't get more satisfaction than the wins we do have."

This volunteer brigade (see page 9 for a photo of a Berwick crew at a fire callout) has bought their own dedicated EMR Ford Territory, giving them flexibility as not everyone has a truck licence. EMR is incorporated into their regular training once a month with reaccreditation taking place every two years

"We don't have new members do EMR but give them plenty of time to hone their firefighting skills," continued Craig. "If a member is new to EMR, we automatically call in peer support for their first few calls. They're at our fingertips."

To access peer support, contact your local peer coordinator. CFA also offers a range of other services to support its members in managing their mentalhealth and wellbeing. For more information go to [cfa.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth).

STORY LEITH HILLARD

## Recruiting now

Applications for career firefighter roles at CFA are now open. This is a great chance to take on a challenging and satisfying role with real career pathways and heaps of variety. You need to hold a full manual driver licence and be prepared to relocate if necessary.

Visit [cfa.vic.gov.au/career](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/career) for detailed information and videos.

**Below:** Shepparton brigade career firefighters in an EMR training session



# Final rollcall for Alan

**When much-loved Werribee Fire Brigade life member Alan Kendall became too unwell to attend rollcall at the fire station, the brigade brought rollcall to him.**

Around 80 Werribee members and another 12 from Wyndham Vale brigade formed ranks in Alan and wife Heather's cul-de-sac with the kind permission of neighbours.

"It worked to perfection," said proud son and brigade member Adrian who was called from the parade to wheel his father through for inspection and an emotional final farewell.

"Then I wheeled him back into ranks and we all broke off together."

Alan was then presented with his service helmet and a plaque acknowledging his 47 years of service to his brigade and the wider community.

There wasn't a dry eye in the ranks or among the onlookers who included Kendall family members, members of the Werribee brigade auxiliary and neighbours.

Alan passed away within days of his final rollcall. His funeral was held at Werribee Fire Station where Captain Michael Wells delivered the eulogy to "a friend to all and a mentor to many. One of his strongest drivers was his sense of family and enjoyment of life, and he brought this with him to the brigade.

"Alan had a profound impact on getting road rescue into the brigade. He ... was a prime mover in not only the fundraising but the building of our appliances to enable us to carry the Jaws of Life.

"Alan also taught others in the brigade these lifesaving skills ... and his legacy continues to this very day with his son being one of the best rescue operators in the business, and many individuals being alive due to his drive and determination to have the brigade be involved in rescue."

Vale Alan.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: SEAN O'MAHONEY

## Bright future with new recruits



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MYRTLEFORD TIMES

**It's the biggest intake in recent memory – eight new recruits to bolster Bright Fire Brigade.**

Late last year the brigade was struggling to get people to fires in the middle of the week. But the new additions, who signed up to the brigade late last year, have now completed their training and are eager to turn out to protect lives and property.

Only a few months ago, Bright brigade Captain Paul Mansfield was concerned that the brigade didn't have enough active members. With around 40 on their list and only 10 regularly attending Monday night training, Paul hoped to find around six new volunteers to ensure they would never fail to respond to a call.

Now, with just short of 50 members, Paul said the current situation was great for the brigade.

"They are all complete beginners but we are pretty rapt with the bunch," he said. "We have never had eight before in one hit and that's the result of our recruiting drive, a bit of media and open station weekends and that sort of stuff.

"We have been recruiting since October, so it's good to get this many and it's going to share the load a bit.

"We have a real mix of people: a few tradies, one semi-retired and a female. We are an equal opportunity brigade, so it's good to have another woman come on board. We have three now."

STORY JUSTIN JENVEY, MYRTLEFORD TIMES



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SHANE PEACOCK

# CFA protecting water catchments

**Melbourne's water catchments are protected to guard against contamination and safeguard some of the cleanest unfiltered water available in a major city.**

Bushfires in these catchments can threaten water quality and yield. In fact, a fire in the catchment and the resulting thirsty tree regrowth can result in a smaller water yield over more than 100 years.

Melbourne Water can respond to a bushfire threat by moving water between its 11 connected water storage reservoirs and away from a bushfire zone.

In the longer term, this precious resource is protected with planned burns within the 156,700 hectares of water catchment land, with CFA participation. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, the responsible public land manager, is increasing its burns in line with the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommendations.

CFA Vegetation Management Officer (VMO) and Macclesfield Fire Brigade Captain Sharon Merritt is a burn officer in charge and the first CFA member to be seconded to Melbourne Water. Her three-month position will further develop the collaborative planned burns program.

"Melbourne Water doesn't have the legal protection to be a burn controller, although

they do have the vehicles, plant and the [69] firefighters on a full-time roster," said Sharon. "They also have four fire towers across the catchments.

"A closer relationship will inevitably mean more effective planned, low intensity burns with runoff prevented so the water isn't contaminated. That means better risk reduction for both the catchments and nearby towns such as Silvan and Monbulk."

A burn plan identifies issues such as Aboriginal sites containing perhaps tools or scar trees, as well as endangered plants and animals.

Silvan Fire Station is built on Melbourne Water land leased to CFA for a peppercorn rent. The brigade liaises with Melbourne Water about once a year and is one of the brigades invited to take part in planned burns when these weather-dependent events coincide with volunteer availability.

"It's the best training members can receive," said Captain Shane Peacock. "Time permitting, we'll assist. Our members get to witness fire behaviour across different vegetation types and arrangements firsthand under a controlled situation.

"We're keen to take any opportunity with Melbourne Water. It's interesting getting different perspectives working with different agencies.

"We have their water purification treatment plant in our brigade area which is a major hazard facility. There's a requirement that these facilities regularly test their emergency plans involving a full multi-agency practical exercise, which also provides training for our members using fully-encapsulated gas suits."

The Silvan network provides up to two-thirds of Melbourne's water. There are some barbecues for daytrippers in the Reservoir Park, but the water is fenced off because it's an unfiltered network, not a recreational space.

Water is not harvested in Sugarloaf, Cardinia, Yan Yean, Greenvale and Silvan catchments. Rather, these end-of-the-line reservoirs have water transferred to them from the water supply catchments such as Maroondah, Upper Yarra and the Thomson Dam.

Long storage times in the reservoirs are a vital part of the filtering process, with most impurities breaking down over time so invasive and expensive treatments are not needed.

The end result is four million people downstream able to get some of the world's best drinking water simply by turning on a tap: a necessity; a luxury.

# Wimmera farmers did the right thing this harvest

**The award-winning Voluntary Grain Harvesting Guide trial, a joint initiative between CFA and the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), was a great success this season.**

The guidelines aimed to increase farmers' awareness of the risks of harvesting during severe weather conditions, and resulted in fewer harvest fires.

Although the poor harvest was a factor in the reduction of fires, it was clear that farmers were willing to adopt the guidelines and take personal responsibility for the risk.

"Two really big pluses have come out of the project," said Tarranyurk Fire Brigade Captain and VFF Grains Councillor Marshall Rodda. "Firstly, farmers are now looking at the weather and making their own assessment as to when it's too dangerous to continue harvesting. Secondly, they are taking their firefighting equipment to the paddock, so it's right there when they need it."

The code of practice has encouraged the industry to take more responsibility for the risk of fires by giving farmers a tangible figure to

work on, rather than asking them to make a judgement that may differ from person to person. The guidelines are also applicable to activities carried out after harvesting such as slashing, mulching and driving vehicles in stubble paddocks.

Several champions in District 17 have been doing a great job to build rapport with farmers, letting them know when the fire danger index reaches 35 (which is considered unsafe to continue harvesting) and when it has dropped to safe conditions so they can resume. These champions include Warracknabeal Group Officer Colin Newell, Deputy Group Officer Mick Morcom, Lah brigade Captain Richard Tickner and Crymelon brigade member Ross Johns.

This project won the Fire Service Award for Partnership at the 2015 Fire Awareness Awards.

STORY LOUISE MCGILLIVRAY

**Right:** Warracknabeal Group Officer Colin Newell, Tarranyurk Captain Marshall Rodda, Warracknabeal Captain Cam Whelan and District 17 BASO Louise McGillivray

PHOTO: DAVID WARD



## Trailer offers relief for District 24

**A new trailer based at CFA's District 24 headquarters has been purpose-built to rapidly transport toilets, rubbish bins and hand-washing facilities to staging areas.**

The compact trailer, designed by volunteer and staff members, was completed in mid-November and put to use just before Christmas at the Barnawartha fire and other incidents.

The trailer will also be used by brigades needing extra facilities at social, fundraising or community safety events.

District 24 Operations Manager Paul King said the absence of toilets at firegrounds was an ongoing issue which especially impacted women. He said discussions at a 'championing women in brigades' workshop last year were the catalyst for the trailer initiative.

"With a rapidly-escalating bush or scrub fire, you can have tens or even hundreds of personnel arriving at an area, and that will often be remote or far from existing amenities," Paul said.

"It's a logistical challenge but we need to make sure our firefighters are properly looked after."



PHOTO: ALEX TODD

Modular hand wash stations attached to the trailer means that members can satisfactorily wash their hands with soap and water, decreasing the chance of illness.

Paul said improving overall hygiene on the fireground was a priority, saying something as simple as a bin would improve conditions at a staging area.

"When there aren't any options available for rubbish disposal, personnel often have no other option but to let rubbish accumulate in their vehicles," he said.

"Having bins on the trailer will help us to keep vehicles relatively clean and means that crews coming in after changeover are not dealing with leftover rubbish."

STORY SONIA MACLEAN AND ALEX TODD

# Supporting kids with cancer

**Sebastopol Fire Brigade recently celebrated 20 years supporting the Cops 'n' Kids cancer support program.**

The Cops 'n' Kids camp was started in 1996 by Ballarat police, when a group of 12 children were treated to a much-needed respite from their cancer treatment. Today, the Cops 'n' Kids camp and the cancer support network Challenge are supported by the wider Ballarat community, including Sebastopol brigade.

The brigade has a strong relationship with the camp and all members look forward to Cops 'n' Kids every year.

The brigade opens its doors to put on a barbecue dinner for children with cancer, their siblings, carers and other helpers – often more than 300 people.

At the last dinner, the brigade's auxiliary made salads and, during the days leading up to the barbecue, volunteers make some of the yummiest treats, cakes and sweets (pictured) you can imagine. As you'd expect, the kids were very excited, but some of the adults

also snapped up a treat. Brigade life members Garry and Anne Maloney made 65 show bags for all the kids.

To mark the 20th year of supporting the Cops 'n' Kids camp, Sebastopol brigade was presented

with two photo books containing memories spanning the 20 years of the camp. The brigade also had a special surprise for the Cops 'n' Kids camp members with a dunking tank and jumping castle for all to enjoy. Not only did the firefighters get dunked, but some of the police officers did too.



PHOTOS: GERALDINE PIETSCH

STORY ALI PICKLES

## Community exercises get locals thinking

**Following a fire, a well-prepared community member will recover faster than a resident who has done little preparation.**

During November and December 2015, more than 250 residents took part in community bushfire exercises at Mirboo North, Noojee and Erica fire stations.

These sessions helped residents to prepare their properties and themselves for the threat of bushfire, and empowered them to take responsibility for their bushfire plans.

Mirboo North Community Safety Coordinator Mark Kennedy said most people found out about their event through Mirboo North brigade's Facebook page and the message board they placed in the main street.

"We've never used these methods before, but they were very successful," Mark said.

Topics covered were fire behaviour, Fire Danger Ratings, warnings and advice, local fire history and the importance and content of a bushfire plan. A burn table was also used to show fire behaviour and local topography.

An interactive part of the day that worked well was a session about simulated fire scenarios in local areas. Residents looked at large aerial maps and were encouraged to discuss which direction a fire might come from, what local conditions might be like and what actions and plans need to be considered. Residents worked in small groups with a brigade member to test their plans and talk about what they would do.

"The most successful part of the day was seeing how many people really started thinking about being prepared," said Mark. "We've run things in the past and never got more than 10



PHOTO: STEVE CORRIGAN

at the station, so to engage around 75 residents was fantastic."

The police and members of DELWP were also on hand to answer questions.

One resident commented that they'd lived in Noojee for 14 years, experienced the effects of the 2009 fires, but still didn't have a bushfire survival plan. After the exercise they were going to assess their property and have a family discussion to formalise their plan.

Another local resident said, "It was great to get people thinking about personal responsibility. Meetings like this make you realise how real it is."

STORY ELLISA BOURNE

# Volunteers looking after their own

**Sally Wearmouth vividly remembers the early stages of the February 2014 Mickleham-Kilmore fire. Told to plan about 50 to 100 meals, instinct and experience told her to expect more. That night, Broadford Fire Brigade's catering unit – the Snack Attack – fed 800 people.**

Across the state, catering units provide critical support at major incidents, and Snack Attack is up there with the best. It's well known across North East Region, as is Sally (pictured far right) who's been the driving force for over a decade.

"It's been such a big part of my life," said the 25-year member and former brigade secretary. "I've travelled up as far as the border and people say, 'You're Sal from Snack Attack'. It seems like everyone knows about us and what we do."

She explained that the Snack Attack isn't just about food. "If it's been a tough day, we're the ones they talk to. There are peers and other support services that come in after a fire, but it helps them to talk about what they've seen immediately after they've seen it.



PHOTO: SONIA MACLEAN

"Our volunteers have dropped everything to come to the fire and often work overnight in a situation that's physically demanding. It's essential they are fed and looked after."

Sally recently took a well-deserved step back, transferring the coordinator role to the very capable Margie Smith (pictured third from the left).

When asked what has motivated her to put in all those hard yards Sal said, "This is about CFA volunteers looking after their own."

STORY SONIA MACLEAN



## Asylum seekers' childhood dreams come true

**From an early age, Noble Park Fire Brigade volunteer firefighters Aida Pahang and husband Abbas Abdollahi had wanted to help their community.**

They migrated to Australia two years ago as asylum seekers from Iran, and establishing a new life in Australia coincided with a targeted recruitment strategy by Noble Park brigade.

The brigade wanted to strengthen its connections with the multicultural community, especially refugees and, when the brigade ran an information session, Aida and Abbas were keen to join.

Aida and Abbas talk very positively about their experience as CFA members.

"In Iran being a woman in the fire service is very difficult. You have to wear a head scarf and the fire service is not as accepting of females as CFA," Aida said.

"I was very excited about joining CFA. The brigade really encourages us to participate and

everyone is so friendly and works as a good team," Abbas said.

Over the past five years, Noble Park brigade has found it difficult to recruit volunteers and build a strong profile in the community. But the multicultural strategy has really changed the situation.

"The brigade is very focused on continuous improvement and now has strong positive engagement with our community," said Captain Terence Sanford.

Several languages are spoken in the brigade now, which makes the brigade a good reflection of its community.

Aida sees a long future with CFA. "One day I want to be a career firefighter and perhaps even the first female captain of Noble Park."

STORY MATTHEW POND

PHOTO: MATTHEW POND

# Look after your back

**Sprains and strains are the main injuries suffered by CFA members and back injuries can be especially debilitating. By strengthening the muscles that support your spine and performing manual handling tasks correctly, many injuries can be prevented.**

The team responsible for the Healthy for Life and Healthwatch programs has recently developed two new workshops: BackFit and DeskFit.

The BackFit workshop is designed to give firefighters and district mechanical officers the practical knowledge to maintain or improve their spinal health. Each workshop runs for 60 to 90 minutes and covers information about common spinal problems; postural causes of back pain and how to combat them; practical instruction of core exercises; and safe manual handling techniques for job-specific tasks.

Spiky massage balls are available during the session, so if you suffer from muscular tightness across the back of your shoulders or at your hips, you'll have the opportunity to work out those sore spots.



PHOTOS: JACK HEGGEN

BackFit booklets are also provided, containing all the technical information you'll need to maintain your spinal health after the workshop has finished.

DeskFit workshops are for regional and administrative staff. Participants learn about spinal health and manual handling for office workers, and have the opportunity to practise some light movements designed to counteract the negative effects of sitting for long periods. At some locations, this workshop is delivered by PACE Health Management, which helped to develop the workshops.



One participant at a recent session thought it was presented in layman's terms, was very relevant to the workplace and general life, and said it was very valuable for all CFA members.

DeskFit and BackFit information, booklets and workshop posters are available on the intranet ([cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au)). Select Health & Welfare>Health & Safety>Health Watch.

For more information or to book a workshop, contact [backfit@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:backfit@cfa.vic.gov.au).

STORY NICOLE TAYLOR

# Get Moving Challenge results

**More than 600 CFA members took part in the 2015 Get Moving Challenge in a bid to increase their physical activity and improve their health.**

Collectively, the 2015 Get Moving Challenge participants took over 300 million steps during the eight-week competition – equivalent to walking around the Earth over six times!

The winning team, called 'It seemed like a good idea' from Wodonga, put in a tremendous effort with all team members consistently achieving high numbers.

"It's just a great competition to motivate people to get fit," said team captain Qualified Firefighter Alan Foster. "Hopefully, it has inspired some people and they will now incorporate fitness into their life."

As part of the 2015 Challenge, participants were also encouraged to complete weekly tasks and share their photos and stories on Facebook. The challenge addressed other areas of health such as diet and sleep.

District 17 Brigade Administrative Support Officer Emma Herschell, winner of the week seven

'Get some air' challenge, enjoyed the weekly challenges and participated most weeks.

"I like that it challenged me to think outside the box when it came to exercise," said Emma. "During the challenge I became more active, went on walks with my team mates and signed up for the colour run [[thecolorrun.com.au](http://thecolorrun.com.au)]."

The next Get Moving Challenge will be held in September 2016. More details about the challenge, including how to enter and the fantastic prizes, will be posted on [news.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://news.cfa.vic.gov.au)

STORY TEAGAN KNIGHT



PHOTO: CHANTELLE SOBczyk

# Work smarter, not harder

**A training day for the Mitchell Shire Group of brigades gave more than 75 firefighters from 10 brigades the chance to practise vital skills.**

At least 20 members of the group recently joined CFA and these newbies worked alongside more experienced mentors, many of whom were in turn being mentored to step up into leadership roles.

Firefighters rotated through three stations at the State Motorcycle Sports Complex at Broadford, each focusing on a skill important for fighting bushfires – grassfire tanker tactics, water point operations and working in the bush.

Mitchell Shire Deputy Group Officer Pip Johnson, who acted as incident controller on the day, said the exercise had been carefully structured so that participants could stretch themselves in a safe environment.

“When organising this exercise, we targeted members who had completed their Minimum Skills [now the Volunteer Recruit Program] this year,” she said. “Everything we’re doing today will help them know what to expect.”

Pip said the training exercise was treated as if it were a real fire, with standard chain-of-command and radio communication protocols.

“As far as possible we tried to simulate how things would be run at an escalating incident, so as incident controller I made sure we managed information flow and tracked the movements of our strike teams,” she said.

“It’s about getting people, especially the newer members, used to how things unfold on the fireground.”

CFA Instructor Tony Scicluna, who ran one of the three sectors of the exercise, talked crews through techniques for blacking out. Tony’s

mantra was all about working smarter, not harder, when it came to carrying out this often thankless task.

“Get it done quickly, get it done well, and then go home,” he said, pointing out the importance of working to the conditions, and advocating for the renewed use of ground spears which inject water straight into the ground.

“When the ground is this dry it completely loses its ability to absorb moisture. You can pour 600 litres of water on to it to deal with a hot spot and that water will just run straight off. It won’t help you at all,” he said.

The grassfire tanker tactics sector, meanwhile, gave crew drivers the opportunity to rack up valuable driving practice handling different terrains.

Wrapping up the morning in spectacular fashion, Pilot Shane Holmes landed a Kestrel Helitack water-bomber at the speedway oval, before stepping out with Air Attack Supervisor Andy Arnold to chat to the group about integrating their response on the ground with aircraft working overhead.

“On the radio, just treat us like another tanker up in the air,” said Andy, “but remember the perspective is very different from up here, especially when there’s smoke. We need your help to identify where the risks and hazards are – powerlines are the worst culprits.”

Crews were reminded to stay well clear of the drop zone and listen to sirens. “A full load coming down will take your head off,” said Andy.

The exercise was attended by members from Broadford, Tallarook, Hilldene, Toobarac, Glenaroua, Wandong, Whiteheads Creek-Tarcombe, Kilmore, Clonbinane and Wallan brigades.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN



PHOTOS: SONIA MACLEAN



# Wedderburn kids welcome emergency services

The north-west town of Wedderburn hosted its second annual Emergency Services Day in December, bringing primary school students and first responders together in a relaxed environment.

The day kicked off with a parade of emergency services vehicles, while around 80 prep to Grade 4 students and their teachers lined the streets to watch.



PHOTO: DEIDRE GORDON-COOK

The students then walked to the Community House where they participated in a range of activities organised and run by Victoria Police, Wedderburn Fire Brigade, Loddon Shire, L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program, SES, Ambulance Victoria and the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

“We’re trying to get children to learn more about emergencies and what to do in an emergency, bring the community together to work together and foster great relationships,” said event coordinator and SES Volunteer Support Officer Sandra Koole.

The roles and responsibilities of emergency services were explained to the kids through demonstrations and discussion, with an emphasis on forging relationships early and what to do if something goes wrong.

“At times, we’ve seen children shy away from police because of what adults have said to them about us. We want to say to kids, ‘We’re here to help,’” said Senior Constable Denis Farrell.

Wedderburn Fire Brigade showed the kids how the hoses work and also gave them some information about home fire safety. Brigade Captain Andrew Villani (pictured far right, below) gave the children some great advice.

“Stay low and call Triple Zero and get out of the house to stay out of the smoke,” said Andrew.

STORY REBECCA MCDONALD



PHOTO: DEANNA NEVILLE

# \$77,000 raised for CFA brigades

**The Aussie spirit was definitely at all Bunnings stores in January at the annual Aussie Day Weekend Fundraiser BBQ.**

The barbecue was held at every Bunnings Warehouse nationwide to celebrate Australia Day and thank all emergency services volunteers for the work they do in their local communities.

It was the most successful fundraiser ever run by Bunnings, raising more than \$497,000 nationally for volunteer emergency services.

In Victoria, over \$126,000 was raised for CFA and SES, of which around \$64,000 will be given to almost 50 CFA brigades nominated by local stores. In addition, \$13,000 was raised by

CFA brigades by shaking tins at the stores.

CFA would like to extend a big thank you to Bunnings Warehouse for holding the Aussie Day Weekend Fundraiser BBQ and thanks to communities across Victoria for supporting it.

Thanks also to CFA members from participating brigades who gave their time to make this event a success, helping with the barbecue and getting into the Aussie Day spirit.

As well as an opportunity to do some fundraising, this event gave our members the opportunity to connect with their communities and share safety information.

STORY GEORGINA HILL



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

# Through the ages – Dandenong





# Emergency Memberlink

Your Emergency Memberlink program is a way for us to recognise your commitment and contribution to emergency services and Victorian communities.



By using Emergency Memberlink, you can receive discounts and benefits on a wide range of products and services in Victoria and interstate.

Details of the offers are in the Emergency Memberlink Guide, which is posted with all new Memberlink cards, and are also on the [emergencymemberlink.com.au](http://emergencymemberlink.com.au) website.

To get a Memberlink card, phone 1800 820 037 or register online at [emergencymemberlink.com.au](http://emergencymemberlink.com.au).

The Memberlink team welcomes feedback about the Memberlink Program and your suggestions about new benefits you think would be of value to you, your family and your colleagues. Phone the team or leave a message on the Facebook page – [facebook.com/emergencymemberlink](https://facebook.com/emergencymemberlink).

## POPULAR OFFERS

- Discounts are available on a range of pre-purchased **Gift Cards** including Woolworths, Coles, Myer, Kmart, Target, Supercheap Auto, Rebel Sport, JB Hi-Fi, Ray's Outdoors, BCF and Flight Centre.
- The **Langham Melbourne** offers a 15% discount off lunch or dinner when dining in the Melba Restaurant or having high tea in Aria Lounge.
- Members receive discounted passenger fares when sailing on **Spirit of Tasmania**.
- **Wyndham Hotel Group** offers 10% off the best available rates at 22 hotel locations in Australia and New Zealand.
- Members have access to special offers for new and existing customers using **Elgas** LPG bottled gas.
- **Thrifty** offers exclusive rental rates and a reduced liability fee on all cars, trucks and buses throughout Australia.
- 10% off best available accommodation rates with **Best Western Hotels**.
- Members receive commercial pricing through **The Good Guys Commercial Division**.
- 10% off all items in-store or online from **The Farm Store**.

- Members have access to corporate rates on a 12-month membership to the **Virgin Australia Lounge**.
- Members receive 10% discount at **The Athlete's Foot** on presentation of your Emergency Memberlink Card.
- **Bairnsdale Camping & Outdoor** offers members 10% off all purchases.
- Receive 10% off most land trips with **Intrepid Travel**.
- **Searoad Ferries** offer 10% discount on ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff on presentation of your Emergency Memberlink Card.
- Get \$50 off your next new booking when you spend over \$1,500 at **Flight Centre**.
- Members have access to **Nissan Partner Program** pricing on a wide range of Nissan vehicles.
- Members have access to a corporate offer at **Goodlife Health Clubs** including 15% off the Active Plus membership rate and free guest membership to bring a friend Friday-Sunday.
- Members have access to exclusive discounts and unique offers through the **JB Hi-Fi Family & Friends Program**.
- 10% off your next manufacturer's handbook service at **UltraTune Auto Service Centres**.
- Members are eligible for corporate pricing on **Rex Gorell Family Group's** range of new vehicles.
- 10% off day entry at **Sovereign Hill** for members and their immediate families.
- Buy your plants and garden products at wholesale prices from **Plantmark**.
- Save money on pre-purchased **movie tickets, theme park** and **attraction** tickets.
- Save 40% on **AIG** travel insurance.
- **Choice Hotels Australasia** offers government accommodation rates at more than 270 Ascend Hotel Collection, Econo Lodge, Comfort, Quality and Clarion hotels.
- Exclusive access to trade prices on audio visual, white goods, kitchen and home appliances through **Harvey Norman Groups & Associations Division**.
- **Mantra Group** offers up to 50% discount on accommodation at Peppers, Mantra and BreakFree properties throughout Australia and New Zealand.



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