

Brigade

spring 2015

Protecting lives
and property

cfa.vic.gov.au



▼ We farewell our hands-on Chief



Includes Pre-Season Update

CONTENTS

- 03 Incidents
- 08 Statewide news
- 10 CEO's column
- 12 Chief Officer's column
- 21 Community safety
- 22 Training
- 23 Events
- 24 Learning from incidents
- 28 Brigade news
- 39 Health and safety
- 42 Through the ages
- 44 Memberlink

COVER PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

CHIEF LEAVES CFA

08



04



36



16



CHAIR

Claire Higgins



Our priorities for the coming year

The *CFA Plan 2015-16* has just been released, laying out CFA's priorities for the coming year.

This plan takes the ideas agreed to in the *CFA Strategy 2013-2018: Towards Resilience* and turns them into actions.

It is the first plan built on the solid strategic foundation of the Board-endorsed network of strategies – Service Delivery, People, Volunteerism, Asset and Finance. These strategies commit CFA to a program that will sustain our front line service delivery while building a new approach to community resilience, and to fire and emergencies, so that we can better meet future challenges.

The *CFA Plan 2015-16* lays out shared priorities to progress the networked strategies. These five priorities are to:

- deliver front line services safely and effectively
- provide greater clarity for our people
- develop leaders at all levels
- turn government commitments and CFA strategies into action
- deliver the Chief Officer's capability requirements.

The first three priorities cover our people's welfare, sense of belonging and direction, and the promotion of strong leadership.

These priorities also reflect CFA's recently-released five values – safety, respect, integrity, together and adaptive – which declare our commitment to improving our culture.

CFA will continue to implement initiatives outlined in the *Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan 2015-18* such as co-creating a long-term emergency management employee and volunteer workforce development strategy and, of course, the continued rollout of new fire stations, vehicles, compressed air foam systems and plans for a new training site.

In addition, initiatives mentioned in this annual plan include undertaking an independent review of our health and safety systems and processes, governance arrangements, structure and strategy to identify areas for improvement; finalising the structures in F&EM, OT&V and Financial Services; and establishing a grassroots volunteer leadership and management development program.

Other key pieces of work will be the improvement of our planning and delivery of operational training, and building better data in key areas such as incident reporting, service delivery standards, hazard class, risk and brigade information.

Through the 2015 State Budget, the State Government has made commitments to enhance emergency services' capability and capacity. Delivering our annual plan calls for collaboration across the emergency management sector. The strategic changes we have made better align us with the sector so we are better placed to influence and drive major change.

The partnership between our staff, volunteers and communities is essential in achieving public safety outcomes.

It is vital that we understand and identify clear capability requirements that sustain our service delivery model.

Our Chief Officer Euan Ferguson has recently announced that he will not be continuing with CFA. I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and best wishes to both Euan and Kristin. They have both been an important part of the CFA family. I believe this edition's cover of *Brigade* magazine is a great example of why Euan has been such an inspiring leader. He has had a great connection with our people, and has been helping us through a period of significant change. For me, what I'll miss most about Euan is his quiet determination and dedication to supporting those working to protect our community.

Keep in touch

You can update your address or email details, or cancel *Brigade* magazine, by clicking on the 'Update your details' icon on cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au or by calling 1800 628 844

Brigade cfa.vic.gov.au/brigademag



[news.cfa.vic.gov.au](https://twitter.com/news.cfa.vic.gov.au)

If you have any queries about *Brigade* magazine, contact the editor: duncan.russell@cfa.vic.gov.au; 9262 8978

For any social media queries, contact: m.anderson@cfa.vic.gov.au; 9262 8317



facebook.com/cfamembers

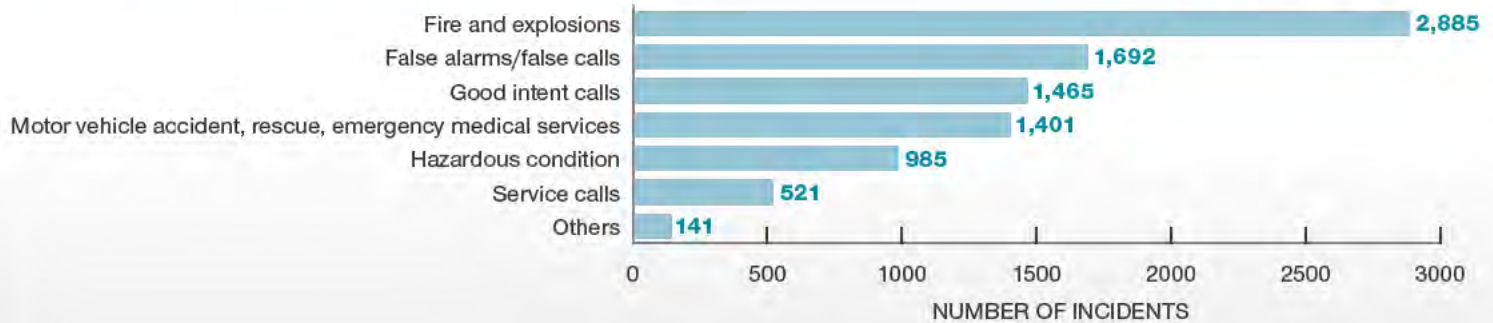


twitter.com/cfa_members

Incident summary

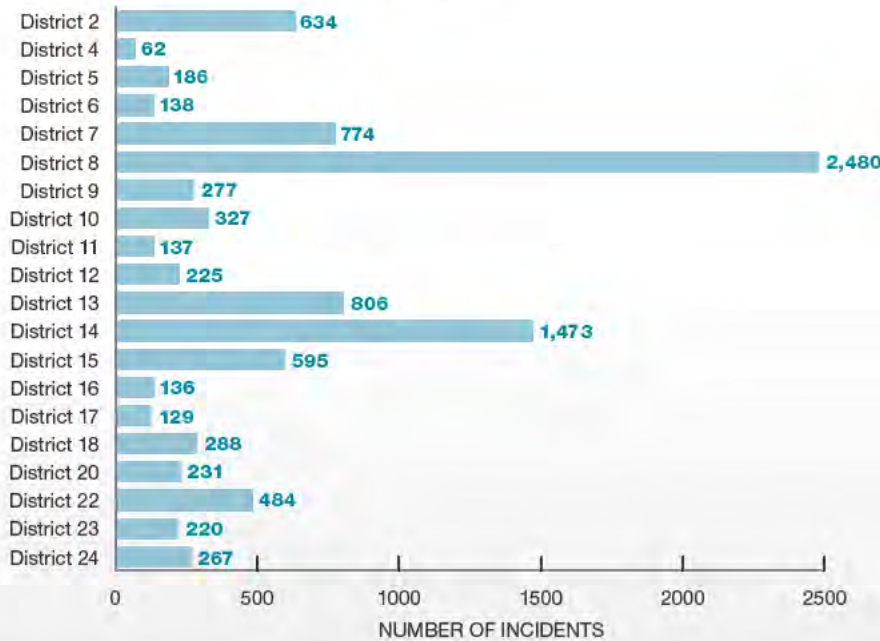
STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY TYPE

1 April – 30 June 2015



STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

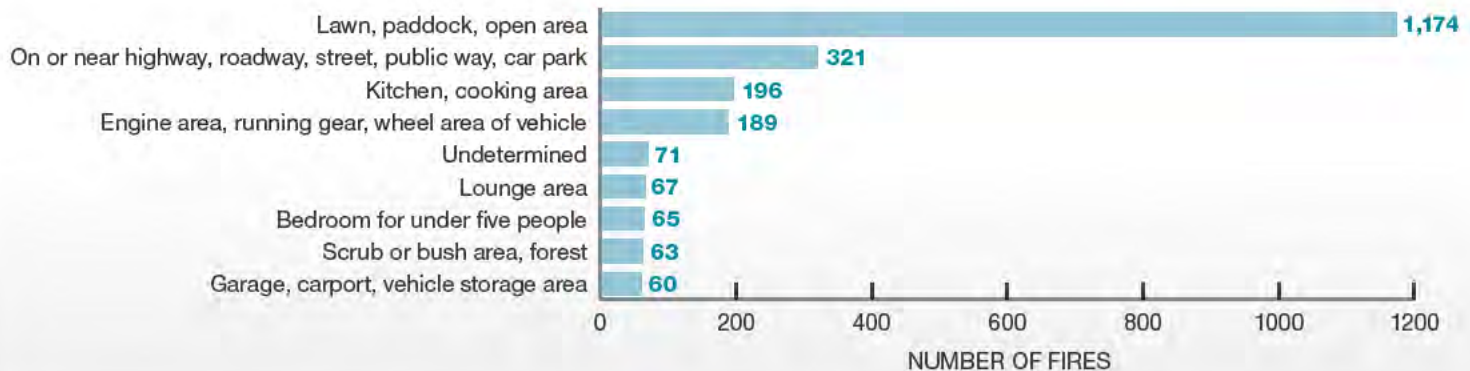
1 April – 30 June 2015



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 April – 30 June 2015



Fire at fire station

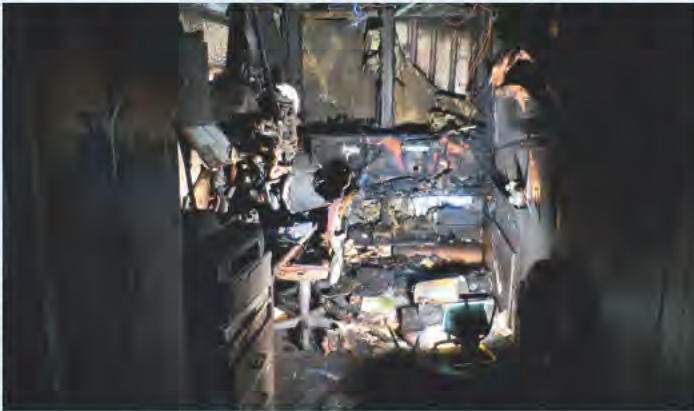


PHOTO: TREVOR VIENET

Clonbinane firefighters were shocked when they read on their pagers of a structure fire at their own fire station.

Some members were alerted by the siren going off without human activation. The siren's cry for help was no doubt caused by the fire which appeared to start in our communications room (pictured).

Firefighter Nick Archer was the first on scene. "There was smoke surrounding the whole building," he said. "I checked if it was safe to open the folding door and then I drove Clonbinane Tanker 1 out on to the driveway to safety. From the tanker I radioed VicFire to raise the alarm."

Shortly afterwards, incident control was set up and power to the station was turned off.

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 12
DATE: 16 June 2015
BRIGADES: Broadford, Kilmore, Wandong



Pumpers, tankers and FCVs from Wandong, Broadford and Kilmore responded to the structure fire. In all there were around 30 firefighters in attendance.

Extensive damage was done to the communications room, loft storage area and the meeting room. The main vehicle bays were not damaged.

It's possible the fire started at around midnight but its spread was hindered because of a lack of air – the door to the communications room was closed.

Despite the fire, Clonbinane brigade remained active and continued to respond to incidents.

This isn't the first time the station has been threatened by fire – a February 2009 fire burnt up to the edge of the road opposite the station. We remain strong, resilient and prepared.

A fire investigation was carried out by Operations Officer Peter Bell, who found there was an electrical fault in a piece of equipment. The photos I took helped the investigator to locate the hot spots and see the position of electrical wiring immediately after we removed the wall cladding at the rear of the station.

A big thank you to all firefighters who arrived to assist in the early hours of a wet Tuesday morning.

STORY TREVOR VIENET, SECRETARY CLONBINANE BRIGADE

Towering inferno



PHOTO: PAUL CARRACHER, WIMMERA MAIL-TIMES

CFA crews worked into the night to extinguish a fire that broke out at a Horsham scrap metal yard.

Workers from Manhari Metals had just left for the day when the fire broke out minutes later.

District 17 Operations Officer Alfred Mason said crews had a busy few hours working to contain the blaze.

"There was a tower of around 500 scrap cars involved," Alfred said.

"Initially there were a lot of explosions in the stack and a lot of flames shooting high up into the air from the exploding cars.

"Crews used a wall of water to cool it down before applying foam. We then used the site's excavators to pull the stack apart and extinguish the blaze piece by piece."

A neighbouring tyre-fitting business was also threatened by the flames, forcing staff to hurriedly empty tyres from its warehouse.

An advice message was issued to Horsham residents because of the volume of smoke lingering over the area. Police closed businesses within a one-kilometre radius of the fire and traffic was diverted from the scene.

The fire was declared under control around 10.30pm and crews remained at the scene overnight to monitor any flare-ups.

STORY ALYSSIA MORISON

INCIDENT: Scrap car fire
DISTRICT: 17
DATE: 29 June 2015
BRIGADES: Horsham, Ararat, Ballarat, Murtoa, Warracknabeal, Dimboola, Natimuk, Jung, Vectis, Wonwondah, Dooen, Green Lake, Laharum



PHOTO: STEPHEN HUGHES

Eight-hour rescue from Buchan cave



PHOTO: GEORDIE AKEROYD

INCIDENT: Confined space rescue

DISTRICT: 11

DATE: 19 July 2015

BRIGADES: Buchan, Dandenong, Lakes Entrance, Morwell, Traralgon, Johnsonville, Maffra



A group of CFA members driving home from a Fireline leadership course was flagged down by a person on the side of the road, who asked them to help a woman who'd fallen down a cave near Buchan in East Gippsland.

At first, the CFA members thought this was an organised exercise as part of their course, but they soon realised it wasn't a drill.

The incident occurred at a private cave off Gelantipy Road just after 1pm. Johnsonville Fire Brigade Captain Rod Baylis was first at the scene and the initial incident controller. He quickly formed a command structure with assistance from other brigade members.

Buchan brigade Captain Peter White arrived soon after and had no hesitation in entering the cave to help the woman.

"I used to work in caves so I've spent a lot of time in them which gave me a good understanding and knowledge of safety aspects," Peter said.

"We were also lucky one of the CFA members in the Fireline course was an off-duty paramedic. He collected as much first-aid gear as he could and entered the cave to assess the patient and make her as comfortable as possible until an ambulance arrived."

The initial assessment of the patient was a broken ankle and possible head and spinal injuries. The woman was trapped about three metres down, below a difficult part of the cave known as 'a squeeze'.

"The opening the crews had to rescue the woman through would've only been about 400mm wide – about the size of the stretcher – so it was a very delicate and difficult rescue," explained Peter.

Several brigades were called to the incident to join the members who'd attended the leadership course from Districts 10 and 11. Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria and SES also took part in the rescue.

"The great thing about the rescue was everyone worked as one – there was no difference between volunteers, career staff and other agencies. I was really impressed," continued Peter.

The Lakes Entrance crew provided better access to the main part of the cave and set up air-monitoring equipment as a precaution.

"Planning the rescue and the set-up took the most time. There was a high-line and a series of ropes used. There was a lot of manpower on scene and everyone was well used," Peter said.

Morwell brigade members took over the rescue operations, building on the work started by the Lakes Entrance rescue crew. When Dandenong brigade members arrived, they blended well into the structure and concentrated their efforts on the area of the patient.

"When it was time to remove the woman from the cave, we wrapped her in a medical air mattress on a spine board which kept her as still as possible," Peter said.

"Getting her through the squeeze was the hardest part; we had to turn her sideways to fit through.

"Photos were taken inside the cave to show the crews up top, giving them a better idea of what they were dealing with.

"The crews outside the cave then formed a haul line to help pull the woman out. We even had to cut down some trees to clear a big enough pathway for this."

Just after 9.30pm, almost eight-and-a half-hours after the incident began, the woman was rescued safely from the cave. She was transported to hospital and later released with a broken ankle.

"The rescue was so unique and a great learning experience for me and for everyone on scene. It was a really fantastic team effort with a good outcome and everyone should feel very proud of what they achieved," Peter said.

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER



PHOTO: COURTESY OF DANDENONG BRIGADE



INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 15

DATE: 15 June 2015

BRIGADES: Buninyong, Mt Buninyong, Ballarat City, Ballarat, Creswick, Bungaree, Sebastopol, Haddon, Hardies Hill, Napoleons-Enfield, Elaine



Couple saved from house fire

An off-duty firefighter played a crucial role in rescuing an unconscious woman from her burning home in the Ballarat suburb of Mount Helen.

CFA crews were called to the Wirreanda Drive house just after 8am and found the two-storey mud brick structure well alight.

CFA District 15 Operations Officer Anthony Pearce said the two occupants were in bed on the second storey when the fire broke out.

"One of their neighbours, who happens to be a CFA volunteer, was instrumental in the rescue effort," Anthony said.

This neighbour was Buninyong brigade member John McLeod. He climbed on to the roof of the home and pulled a woman from the burning house.

"I went up the ladder into the smoke and tried to drag Ruth over to this ladder," said John. "The smoke was far too thick and acrid due to the toxic things burning inside. It was impossible to breathe and I knew no one was going to last much longer in that smoke.

"I came back down the ladder and managed to convince Lachie [Ruth's husband] to start dragging Ruth away from that ladder, closer to the edge of the roof where the smoke wasn't as thick.

"My son sprinted off to get our extension ladder and I sprinted off to get a safety harness from our shed. I positioned our ladder



against the roof on an exaggerated angle so it would be easier to slide Ruth down it. I then went up the ladder with the harness.

"Lachie and I began to attach it to Ruth who was barely breathing. Buninyong crew arrived and I directed them to get a line around to the back of the house to get water on to the smoke so we could breathe. A Ballarat crew member arrived and climbed on the roof to help me.

"We convinced Lachie to climb down and let the ambulance staff treat him. When the harness was on Ruth, I attached a rope to it. I then looped the end of the rope once around the top rung of the ladder so I could control Ruth's descent. We then lifted and lay Ruth against the ladder and slowly lowered her to the ground, where the ambulance guys took over."

After the rescue, the couple was taken to hospital.

Due to the fuel load in the house and issues with water access, it took 19 CFA trucks nearly two hours to control the fire.

Girl rescued in gorge

After a 12-year-old girl fell 10 metres into the gorge at Beechworth and sustained a severe neck injury, Ambulance Victoria called in specialist CFA crews.

Four members of North East Region's Technical Rescue Brigade plus three Mt Beauty brigade members arrived at the scene at the same time.

After confirming the situation with Ambulance Victoria, local police and SES members already on scene, a retrieval plan was worked out and implemented by CFA rope rescue specialists.

SES members helped bring all the rescue equipment to a safe work area to rig up the stretcher and rescue system.

The stretcher crew was lowered to the girl's location, where Ambulance Victoria personnel had readied the girl with a neck brace and secured her on a spine board. After being quickly loaded on to the stretcher, the girl and crew were hauled back to the safe work area by SES.

INCIDENT: Rescue
DISTRICT: 24
DATE: 1 July 2015
BRIGADES: Beechworth, Mt Beauty



The girl's grandmother was waiting near the ambulance and was relieved to see her. She thanked all the emergency services personnel for retrieving her granddaughter from the gorge.

The rescue took a little over two hours.

The local police, Ambulance Victoria, SES and CFA teams all deserve a pat on the back for how well they worked together. Although this rescue wasn't particularly complicated, it was well organised and implemented efficiently.

STORY ROBERT FRASER

Cars crash within metres of each other



PHOTO: BRETT BOATMAN

INCIDENT: Road accident
DISTRICT: 11
DATE: 10 July 2015
BRIGADES: Omeo, Swifts Creek



With the first car ending upside down in a culvert – and a school bus travelling the route during school term – Graham said there was potential for a more devastating outcome.

Three vehicles and nine members from Omeo attended. With no road rescue unit close at hand, both Sam and Dave helped rescue the occupants of the second car through the windscreen, which had popped out, and waited with them until paramedics arrived.

Omeo members closed the road at the accident site, while members of Swifts Creek brigade set up another road closure just outside Omeo.

Meanwhile, a mini-bus bound for Dinner Plain was stopped at the road block and, in a great example of cooperation, was used to take the occupants of the first car to Omeo District Hospital.

Not to let down the couple of people who'd been on the bus bound for the ski slopes, the brigade stepped in and drove them to Mt Hotham. It's another example of how CFA works in remote areas to help people in times of need.

"There's no SES in Omeo and we often arrive before the ambos. We are not a road rescue brigade, but brigades along the Great Alpine Road go to just as many road accidents as fires," said Graham.

An Omeo satellite station was built several months ago at Cobungra and the brigade has raised \$30,000 towards a vehicle to be based there.

STORY AMANDA BOLCH

Omeo volunteers are often first at the scene of vehicle accidents, but in July the occupants of a crashed car turned up at the home of a brigade member, Sam Heesom.

Sam lives about 200 metres from where two single-vehicle road accidents occurred within minutes of each other on the Great Alpine Road at Cobungra.

The five occupants of the first car, which skidded on ice, went over an embankment and ended up on its roof, were able to get out of their car and walk to the house.

Just after they got back to the scene, another car hit the same patch of ice and it too went over the edge and down the embankment.

Another Cobungra resident and member, Dave Butler, radioed through information about the crash scene and the dangerous conditions.

Omeo brigade Captain Graham Symons said the accidents occurred on a section of road that was not known for icy conditions, so no warnings were in place.

"There was about a 150-metre section of road where the cars hit the ice. When we got there it was still 8mm thick, but you can't see it. It looks just like the road," Graham said.

The Chief leaves CFA



Chief Officer Euan Ferguson leaves CFA in November 2015. Euan was appointed to the role following 10 years as Chief Officer for the South Australian Country Fire Service. He has also served as President and Chair of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC).

Euan joined CFA in 1993 after a very successful career in fire and emergency management that first began with the Victorian Forests Commission in Gippsland.

He took over as CFA's Chief Officer in late 2010 and brought a new approach to the role which was needed in the wake of the devastating 2009 fires and the subsequent Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

We asked a range of CFA members to tell us about Euan and we've given their responses below.

As leader of CFA's operational members, Euan has done an outstanding job. During his time as Chief, he has injected an enormous degree of both energy and commitment to this very demanding role. This has included the introduction of important fire management reforms to CFA which have had a profound effect and set the foundations for a better CFA going forward.

He has spent an enormous amount of his personal time to engage directly with many CFA members across the state. This has ensured that his decision-making has been based on first-hand consultation and feedback from the field.

On behalf of the Board and the Executive Leadership Team, we congratulate Euan on his exemplary service as Chief Officer of CFA. We ask you to join us in thanking Euan for his wonderful service to CFA and wish him the very best in the future.

CEO Michael Wootten

Euan came to CFA not long after Black Saturday, a dark and sad time in Victoria's and CFA's history. There were parts of CFA where morale was low and serious questions were being asked from within. One of Euan's immediate priorities was to set about connecting with CFA people, particularly at the heart and soul of our organisation.

His energy and commitment to connecting to the field was there for all to see; an energy that has continued throughout his tenure as Chief Officer. I believe history will judge Euan as a Chief of the people, accepting all invitations to fly the flag of the Chief and that of CFA. His journeys across the state, every available hour, every weekend, have become legendary and exhausting for those of us attempting to support him.

While there are no records to confirm this, I suspect he has visited more brigades, groups, handed over more trucks, presented more medals and opened more stations than any other Chief Officer. He will be a hard act to follow.

DCO Steve Warrington

Thank you Euan for being an outstanding leader. Although I met you only a few times, you were always interested in what was going on, always willing to listen to a new recruit or a seasoned captain. Your manner was appreciated by all. You will always be welcome at our little station and many others around the state.

Robert Bury, Fourth Lieutenant Doreen brigade

Euan has a genuine interest in the volunteers. He's sincere in his approach and he's just 'one of the boys' when in the company of CFA volunteers. Euan and his wife spent an afternoon with the officers of our brigade and was fascinated with the history of Wonthaggi and our brigade's connection with the state coal mine. He took a piece of black coal and put it in his office as a reminder of his visit.

Kim O'Connor, Captain Wonthaggi brigade

Euan brought new organisational approaches to CFA that were required in the wake of the devastating 2009 fires. He made significant changes to the approach to firefighting including better liaison with other firefighting agencies. A major improvement to firefighting was the concept of hitting fires early and hard. The increased and earlier use of aircraft helped limit the spread of many fires. As a member of the District 16 IMT and a firefighter with Ararat brigade, this meant we were leaving fires with a sense of success more often. I'd like to thank Euan for his outstanding leadership.

Peter Baxter, Captain D16 HQ brigade

I met the Chief at an International Women's Day dinner. He chatted to every table of CFA women. Euan asked us if there was anything CFA could do to better support female volunteers. Wildfire pants, I said. It was difficult to go to the bathroom on a fireground when wearing the then-current design with braces. Euan said CFA was designing a new female-friendly type of wildfire pants which would be available soon. As soon as I could, I grabbed a pair of the new pants. Thanks Chief!

Erika Nash, Captain Otway brigade

A man who leads by example.

Rick O'Haire, Captain Glenaladale brigade

Euan came in with a vision at a very difficult time in our history. He helped to rebuild and enhance the morale in CFA and made so many of us proud to serve again. The legacy of a good leader is the development of good leaders. I have seen many people developed at my level under Euan's stewardship and I hope that's something that he recognises and celebrates.

David Harris, District 14 Operations Officer

Euan's willingness to roll up his sleeves and just be one of us is a tribute to his character and leadership. A Chief Officer who carries a rake-hoe in his car (and is prepared to use it) is a real leader. Euan has always made himself available to discuss issues with the rank-and-file members and this led to him being a very successful and highly-respected Chief Officer. He's a very humble and sincere person but, at the same time, is also a very strong and decisive leader who leads by example. He will be sorely missed.

Jim Renkin, Benalla Group Officer

Euan has left some big shoes to fill. I wonder if the next Chief will have the care, compassion and understanding for our business that Euan has displayed.

Fiona Burns, Captain Hillcrest brigade

I first met the Chief when he was an Operations Manager for planning back in the late 90s I think. Euan seemed genuinely interested in listening to our issues and took the time to follow up and get back to the brigade with answers. Since his return to CFA as Chief he has done the same – visited, taken the time to listen, written down any concerns and got back to us with answers. He comes across as a person who genuinely cares.

Henry Barton, Officer in Charge, Warmambool brigade

I remember all our meetings with Euan, especially when he visited our little shed at Trida. He took on our issue with our overweight little 1.4D tankers with gusto and pushed the right buttons in the right places to allow local officers to perform the mods. We now have fully-operational vehicles. He's great at following up issues and always acts in the best interests of volunteers.

Peter King, Captain Trida brigade

His approach, friendliness and leadership are very inspiring to volunteer leaders like myself. His passion for ensuring volunteers are provided with quality leadership training will allow CFA to move into the future with stronger leaders.

Tim McNeilly, Captain Golden Square brigade



CEO

Michael Wootten



BUILDING THE CAPABILITY OF OUR LEADERS

In just a few months' time we will bid farewell to Chief Officer Euan Ferguson who has decided not to renew his contract, which concludes in November. The Board has begun a rigorous recruitment process to find the next Chief Officer.

Euan has earned great respect in a demanding role through a combination of professionalism, accountability and optimism. As I continue to meet with brigades across the state, it's clear these are qualities that our members at every level also aim for.

It comes as no surprise then that, once again, our staff and volunteers were among those recognised in the annual Queen's Birthday Honours List – see page 11. Seven past and present members received honours for their exemplary service to the community. It's a formal acknowledgement of the qualities that have already seen them receive so much respect and admiration from their peers. I know attention is not something any of them actively seek. These people are natural leaders, spurred by a will to do right by their community.

It's a mindset and culture we want to promote. The annual CFA Plan, which has just been adopted for 2015-16, focuses on five key areas, including leadership. We will build the capability of our current and future leaders so they can deliver our organisational priorities.

CFA can't remain a strong, motivated organisation without strong leadership. Over the next year we'll focus on improving command capability by offering professional development to a wide array of current leaders from brigade level up.

We'll establish a grassroots Volunteer Leadership and Management Development Program, and the capability of CFA's Senior Leadership Team is being strengthened through the inaugural Enabling Leadership Program. More than 60 people from senior

management positions have been selected to take part in the 12-month course.

Strong leadership has an important influence on our organisational outcomes, so it makes sense that we invest in our future leaders as well as current management. La Trobe University is helping us nurture them through the Aspire Early Admission Program. Junior members completing Year 12 can now receive priority access to tertiary study, with the university recognising their community service as a significant entry requirement. In turn, the university supports our Junior members in continuing their important volunteer work.

We want to foster leadership qualities in our next generation of volunteer and career firefighters. A future Chief Officer could easily be among them.

GOVERNMENT FISKVILLE INQUIRY

The Parliamentary inquiry into CFA's Fiskville Training College has handed down its interim report after hearing five days of evidence.

Members of the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee made three recommendations. The common theme was a desire for greater transparency about environmental and health-related issues.

CFA supports these recommendations. Any insight from the Inquiry's report that helps protect our people will be included in the wide range of initiatives already underway. The safety and wellbeing of our members must be our number one priority.

The inquiry resumed hearing evidence on 27 July and its final report is due on 1 December. I can assure you that CFA management will face the Inquiry's outcomes, knowing that it has a responsibility to its members - past, present and future.

As part of Fiskville's closure, the Firefighters' Memorial will be moved. A team is currently meeting families and brigades who've lost members to gather their thoughts on where the new memorial should be located and what it should look like. You can participate by completing a survey at <http://cfa.engagementhq.com/cfa-have-your-say>.

Online induction now live

CFA has introduced an online induction program for all new members.

Volunteers and staff will benefit from a more flexible approach, that lets them undertake induction at a time and location that suits them. The online induction program should take less than an hour to complete.

Induction ensures new members learn about CFA's culture, vision and values. It also gives important information about how the organisation operates. A sound induction makes new members welcome and helps them successfully contribute and feel like they belong.

Topics covered in the program include CFA's structure, history, key policies and the range of important services we provide to the Victorian community. It also has information for new employees at CFA. The program is interactive to ensure the material is easy to remember.

We plan to update the induction regularly when there are changes in CFA policy and in response to feedback.

The online induction program doesn't replace local induction conducted by brigade management teams, districts or regions.

You can view the online induction at cfa.vic.gov.au/induction. Even if you've been a member for some time, we encourage you to have a look at the program to see how CFA has evolved as an organisation.

Brigades, districts and regions have been sent more information about the induction program.

If you have any questions or want to give feedback about the online induction please email volunteerism@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY CHRISTOPHER STILL

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

The 2015 Queen's Birthday Honours List gives national and formal recognition to Australians who've made a significant difference to their communities. Seven CFA members were honoured this year. Denis Purcell, William Sadler and Peter Robbins received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) and Keith Pakenham, Russell Gray, Steven Barling and Frank Coulson received the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM).

DENIS PURCELL

Denis Purcell's community service and commitment to emergency response organisations includes 33 years with SES and eight with CFA, where he worked as a communications officer with Winiam and District Fire Brigade. Since 2004, Denis has served as the principal emergency response duty officer for SES's Bacchus Marsh unit.

"This award reflects on all volunteers, not just myself. I hope it highlights that volunteering is a good and worthwhile thing to do," Denis said.

WILLIAM SADLER

A volunteer with more than 50 years' service, William Sadler, commonly known as Frank, recognised from a young age the importance of a fire brigade in a small rural area. "You have to be a member, it's vital. We have a very good unit here, with very good people who do a terrific job," he said.

At the age of 22, Frank joined Swanpool Fire Brigade. In those days firefighting equipment included a manual pump on the back of a truck. "You had to push back and forwards to pump the water," he said.

PETER ROBBINS

As well as being a member of Meerlieu Fire Brigade for 58 years, for the past 25 years Peter Robbins and his wife have been running a farm-stay holiday home for the families of children with a life-threatening illness. Annie's Cottage (pictured below) is let to families free of charge, through the children's charity Very Special Kids. Five years ago Annie's Cottage was destroyed by fire, but Peter "rushed outside, hooked the pump up, and managed to save a small building off to the side of the cottage – a playroom for the kids". The Robbins rebuilt the cottage.



KEITH PAKENHAM

CFA staff member and volunteer Keith Pakenham has been part of the CFA family for more than 30 years. He became a volunteer firefighter in 1984

at Noble Park brigade and captain in 1999. Keith always loved taking photos at incidents and in 2007 he became a full-time employee at CFA as a photographer.

Keith is known to many in CFA because of the lasting impression he leaves. He has almost limitless knowledge and love of CFA and always has a fascinating CFA story to tell.

RUSSELL GRAY

Russell Gray has dedicated the past 43 years to helping fellow CFA members. Russell received his award partly for his efforts to improve CFA equipment and techniques. He's known for his uncompromising thoroughness in testing new equipment to ensure it's tough and reliable enough to let firefighters do their job while keeping them safe.

Russell has also done a lot of work mentoring CFA members – something he's always enjoyed. "You see them blossom. They're raw. Then you see them go through their career and they get better and better," he said.

STEVEN BARLING

Volunteer Steven Barling is one of those rare individuals who's handy with operational strategy as well as a fire hose. The Churchill brigade captain and Merton group officer has worked tirelessly preparing his teams for large incidents.

"I want us to be the best we can be, and part of that is planning and making sure we have all levels of command in place," Steven said.

Steven has 20 years of service in officer roles, and experience has taught him that understanding people and leading by example are at the heart of leadership. "I wouldn't expect people to do something I wouldn't do myself," he said.

FRANK COULSON

Frank Coulson has been a CFA member for 53 years, including 20 years' experience as a leader. Frank said he joined CFA because he saw a gap in training in the early days. Ash Wednesday brought it home again to Frank, as he saw a need for higher skills training.

Frank held the position of group officer of the Heywood Group and represented CFA on the multi-agency Emergency Management Planning Committee for Portland. He's currently captain of District 4 Headquarters brigade, where his team provides administrative and logistical support during incidents.



FRANK COULSON



KEITH PAKENHAM



RUSSELL GRAY



STEVEN BARLING

PHOTO: CATHERINE COULSON

PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIN

PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

PHOTO: CHRIS G'ALLAGHER

CHIEF OFFICER www.cfa.vic.gov.au/chiefblog

Euan Ferguson

After five years as Chief Officer, I will be stepping down in November. Kristin and I will be climbing mountains and chasing our dreams. Kristin has been a constant and visible supporter in my travels and I owe her (and our sons Ben, Jack and Sam) a huge vote of thanks. Our 'fire service family' has endured many absences, sacrifices, interruptions and distractions. Their love and support has been unwavering.

There is insufficient space here to thank the many individuals, groups and teams within and outside CFA with whom I have worked closely.

CFA is about people. We exist to prepare and serve the community in times of need. We must never lose sight of that purpose. The defining feature of CFA is the spirit of volunteering. Volunteerism is so very precious. It is the lifeblood that courses through the veins of the organisation. Our volunteers measure their worth not by riches and possessions, but by hours of service, sacrifice and everyday acts of compassion and duty.

I thank the women and men who do the front line work of CFA: managing risks, empowering the community and responding to calls for help. You are special people and you inspire me. I see, with pride, the potential of our youth. I see CFA's leadership programs growing young women and men: our volunteers, career and administrative staff. I hope that we have prepared you well for the future.

We are on a pathway to increase diversity and inclusiveness. Diversity makes us stronger and better able to serve the community.

CFA continues to promote the philosophy of distributed leadership through Mission Command. The rule book is getting too big. It's getting too hard to interpret. The philosophy of Mission Command empowers local leaders who work within well-understood principles and within a clearly-established intent to use their initiative and innovation to solve local problems.

I believe that, before you can lead people, you first have to walk among them. You need to be in their presence and to know them. Meeting our people, especially our front line people, has given me a perspective and understanding of the real feeling that pervades our organisation.

Anything I have achieved has been through the will and actions of others. I hope my efforts have contributed to a better CFA and a safer community.

I leave you with three enduring philosophies: **take care of yourselves and each other; strive to be the very best you can be**, every day and in every way; and **stay positive**. The future is full of challenges. We should view it through the lens of youth, optimism and hope. I want you to be proud of CFA, proud of your service and confident to stride boldly into the unknown. It has been my great privilege and an honour to serve as your Chief Officer. Until we meet again, on some dusty, smoky fireground, thank you and thank you!

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South West Region



Bob Barry

The South West Region continues to be busy in all areas of our business and service delivery. The last quarter has seen us close off a very successful year with a significant number of achievements. The new business planning arrangements for regions lead us into the new fiscal year with an emphasis on the Chief Officer's priorities and his Capability Statement.

Our attention will now shift to readiness and preparedness of the region for the coming fire season. Preliminary predictions for the season are indicating the possibility of a busy period. Being prepared at all levels will be our focus.

Well done to all our staff and volunteers across the region for your work. Here are two of many achievements I would like to share with you.

Geocaching: Have you heard of Geocaching? If not, think about a scavenger hunt for travellers. It's a popular worldwide game of hide-and-seek that gives people in the area of community safety the opportunity to engage 24/7 with travellers as well as locals. CFA has trialled 29 caches hidden in extreme and high-risk areas across Districts 4 and 5 as a way of delivering CFA bushfire safety messages.

Participants read the fire safety message associated with each CFA cache before seeking the elusive 'treasure'. One of the first CFA caches has been in place for about 10 months and has been found by more than 90 participants. Players have been very appreciative of the bushfire messaging. It has been particularly interesting to include messaging around whether participants should be in high-risk areas on particular days.

District seminar for BMTs: Many brigade members elected to brigade management team (BMT) roles don't have previous experience in team management or brigade officer roles, so a BMT professional development day was conducted by the District 7 leadership team. This brought together experienced BMT members, newly-elected members and District 7 staff. The workshop sessions gave guidance, support and confidence to new officers and key BMT personnel to ensure they perform their future roles successfully.

The training day was developed by District 7's volunteerism coordinator with input from the district operations manager, operations officers, and the administration, training and community safety teams. BMT members were given the latest information and systems, reporting requirements, role descriptions, and coaching and mentoring opportunities.

The day began by focusing on the importance of CFA's mission, teamwork, communication and working together as one to enhance their BMTs. Following this, breakout workshops focused on each of the key officer roles.

The day ended with all members reflecting on the importance of resilient communities. It was a successful training day and we hope to roll out the initiative across the region. We thank the Headquarters brigade for catering for 120 participants.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North East Region



Garry Cook

Over the past couple of months, some great work has started in district planning committees (DPCs) across North East Region to closely review our planning structures and critique ourselves on how forward thinking we are. We want to challenge ourselves by asking whether we've become too routine at this very important level of our organisation.

I see this as a critical piece of work, and I commend the DPCs that have undertaken this activity for their willingness to challenge the norm. The analysis of our demographic profiles in some areas and statistical data of activity are enough to generate the discussion, but we need to do more.

The CFA Board has set long-term outcomes and we now have a strategic framework consisting of five organisational strategies that provide the direction towards achieving these. But this framework will only be of value if we, in turn, put these strategies into action at the grassroots level of CFA.

Doing the 'same old same old' is no longer the only option. The Service Delivery Strategy is targeted at this level and is underpinned by the theme 'helping local people solve local problems'. We must look at everything we do and how we go about it. We must modernise our approach and thinking to find better ways to deliver our services across the variety of Victorian communities we serve. We will continue to create an environment where good thoughts or ideas can be put forward and we must keep our minds and hearts open to the challenges that lie ahead.

In the past few weeks, we have seen 60 recruit career firefighters join our ranks across the state following their intense 19-week program at the Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre (VEMTC) at Craigieburn. Several of these recruits started their journey as volunteer members of our brigades, a great breeding ground for people who pursue firefighting as a career. Also, a number of the career firefighters from stations across the north-east have been involved in the training of these recruits and their efforts have delivered a terrific outcome. I was fortunate to be present for the graduation ceremony for recruit course 1/2015 in July, and witnessed the outstanding display of skills developed during the course, clearly led by some of our finest people.

As is normal around now, we start to consider the summer fire season and its potential. Without any specific analysis, what is clear and known already is there will be a summer, there will be dry fuel and we will need to be ready.

Stay safe.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South East Region



Trevor Owen

At the heart of CFA is a strong and rich history of volunteers and career staff working together to protect the Victorian community. Our volunteers and career staff deliver services built on a truly integrated model which provides Victoria with its firepower. CFA continues to be one of the strongest examples of integration in the world.

It is pleasing to see so many of our career staff and volunteers across South East Region working together in support of one another in the interests of the communities we serve and protect. Whether our services are volunteered or contributed through our career, we are one CFA.

The strong bond and healthy relationships that exist between our volunteers and career staff require commitment and understanding. We have some fantastic leaders among our staff and volunteers in our integrated fire brigades and across our districts. They work hard to maintain and strengthen the integrated culture that has sustained us well. Thank you to those members both past and present who make our integrated culture a success. We need to work together as one to protect the very fabric that makes our wonderful organisation not only unique, but hugely admired by the community we serve.

The health and safety of our members must remain our first priority, which is why this leads our organisational values. I have witnessed our Wellbeing Program achieve great outcomes for members and their families, particularly during difficult and challenging times. As with Ash Wednesday and Black Friday in the past, the impacts of the 2009 fires are still being felt and will be for many years to come. Let's make sure we look out for one another and ask the question R U OK? Remember CFA has a range of services available to help.

Our new CFA values (safety, together, adaptive, integrity, respect) require all members to live them. We all want the right culture in CFA and we know we can improve by having a better understanding of what is appropriate behaviour. Calling out those who aren't living our agreed values is important and I ask you to find the courage to speak up if a member is not living our CFA values.

As I write this column in the middle of a winter snap, many of our brigade members have been busy attending structure fires, car accidents, rope rescues and hazardous materials events in the rain and snow, but summer is just around the corner.

Brigades, groups and district pre-summer skills maintenance, briefings and the many other preparedness activities should be well planned for the next few months. The best teams are those prepared for anything. How well are you and your brigade, group and district prepared for what could be a long and hot summer?

Twitter: @CFASouthEastACO

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North West Region



Mike Wassing

Two of CFA's values are safety and respect. There are many ways these values apply in CFA, but one that is sometimes overlooked is 'our' (read 'your') responsibility to take a stand against violence.

We all want an environment and workplace that's safe, respectful and supportive. Sadly, violence is prevalent in our communities, especially against women. One woman a week is killed by a former or current partner and one in three women has experienced physical violence. The terrible statistics increase at times of disaster.

As a community-based fire and emergency management organisation, we have a responsibility to stop attitudes and behaviours that support violence in our workplace and community.

As I have shared with you before, North West Region has established a Violence Prevention Advisory Group to provide leadership to develop cultures of non-violence and gender equity (see page 20). We have now forged some excellent relationships with women's health organisations and other state and local government representatives. In addition to our continued support of White Ribbon and locally-led initiatives, we are conducting a self-assessment of current prevention activities with the aim to generate ideas on how we can take action.

We are also conducting bystander training across the region, through partnership with Women's Health Loddon Mallee which funded the workshops.

Changing tack, I was recently asked about the role of a local command facility (LCF). The term LCF has been used in recent years to describe a local CFA static command facility, more often than not a group HQ. These locations are fitted with standard information, communications and technology systems including internet access, copiers and displays to enable local incident management. The role of an LCF depends on the incident management structure being used. If the incident is Level 2 and there's a request to have a local control established, the LCF function is control and so is called the incident control centre. (It's important to note that Level 2 fires/incidents can be run from the pre-determined Level 3 ICCs if required and dependent on readiness arrangements and capacity.)

If the incident is Level 3 and we need a static division command centre, the LCF function is division command and called 'location' division command. A third option, and most often applied, is for Level 1 incidents where it may be running communications and logistics in support of the incident controller on the fireground. In this case, it is referred to as the 'location' group HQ. (This role may also apply during major incidents when it is not required as a division command.)

Ultimately, the LCF is a facility; its function is relevant to the incident structure and consistent with the flexibility established under our AIIMS incident control system.

ACTING ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER WEST REGION



Phillip Beasley

I attended the CFA-SES Community Engagement and Hazard Awareness State Forum on the first weekend in August and it was very pleasing to see a number of familiar faces from brigades in West Region. This forum has grown in popularity over the past five years from an initial 70 brigades being represented to now more than 200 brigades. This year, CFA partnered with SES and it was fantastic to see both agencies represented among the 500 attendees.

The keynote speaker for the forum was Dan Neely, the manager of community resilience with the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO) in New Zealand. Dan spoke of the need to work to open the lines of communication with our communities so that we understand what the community needs before, during and after an emergency. This contrasts with our perhaps more traditional response of telling the community what to do.

Dan talked of "creating the white space" to both engage with the community at a range of different events and to allow Wellington residents to confidently make suggestions about how emergency services might support the community's own response to an event.

I encourage you to check WREMO's website (getprepared.org.nz/wremo) and Facebook page ([facebook.com/wremonz](https://www.facebook.com/wremonz)) and consider how we might take up some of their ideas.

Preparedness

Now this might sound a little strange given the cold, showery and frosty weather we have been getting over the past month or two, but it's time to turn our efforts to prepare for the upcoming bushfire season.

Fires are already occurring in the Blue Mountains and northern NSW, indicating perhaps an early start to the season. At a local level, DELWP Horsham together with Parks Victoria at Halls Gap recently conducted a heath burn on the Halls Gap-Dunkeld Road. It burnt well which indicates the readiness of dry fuels to burn even in winter.

Predictions are that we can expect lower-than-average rain in spring, which means that the already-diminished dam water stocks are not likely to get any better. So it's time to make sure your kit is ready to go, and that pre-season training and exercising is planned and conducted.

I recently attended the District 17 VFBV meeting and spoke of the need for our staff, VFBV and peer support members to monitor the welfare of our members during the coming months. Together, we will support our members with programs and initiatives to make sure we look after our mates.

More about our values

In June, CFA adopted five organisational values – safety, respect, integrity, together and adaptive – behaviours we live by and hold each other to.

In the last edition of *Brigade* magazine, we looked at safety and together. Here, we look at the remaining values and how they're being demonstrated in CFA.

Integrity is about making transparent and timely decisions, acting openly and fairly and holding each other to account. All members are expected to act with integrity in everything they say and do, in dealings with each other, our stakeholders or in our communities.

An example of an action at a corporate level that enhances our integrity, was the CEO's recent decision to put together blog posts about what's discussed at ELT and CFA Board meetings. This was in response to feedback that the evidence behind decisions made at executive level was not always clear.

Keeping members informed about what's happening in Board and ELT meetings is part of the CEO's "commitment to make decision-making in CFA more transparent".

Below are two more examples of our values in action.

STORY AMANDA BOLCH



PHOTO: RUTH MCGOWAN

ADAPTIVE APPROACH TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Building community resilience is an example of how CFA takes an adaptive approach to service delivery. Empowering communities with the tools and knowledge to help prevent fires and increase their level of preparedness is a key focus for CFA.

CFA Member Engagement Project Manager Jamie Devenish said community resilience was a "priority rather than a program."

"We often use it to describe an outcome of all the prevention and preparedness work done – if communities are better prepared, when the day comes, they will be in a better position to make informed decisions and deal with the issues," he said.

Jamie said the first step was working with broader CFA membership so prevention and preparedness are considered as important as fighting a fire.

"We had a big win recently with the formalisation of every brigade electing a community safety coordinator on to their brigade management team. It will take time but, culturally, that's a great step. This is largely in addition to 400 active community engagers already working in more than 200 of CFA's busiest brigades in urban areas and regional centres."

Brigades run a range of localised programs and there's no doubt that innovative local engagement campaigns can have massive local cut-through.

"But adaptability means having multiple delivery options to deliver our services, so we also have a suite of corporate community education programs to keep prevention and preparedness at top of mind," said Jamie.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

RESPECT FOR PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

District 14 Peer Coordinator Neville Goddard explained why CFA's voluntary Peer Support Program is a perfect example of respect.

"Respect is something that works best when it's mutual – and mutual respect is one of the foundations on which the Peer Support Program is based. We work from a basis of unconditional positive regard for the people we work with and, in my experience, receive respect and appreciation in return."

The program began among firefighters involved in Ash Wednesday, who recognised the need for emotional and psychological support after a traumatic incident. There are currently more than 150 peers.

Neville has been involved with the program for more than 12 years. He became a coordinator in December 2008 – just two months before the 2009 fires.

"The Peer Support Program encourages empowerment on an individual and brigade basis, to help people who are typically resilient self-starters to recapture that for themselves," Neville said. Neville often tells brigade members that "you are each other's first and best support."

"Commonly in sessions with brigades, members will come out and say very supportive and affirming things to each other. The openness of communication encouraged during peer sessions encourages mutual respect and empathy."

Neville said, he saw enormous benefits of the Peer Support Program – immediately following incidents or personal difficulties in people's lives, and as part of cultural change in CFA.



Wycheproof members during a brigade project planning session

Helping brigades remain sustainable

The Brigade Sustainability Pilot (BSP) team works collaboratively to strengthen brigades. Over the past year, the team has discovered some pretty surprising factors that impact on brigade viability (the immediate challenges they face) and sustainability (long-term challenges).

Most of the brigades the BSP team has worked with face multiple challenges and, like a row of dominoes, one challenge will trigger another, then another and so on. But by working directly with brigades and drilling down to identify what's causing them to struggle, we can help stop the domino effect and develop innovative solutions.

COMMON PROBLEMS

A big challenge for many brigades is daytime turnout. The usual solution adopted by brigades is to recruit, recruit, recruit. However, many brigades have a pool of members who have simply stopped participating for one reason or another, and BSP teams have worked to help brigade leaders understand why this has happened, and then develop strategies to re-engage members. This has led to improved daytime turnout and also helped to create a more dynamic and positive atmosphere in the brigades. It has also empowered brigade leaders to think more creatively about how they understand and resolve other challenges.

Another major discovery was related to cultural change and the need to work with brigades to shift their perspective on cultural factors that impact their service delivery. When we talk about brigade culture, we mean shared social values, beliefs and behaviours, and how the community perceives the brigade and the brigade perceives the community.

A widely-used description is that CFA's culture is white, Anglo and male. If this is how brigades see themselves, it's more than likely that the community sees them in this way too. The BSP team has been helping brigades adopt strategies that slightly shift their culture so that non-Anglo, non-white and female community members see a place inside their local brigade.

A diversity of influences in our society creates a cultural environment that's lively, energised, innovative and outward looking. Imagine if we could help every brigade diversify their membership to create these kinds of environments. In most cases, that would lead to sustainable volunteerism.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE

There's also a great deal of research about volunteering which helps us understand how people volunteer and the relationships between volunteerism and sustainable brigades. If we want to move with the times, we need to understand this new dynamic and remain flexible as an organisation. People are increasingly seeking volunteer opportunities that offer flexibility – perhaps short-term or sporadic involvement, or even task-specific opportunities.

This is far from the traditional brigade model, where volunteers have been expected to remain members for a long time and be very committed. The challenge for CFA is to embrace emerging volunteering models so we become an organisation of choice for future volunteers. The flow-on effects can be positive in terms of building new networks and raising awareness about flexible options within communities. The new Membership Classification has proved effective in helping brigades adopt more innovative approaches to the roles and structures in their brigades, and improve the way they deliver services to the community.

But what can brigades do when their communities face stagnation, when their membership base is ageing, or they've reached membership saturation? In rural areas, the BSP team has found that brigades decline for three main reasons: an ageing population, farm amalgamation and declining employment opportunities.

This means we have to discuss other ways to deliver a fire service and empower brigades to adapt to their situation. The BSP team has been helping brigades through this process and brigades are leading some significant changes such as crew support from larger brigades, or adopting the cooperative model detailed in the *Management Structures* booklet.

There is nothing like good old fashioned face-to-face support that's tailored and practical to suit local needs. Predicting where we'll be and what our communities will look like in the decades to come is a complex challenge. It's all about working together to support our people and seek solutions to help us plan and prepare to face these challenges head on.

See pages 28 to 30 for stories about small brigades having some successes.

STORY ALI MARTIN AND DEB SALVAGNO

Better communication as blackspots removed

Having to rely on transportable repeaters to cover local command channel radio communication blackspots is almost a thing of the past, now that the final transmitter has been installed at Mt Tara in District 11.

The Radio Blackspots Program began soon after the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission which recommended that CFA “develop a program for identifying and responding to blackspots in radio coverage”.

With more than \$6 million in funding, CFA identified gaps in radio coverage and carried out the works at 78 sites around Victoria.

Information and Communications Technology Services’ Lee Kirkby said the result was better communications during incident management for interoperability, divisional and sector command at large scale incidents and at local command level.

“By putting in place more permanent radio communications we’ve enhanced radio coverage, which improves firefighter safety, command communications and intelligence gathering,” said Lee. “Incident control information can be relayed quickly and accurately, which improves planning capability.”

In fact, between CFA’s new and upgraded sites and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning’s radio repeater sites, Lee said there was now “significant coverage of both private and public land across Victoria” when it comes to emergency radio communication.

The work included building 52 new VHF radio base station repeater sites, upgrading 26 interim CFA dispatch radio sites and upgrading four transportable repeaters.

Another positive outcome of the project was the upgrade of all communications sites from analogue to digital technology and the opportunity to make other enhancements such as the provision of a UHF CB radio transmitter for the local community at Licola in District 10.

Following the completion of the last radio base repeater station, a process of continual review is now in place to ensure other blackspots identified in the future are remedied.

STORY AMANDA BOLCH



EMR being extended

The State Government announced in the recent budget that the Emergency Medical Response (EMR) Program would be expanded to a further 28 CFA brigades across Victoria.

EMR brigades carry a first-aid kit, oxygen kit, cervical collars, and a defibrillator on their primary vehicle. They respond to ambulance ‘Priority 0’ events where a patient is in cardiac arrest or is likely to go into cardiac arrest. The earlier cardiac arrest patients can be defibrillated, the more likely there will be a positive outcome.

MFB has been providing EMR since 1997. In 2007, a CFA EMR pilot program began at Berwick, Edithvale, Mornington, South Morang and Whittlesea. The trial was expanded in 2011 to include Cranbourne, Dandenong, Hallam, Shepparton and Springvale.

During the pilot program, EMR training has been delivered to CFA members by Ambulance Victoria paramedics. Their knowledge

and experience in responding to Priority 0 events has proven invaluable to course participants.

EMR responders are trained to recognise and treat a range of medical emergencies including cardiac arrest, drug overdose, choking, anaphylaxis, stroke, asthma and other respiratory illnesses. They are also trained in specific methods for paediatric and elderly patients.

The training program also includes methods for communicating with family members and bystanders at EMR incidents. There’s a significant focus on welfare of EMR responders during and after EMR call-outs.

Extending the delivery of EMR will add further value to the already important role CFA plays in the community.

STORY GRAEME SYMONS



PHOTO: DUNCAN RUSSELL

CFA Toastmasters Club wants more members

The Toastmasters Club was founded to give CFA members in District 13 the opportunity to improve their communication and leadership skills.

As well as developing listening and speaking skills, the club gives you an opportunity to socialise with a great mix of members including new recruits, brigade captains and full-time employees.

Sometimes CFA members are asked to stand up and present themselves at a moment's notice. Joining this club is the ideal opportunity to help you develop the skills and confidence needed to get your message across without embarrassment.

Members can give speeches on anything. Recent ones have been about holidays, roast chicken and the frustration of love.

"The intent of Toastmasters is to build on the public speaking skills and confidence of members," said Chief Officer Euan Ferguson.

"CFA members often have to speak in brigade or other CFA forums and sometimes in public forums. Confident communication is a key aspect of leadership.

"Getting your message across, clearly, succinctly, but with the passion to move people's hearts and souls, is a rare skill that we can all strive to improve."

Brigade magazine Editor Duncan Russell attended a recent meeting. "This club is a fantastic place to improve your public speaking skills in a fun and extremely supportive environment," said Duncan.

The club meets at Wandin Fire Station. For more information contact Evan Thomas on 8739 4016 or email e.thomas@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY ALLEN KOOCHEW

CFA shines at emergency conference

The latest emergency management knowledge was recently showcased at Australia's largest all-hazards natural disaster conference, with CFA well represented on the program.

CFA's Danielle Wright, Ali Martin, Tanya Di Michele and Gwynne Brennan all gave valuable insights at the annual Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC and AFAC conference, held in Adelaide in the first week of September.

On the first day, Danielle provided the conference with an overview of CFA's improvements to its grassland curing assessments. Ali, Tanya and Gwynne all gave talks on the third day. Ali outlined the Brigade Sustainability Pilot approach, reflecting that communities and the way people volunteer is changing, and with this there are new and innovative ways for brigades to operate.

Tanya discussed the range of programs and services that have been implemented in the past few years to support members' mental health and wellbeing. These include a wellbeing program, revised Member Assistance Program, a range of resources including an online toolkit, mental health videos and brigade booklet, and the development of a marketing and communication plan which focuses on promoting a structured approach to managing mental health.

She explained that this approach has been essential in enhancing CFA's response to psychological hazards in the organisation. She went on to say, though, that response and recovery alone won't ensure that members operate in a psychologically healthy and safe environment. The view that psychological hazards just happen in workplaces is no longer acceptable. Prevention and preparation must become a key part of decision-making to create a safe and healthy work environment for all CFA members.

CFA's approach to fire safety in schools was highlighted by Gwynne. Using selected schools in high bushfire risk areas, a pilot program was carried out in 2014 on teacher-driven fire safety education. Project evaluation showed a significant increase in both teacher and student participation in fire-safety education and emergency planning.

Information about the 100 talks that took place over the three days, is available at bnhrc.com.au and afac.com.au/conference.

STORY NATHAN MADDOCK



Nominator's Guide

The new publication *CFA Honours and Awards Nominator's Guide*, which complements the *CFA Honours and Awards Manual* is being distributed to all group secretaries and district offices.

The guide gives information about how to determine the most appropriate award and the importance of aligning the written nomination of a person to the criteria for the selected award. It also gives suggestions on how to write the content of your nomination, so that the nominee has the best opportunity to be considered for special recognition.

Stepping up to the BMT



PHOTO: ELIZABETH WALLS-GILL

When the Chiltern Fire Brigade captain asked Will Vale to nominate for the new community safety coordinator role on the brigade's management team (BMT), he agreed to put up his hand even though it meant getting involved with something new.

Since health issues have prevented him from getting on a truck, Will (pictured far left with Chiltern brigade members) has carried out various communications and incident management roles, and become increasingly aware of the need for better safety awareness in the area. Chiltern is a semi-rural area and the brigade also supports surrounding towns.

"The risk is huge," Will said. "We've got a beautiful national park around the outskirts of Chiltern, and our biggest fear is that if a fire like the one we had in the 1950s came through again, it would really devastate the town."

Will believes there's only so much that can be achieved by government campaigns or slogans and that individual conversations – whether informally at the shops or as part of a program – are key to making real change happen.

"For me the main aspects of community safety are saying 'you are at risk' and 'these are the things you can do'. Sometimes that will be part of a conversation down at the shops."

Almost one year on, this Chiltern brigade member remains a firm advocate for the introduction of the dedicated BMT role, but reckons only time will tell if brigades will accept the new role and run with it.

"When it comes to the crux of it, we are volunteers so it's certainly a question on people's minds – is this just another thing we've got to do?"

North East Region Community Education Coordinator Robert Brown argues the role is more about lifting the prominence of the work

people were already doing. He also believes the new community safety coordinator role takes a load off the captain.

"Captains have traditionally been the point of contact for the community or the district for anything community-safety related, so this is about not having things always falling on them," Robert said.

"If the brigade hasn't got somebody who can be dedicated to the role, then that's OK. It helps us to identify where – as a region or district – we need to put more time and effort to offer more support."

Robert said brigades often 'do' community safety without realising it.

"There's a perception that it's all about going out of your way to organise something, but often it's more about knowing how to answer questions or direct people when they approach you.

"We recognise that local brigades are the ones that know their community. This is not something we can do effectively from HQ."

Because those coming into the community safety coordinator role won't have the benefit of picking up where someone else left off, workshops are being offered across North East Region for newly-elected members.

Meanwhile, Will is considering the next steps for brigade activities following the success of a doorknock they ran last year using resources provided by the Property Advice Visit Service, a statewide program.

"As a brigade, we hadn't previously visited some of those nooks and crannies where people lived and we were quite surprised by some of the access issues and how risky those homes were," he said of the doorknock.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NORTH WEST REGION



Left to right: Chris Maloney, Leah Walter, Mike Wassing, Kirsten Dudink, Debra Salvagno and Craig Houlahan

Tackling domestic violence in NW Region

Mike Wassing admits he's not an expert on violence prevention but, as a father of three girls and a man shocked by the statistics that one in three women has experienced physical violence, he couldn't sit back and say it was someone else's responsibility.

North West Region's assistant chief officer has thrown his support behind violence prevention and, in particular, violence against women.

"We have a responsibility to be aware of what's occurring in our communities. In my role in CFA I can support prevention and promote awareness through 245 brigades, 11,500 volunteers and 350 staff," Mike said.

Mike heads the NWR Violence Prevention Advisory Group. His involvement in Bendigo's White Ribbon march in November, and as an ambassador for Bendigo's *Violence Prevention – It's Everybody's Business* conference, led to the group's formation. Its mission is to develop a culture of non-violence and support gender equality.

Other group members include representatives from Women's Health Loddon Mallee (WHLM) and Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

To help arm members with information on how to become involved, Mike is working with WHLM to deliver 'bystander training' to all district headquarters. It will also be piloted with a couple of brigades. This training will equip members with the skills to take a stand against attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence – both in the community and within CFA.

"Our new CFA values highlight that safety is our number one priority – every one of us has the right to be safe at work, and that includes safety from violence or threatening behaviour," Mike said.

"I want all members to speak up against attitudes or behaviours they see that are disrespectful and contribute to gender inequality."

STORY AMANDA BOLCH

IGA and Ritchies' valued support

IGA and Ritchies have been strong supporters of CFA for more than 15 years and this year is proving to be no exception.

Since the IGA partnership began in 2000, Victorian IGA stores have donated more than \$3 million to CFA through the Community Chest program.

The program has helped many brigades make a real difference in the community with funds being used to buy additional equipment and improve member training.

In recent years, a change to the program has meant IGA stores can now nominate the local brigade or other charities that will benefit from Community Chest funding, with any remaining money going to CFA's central Public Fund as a single donation.

This year, IGA Community Chest funding will be used to pay for four Fireline leadership courses from August to October. The courses were offered to new brigade captains and officers and to IGA managers and potential leaders from local stores.

The course promotes the development of skills, behaviours and cultural attitudes that help leaders make sound command decisions, communicate effectively and prepare teams. We're thankful to IGA for funding these vital programs.

Ritchies supports CFA through its Community Benefit Card program which has delivered more than \$2.5 million to brigades since 1993.

In November, Ritchies will be running a promotion with CFA across all Victorian stores to promote summer fire preparedness and the Ritchies' Community Benefit Card program.

Brigades that receive money from the program have been asked to take part in the promotion by having a brigade display or fundraiser BBQ during a weekend in November at their local store. It's also an opportunity to thank the local community for supporting the program.

Ritchies' stores across Victoria will also display CFA posters and other material to promote fire safety messages and CFA will be promoting the events on Facebook and the CFA News and Media website. Ritchies will feature events on its website and in catalogues.

Brigades that receive benefits from the program should already have been notified of the promotion by email and registered their interest but, if you'd like to know more, contact the CFA marketing coordinator on 9262 8314 or email cfapromotions@cfa.vic.gov.au.

You can also help your local brigade by shopping at a local Ritchies' store and nominating the brigade to receive funding through the free Community Benefit Card program. For more information visit ritchies.com.au/community-benefit-card.

STORY NANCY THOMPSON

Fire Awareness Awards

The 2015 Fire Awareness Awards are open to anyone who has implemented a project or program over the past two years that helped reduce the effect of fire in Victoria. Long-term supporter of the awards, RACV Insurance, is offering a \$10,000 Award for Excellence to the most outstanding application. Submit your application to fireawarenessawards.com.au by 30 September.

Connectors of community fill Creswick



PHOTOS: BLAIR BELLEMIN

Community connections was the theme at the fifth annual Community Engagement and Hazard Awareness State Forum held in Creswick at the beginning of August.

For the first time at this event, CFA joined forces with SES, with 500 members from the two agencies taking part over the two-day forum. In arguably the largest congregation of brigades in CFA history, 205 CFA brigades were represented by almost 400 CFA members with an interest in emergency prevention and preparedness.

Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley opened the event with a big-picture presentation on the importance of local connections, imploring attendees to partner and build local relationships.

Keynote presenter Dan Neely from Wellington in New Zealand then shifted gears in the afternoon of day one. His entertaining presentation 'What emergency managers can learn from Vanilla Ice' left the representatives from both agencies with a different perspective on the lyrics to classic hip-hop song *Ice Ice Baby*.

The Q&A panel discussion on Sunday morning was as popular as ever, with Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and others fielding probing questions from the floor on the future of community education and fire prevention. Regional breakouts then followed in the afternoon to give attendees the opportunity to network with other like-minded members from across their region before the ever-passionate Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington closed the event.



Breakout sessions occurred throughout the weekend, giving attendees the opportunity to select the sessions that interested them the most. These included successful grassroots presentations from members of Noble Park, Arthurs Creek, Moe South and Upwey brigades, in addition to Benalla, Moorabbin and Footscray SES units.

The State Forum is led by the Member Engagement Volunteer Reference Group and aims to bring together the members who take on the community safety or engagement roles at local brigades and SES units. It's a great opportunity to showcase successful initiatives and share the best approaches to help members better engage with their communities. It also supports the changes to brigade and member classification which has formalised a community safety coordinator on each brigade management team.

The State Forum has proven to be a pivotal part of CFA's community engagement endeavours.

STORY JAMIE DEVENISH

The Pledge - win your brigade \$1000

Brigades are being offered the opportunity to win one of three \$1,000 cash prizes this spring simply by getting members of their community to take the online Fire Safety Pledge.

The Pledge aims to increase public awareness of the risk of fires and offers the community some specific actions they can take to reduce their risk or better prepare.

When the pledger makes their commitment online, they will be asked to enter a local CFA brigade they would like to support. At the end

of the competition, which runs from October to December 2015, the brigade with the most number of pledges will receive the cash prizes.

Given that CFA brigades serve communities of different sizes, there will be three prize categories so that brigades with small communities aren't disadvantaged: the overall highest number of pledges; pledges per capita; and a 'tiny town' award.

As an incentive to encourage members of the public to complete the short process,

one pledger will also take home a \$200 Bunnings voucher. The pledge will offer both summer fire safety actions such as 'I pledge to check the Fire Danger Rating each day' and home fire safety actions such as 'I pledge to test my smoke alarm regularly'. Get involved at thefiresafetypledge.com.au from mid-October.

STORY JAMIE DEVENISH

Attack on a train



Firefighters were called to reports of a chemical smell on a train that was affecting hundreds of passengers.

The counterterrorism exercise in late May was held in Ballarat and Geelong. Around 100 CFA members from across the Ballarat area attended the incident at V/Line's Ballarat East depot and a similar number attended the Geelong West depot.

CFA District 8 Station Officer James Wong said the aim of the exercise was to better prepare brigades to respond to major hazmat incidents.

"Firefighters can often be first responders to incidents of this nature so we need to be well prepared," he said.

"It's important to stress that this exercise was not in response to any specific terrorism threat in Victoria. This was simply about being prepared for any emergency and this exercise gave firefighters a chance to practise their hazmat and decontamination response."

The exercise was also an opportunity to assess and improve Victoria's preparedness plans and emergency response procedures.

"There was a lot to be learned from the exercise. It highlighted the importance of all agencies working together seamlessly in all environments and all types of emergencies," James said.

"These types of emergencies can have a significant impact on the community, so it's important we consider their needs in terms of preparedness, prevention, response and recovery."

As well as CFA, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Emergency Management Victoria, the State Government and V/Line were involved in the exercise.

James said the exercise also highlighted the need for timely, accurate and relevant public information, especially with the widespread use of social media and online reporting.

"An incident of this nature would go viral on social media, so it's important for our crews to not only learn to deal with the situation on the ground, but also provide up-to-date information to the community," he said.

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMUN

Fuel tanker awareness training

Kialla and District and Mooroopna brigades recently held a training evening to increase safety awareness about the features and facilities on a modern fuel tanker. The Central Goulburn Group also invited members from other groups to attend.

The session was led by Kialla and District Fire Brigade Captain David Thompson, who's the driver of a tanker operated by Petrogas Regional.

David explained the safety features, the position of important information and items which may help brigades at the scene. The session focused on how to respond and ensure that a disabled vehicle remains, or is made, safe before the arrival of an expert recovery team.

Clearly, not all vehicles have all the features of the new tanker assessed in this training session, but tankers like this travel the roads every week, and newer vehicles will gradually replace older ones.

It was very pleasing to have around 80 members attending from most brigades in the Central Goulburn Group, and they gained a lot of useful information.

Thanks to Wayne Martin from Petrogas Regional for letting us look at the vehicle, David Thompson for leading the session, and a special



thanks to Asem and the team from People Supporting People for the food and coffee that made a very cold night much more pleasant.

STORY IAN MARTIN

PHOTO: RAY STOCKWELL



PHOTO: GEORGINA HILL

Woolies raises \$15,000 for brigades

CFA brigades in Victoria's north will receive new cooling equipment, communications gear, portable lighting systems and other items courtesy of fundraising by Woolworths.

Forty-nine stores across Victoria raised around \$15,000 for CFA through sausage sizzles and other activities and presented a cheque to CFA North East Region Assistant Chief Officer Garry Cook in mid-June.

Garry thanked Woolworths and said the funds were a boon for smaller rural brigades.

"Many of our rural brigades have been affected by drought, which is a big emerging issue," Garry said. "It's just great to see a large corporation like Woolworths raising money to put back into some of our smaller fire brigades in the more rural parts of the state."

Money from the Woolworths fundraiser will be split between CFA's North West and North East regions.

Sixty brigades in CFA's North West Region, including Bendigo, Kerang and Charlton, will receive portable cooling equipment to help firefighters recover from heat stress.

Garry said the capabilities of brigades in North East Region would also be aided by new purchases.

"Some of the money will be used to buy portable and 'bag' radios. These are powerful units that can be moved from car to car.

"Put one in a vehicle and you've got a mobile command vehicle set up in five minutes."

Woolworths Wallan store Manager Jennifer Marlow said, "Serving our local communities is important to us and CFA does great work in our local area. We thank our customers for their support of this great cause."

STORY GEORGINA HILL

State Control Centre welcomes visitors

As part of Public Sector Week, Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) together with CFA, MFB, SES and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning organised two State Control Centre (SCC) tours in late June to show how the emergency services manage incidents.

The SCC is an important base that's run by EMV, and enables emergency services to work together to coordinate, lead and organise initiatives while supporting communities.

Both sessions were very popular with people from various organisations including the Department of Education, Victoria Police and the Environmental Protection Authority.

Each session started with presentations about how the SCC works and how the unit collects vital information during emergencies and informs the community.

MFB Communications Adviser Meg Rayner, CFA Campaign Marketing Adviser Erin Bulmer (pictured below on the right) and SES Manager Emergency Management Communications Stefan Delatovic then spoke about community safety campaigns and the importance of community engagement. They emphasised the importance of shared responsibility between the community and the agencies in planning, preparing for, and responding to emergencies.

The audience was then split up into small groups and taken on a guided tour of the SCC's sections to get a better understanding of the centre's work.

STORY CASSIE SNEIKUS



PHOTO: SASKIA VAN BEVER

Learning from incidents

Learning through case studies

A case study is an explanatory story based on a real-life incident that looks at what happened and why it happened. The aim is for people to learn from the case study so they improve their decision making in time-critical situations.

DOCKLANDS HIGH-RISE FIRE

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

On 25 November 2014 at 2.24am, MFB crews responded to an exchange call for a reported multi-storey apartment fire in Latrobe St, Docklands in Melbourne's CBD. When crews arrived at the scene at 2.29am, they saw that the fire had spread to include around six levels above the room of origin, which was on the sixth floor. By 2.35am the fire had reached the roof of the building, which was above the 21st floor.

The rapid, vertical spread of the fire has been attributed to the external cladding of the building, which is being reviewed by a number of organisations. The fire was started by a cigarette butt placed in a plastic container on the balcony of an apartment and it travelled vertically to each floor, penetrating a number of apartments.

The apartment tenancies in the building included a large number of student residences, with some two-bedroom apartments containing up to eight students. Fuel loads within some apartments were excessive, with makeshift partitions and additional bedding.

Due to the fire travel within the building, the emergency warning and intercom system (EWIS) was compromised on some of the fire-affected levels, which meant firefighters had to evacuate residents at every level. More than 400 residents were safely evacuated from the building and taken to Etihad Stadium because it was unsafe to re-enter the building.

It was reported that the building's sprinkler system operated well above its design criteria, which helped the 120 firefighters on scene to contain the fire. Electricians isolated the power to the building, but this stopped the operation of the pumps to the sprinklers and hydrants, so the power to these pumps was reinstated. Only power that was not required to operate the fire safety systems was shut off.

At the height of the firefight there were 22 firefighting vehicles on scene, as well as two ladder platforms and four specialist vehicles. The fire took around 30 minutes to bring under control. Incident control was established using ALLMS ICS structure and an emergency management team was established on site with Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, SES, Melbourne City Council, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Red Cross.

MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS IN AREAS COVERED BY CFA

Typically, the term 'high-rise' is used to describe buildings greater than 25 metres high and is based on the *National Construction Code* requirements for fire safety. In terms of building safety requirements, these buildings generally include fire safety systems such as pressurised stairways, sprinkler systems, fire separation and EWIS systems. Although CFA doesn't have a large number of these buildings in its jurisdiction,



PHOTO: WAYNE TAYLOR/FAIRFAX SYNDICATION

it does have some residential buildings up to 15 storeys, with an effective height of around 46 metres, and a number of similarly-sized commercial buildings.

The majority of multi-storey buildings within CFA areas are less than 25 metres in height. According to the *National Construction Code*, buildings less than 25 metres effective height (seven or eight storeys) don't require the same level of fire safety systems. It's likely there will be no sprinkler system or air-handling devices (which force smoke into certain areas) to help fire management in these buildings. But seven or eight-storey buildings, which are common in regional cities, holiday resorts and alpine areas, can house a large number of residents.



PHOTO: WAYNE TAYLOR/FAIRFAX SYNDICATION

Residents are escorted in and out of their apartments to collect belongings

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

MFB identified several lessons from the Docklands fire which CFA members can apply to their own areas.

Fit-for-purpose building materials The installation of fit-for-purpose and approved building materials ensures the robustness of fire safety design in building construction. There is currently no practical method to predict full-scale fire performance from small-scale tests for the broad range of exterior wall systems commonly used. Building surveyors, architects, developers and designers should pay careful consideration to the external wall construction and all associated cladding materials.

Intercom warning system A failure or absence of a building occupant warning system will delay the self-evacuation of residents in a building. The evacuation of a large residential building requires the ongoing management of a large number of evacuees well past the initial evacuation. A safe location will need to be found for those evacuated in consultation with the municipality, DHHS and Ambulance Victoria. A significant number of resources are needed to do this.

Isolating the power The isolation of electrical services in large residential buildings may hamper ongoing firefighting efforts and, when the fire-affected building is fully isolated, it will take significant time to reinstate. As this could affect the fire services' ability to fight a fire, it might be worth isolating only the fire-affected areas. Local building management can help to safely isolate parts of a building.

Accumulation of combustible material Building management needs to implement and enforce a good housekeeping policy to prevent the accumulation and storage of combustibles and other items on balconies, ensuring there is minimal material to fuel a fire.

Fire extinguishers Building management should be encouraged to ensure that all installed fire extinguishers are unobstructed, clearly identified and correctly maintained. Sometimes goods and materials are stored in fire safety equipment enclosures,

such as hose reel cupboards. This should be regularly monitored and prevented.

Smoke alarms Building occupants need to be made aware of the importance of smoke alarms in providing early detection of a fire. By removing the backup battery or covering the alarm to prevent false alarms, they are putting themselves and other occupants at greater risk of serious injury or death.

Preparedness Understanding the risk and having a well-developed plan is vital when working with high-rise buildings. A strong relationship with the building owner will help with this preparedness. Knowledge of the fire safety systems in the building, the intended use of the building versus the actual use and the fuel load, will help brigades understand how a fire will behave in the building. The intended emergency evacuation process is also important, because occupants may or may not behave as you'd predict. The Docklands building occupants conducted a fire evacuation drill in the days before the fire.

Access Understanding the layout and access to the building will help with an integrated initial attack of the fire. It's vital there is access for aerial vehicles, which provide maximum reach and potential rescue capability as well as using boost points to provide required pressure for fire service mains to operate. Understanding the egress options and emergency assembly points may give the incident controller an opportunity to limit the convergence of other emergency services and evacuees.

Resources needed The rapid escalation and understanding of the numbers and types of resources needed to deal with a complex residential fire will help protect the community. These types of fires also result in a significant incident management workload. For this reason, it's essential that sufficient incident management resources are available to support the incident controller. The opportunity to conduct both practical and table-top exercises with all emergency services and support agencies will help to manage any incident that occurs.

NUMURKAH TELEPHONE EXCHANGE FIRE

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

At 4.34am on 20 April 2015, Numurkah Fire Brigade responded to an alarm at the Numurkah telephone exchange. The brigade's pumper, field command vehicle and tanker went to the incident, with automatic support from Wunghnu brigade's tanker. At the scene, there was no visible sign of fire, despite the fire indicator panel showing multiple detectors operating. On further inspection, smoke was visible in the building and the incident controller requested the Shepparton aerial pumper because of the potential for the fire to escalate.

The members of the brigade had good knowledge of the building because it was one of their alarm-monitored sites and they had inspected it a number of times.

A fire was found in the room containing batteries. Thanks to their local knowledge, the brigade knew that isolating the power would have led the generators and battery supplies to continue to power the Telstra equipment. The brigade entered the room wearing breathing apparatus and carrying a dry chemical powder extinguisher and a hose line, and found the battery bank was on fire. Using two quick blasts from the dry chem, they were able to knock down the main fire. The facility's CO₂ extinguishers, which were already in the building, were used to extinguish the remaining fire above the battery banks.

The brigade used positive pressure ventilation to remove the acrid black smoke being produced by the burning electrical insulation. Gas detection was used to ensure the CO₂ gases had been removed from the building.

Although the Telstra equipment in the room was significantly damaged, the fire was contained to the room of origin and the remaining equipment in the building was still operable. The damage to the exchange affected around 1,800 of the 2,400 landlines in the local area, but it had the potential to cause outages to a much larger area. The brigade was unaware of the full extent of the outage at the time of the incident.

Back at the station, brigade members contacted their remaining alarmed premises and high-risk facilities to alert them to alternate brigade activation methods if required.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Knowing the risks in a facility The brigade had intimate knowledge of the layout of the building, hazards risks within the facility, alternate power supplies and the location of fire protection systems. While brigade pre-plans are an extremely effective tool to record and share information, they are enhanced by local members' practical knowledge and comprehensive understanding of the risks within a facility.

Gaining entry quickly The brigade had keys to the premises and was able to quickly gain entry to begin a size up. This ensured that the fire was contained quickly before travelling throughout the building.

Specialist fire extinguishers Knowing the location of the facility's specialist fire extinguishers helped initial responders to contain and extinguish the fire.

Additional resources The early response of additional resources after initial size up ensured there was no delay in specialist support arriving.

Working with the community The brigade members' connections with the community meant they could help the community recover, and put in place redundancy plans until they could confirm the extent of the network outages.

VicFire The day shift fire service communications controller at VicFire also ensured redundancy plans were considered across the wider call-taking and dispatch of emergency services in the area.

CONCLUSION

This fire could have impacted the local community and broader telecommunication networks more significantly if it wasn't for the



effective initial attack from brigades. Understanding the risk played a significant part in limiting the impact on the community. The fire and subsequent damage was contained to only one part of the facility, and this ensured that the communications providers were able to reinstate all communication networks within two days.

The degree of connection between the brigade and the community had a marked influence on the outcome of this event.



PHOTO: KAY HAWKINS

CHRISTMAS HILLS FIRE-SCAPE

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

In mid March 2014, members of Christmas Hills Fire Brigade and Christmas Hills Landcare Group met with CFA members responsible for a new CFA initiative called Fire-Scape.

Fire-Scape helps residents plan strategically for fire, improves local fire knowledge and improves the sustainable use of land. It enables fire management agencies and community organisations, such as Landcare and other land managers to work together to consider fire not only as a threat to properties but also as a way to improve the quality of native vegetation.

A trial demonstration planned burn at Christmas Hills was successfully carried out in April 2015 by Christmas Hills brigade, Landcare, Nillumbik Shire and Bend of Islands Conservation Association. The program was also trialled at Fish Creek in South Gippsland with six properties totalling 15 hectares, and in Barongarook near Colac (200 hectares).

The program comprises two workshops and a demonstration burn. The first workshop addresses topics such as developing a fire management plan in cooperation with your neighbours, risk management and bushfire protection, fire behaviour and an introduction to fire ecology. During this session a field visit is organised and a community burn strategy developed. In the second workshop the group begins site preparation and hazard assessment, learns about the local fire history and completes the community burn strategy. The final component is the planned burn, usually in autumn, and carried out by the local fire brigade with workshop participants attending.

The demonstration burn was carried out on a bush property. It showed community members what's involved in planning and carrying out a burn, and they were encouraged to develop a community fire management plan at a local scale. Although small, the burn was the culmination of a number of community consultations over 12 months. The burn was conducted by Christmas Hills Fire Brigade and the burn controller was a CFA staff member. The burn process was explained to participating residents by Parks Victoria and Landcare.

All three Christmas Hills brigade trucks attended, along with around 20 firefighters. The site was unbounded on three sides, so considerable effort was directed at constructing and patrolling

a mineral earth break around the site and, later on, blacking out the perimeter with the least site disturbance (see more on the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade Facebook page).

The next step in the process is for the site to be monitored by Landcare in order to document the ecological outcomes of the burn. This burn-off marks the completion of the Fire-Scape pilot program, and the brigade is keen to apply the experience it has gained to more planned burning in the brigade's area.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Planning The Victorian Fire Risk Register was incorporated in the planning stage to ensure that the property selected reflected risk management priorities. The burn and Fire-Scape process was a resounding success mainly due to the amount of planning and preparation by the landowner, committee and the brigade. The small size of the burn and conditions allowed the group to finish at around 4.30pm, with just a couple of people monitoring the next day. On the other hand, it was labour intensive and a lot of work for those involved for a relatively small burn. The planning process could be streamlined.

Education The burn commentators provided an excellent overview of what was occurring, which provided insight for the onlookers and ensured the activity was educational. The implementation of a prescribed burning program that gives a balanced view of asset protection and ecological perspectives has been extremely beneficial for the community, particularly when planning the burn and deciding what would be burnt to ensure habitats could continue to survive after the burn.

Landowners Future burns are dependent on the availability of brigades and landowners. To ensure momentum for the program, landowners who've already expressed interest through an initial survey will be contacted to establish their interest in future burns. The brigade intends to develop a couple of pre-planned burns to take advantage of any suitable burn windows and reduce any delay in prescribed burning in the future.

Cross-tenure burns Christmas Hills Fire Brigade is enthusiastic about trialling cross-tenure burns with other agencies in the area so that a larger burn can be tried where agency personnel can support follow-up burn patrolling and weeding.

Quiet achievers

Many remote brigades in small communities struggle to remain viable. Here are some examples of brigades that have managed to turn things around. All stories by Leith Hillard.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MYRTLEFORD TIMES

Increasing resilience in Mudgegong

After eight years, Andrew Cross (pictured) has moved from being Mudgegong captain to Ovens Valley group officer. Like so many CFA leaders, his testing time was February 2009 when the 33,000-hectare Beechworth-Mudgegong complex hit the township under a north-westerly and "took us apart" leading to the death of two locals.

"There was nothing we could do," said Andrew. "We had to sit on the periphery. There were huge stock losses and 20 homes gone, affecting nine little communities."

From an experience of powerlessness, those nine communities have built resilience and togetherness. Significant funds received from the Red Cross's Victorian Bushfire Appeal were used to form the Into Our Hands Foundation. That money was then channelled into major projects with at least one member from each community involved in decision-making.

"We had \$217,000 to put 55,000-litre water tanks and bores into seven communities lacking static water and out in the landscape where we had good access," continued Andrew. "We've now got a half-million-litre capacity in strategic locations."

"We wanted to protect remnant trees and are also replanting. It's landscape design for the future with the brigade taking an advocacy role. The emphasis is on beautifying but not creating a fire hazard, with no eucalypts on access and egress roads."

A memorial quilting project assembled numerous quilt squares (pictured) sewn by people of all ages to illustrate in thread that the communities are not alone. Finally, a community-strengthening project has provided amenities for women and first-aid facilities at the Dederang Recreation Reserve.



PHOTO: TREVOR SMITH/CINDY LUCAS

Meanwhile, leftover funds are gathering interest for additional community projects in the long term. In 2014, 19 projects were funded to the tune of \$123,748. Some of this money supplemented a VESEP grant and funded Mudgegong brigade's new training/meeting room.

There are now also five UHF radio hubs in houses across the district with a rollcall every Wednesday in summer.

"We now have contact with just about everyone in the valley," said Andrew. "If it's a bad day, people can let us know if they're leaving."

The fire brigades have thrived in the fire's wake.

"We live in a fire-affected community and everyone should be involved whether it's radios, logistics or planning," said Andrew. "Twenty people have gone through Minimum Skills in our brigade since 2009. We're trying different things all the time in training. I call it the non-blinkered approach."

"The Bogong and Ovens Valley groups have trained people for the local command facility who weren't previously in brigades and they're now part of our summer fire response."

"If you're prepared, you're halfway on the way to being resilient. People now know what's going on and because they know they're more ready to bounce back."

"People in the bush share a lot of common interests such as native wildlife and vegetation. Now we've all met people we didn't know before and there are a lot more people rowing the boat in the same direction."

Tarrington re-engages its members

The once rural brigade of Tarrington is fast becoming a mini suburb of Hamilton, but when Shane Palmer became captain two years ago numbers were stagnant.

"It was the same people on the truck every time," said Shane, "and we wanted to spread the load. We understand that people get busy. The brigade is quiet with about eight to 10 incidents a year and people forget."

The brigade management team (BMT) and Brigade Sustainability Project looked at the membership of 50 – who had moved away; who was now retired. The BMT then rang all members as part of a re-engagement plan, asking whether the person still wanted to be involved and, if so, whether they wanted to be operational or work behind the scenes. The BMT also drafted a letter thanking all members for their time and commitment.

"About 70 per cent of members re-engaged following the ring-around," said Shane. "We followed up with more training including a structure fire refresher. An MVA [motor vehicle accident] exercise is coming up and we visit Penshurst training ground twice a year on top of the annual draughting and burnover exercises.

"We've also had eight new members, mostly in their 30s, qualify in Min Skills in the last 18 months. Some of them came up through Juniors 15 years ago and they've come back. We have the whole gamut."

Running the District 5 champs both last year and this year boosted the brigade's funds and gave those dormant members a chance to reactivate.

"I'd say get out there at local cultural and community events and have a presence," continued Shane. "Keep your members' interest.

"We're all together as a brigade now. It's 'us' and 'we'."



PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

Glenmaggie brigade finds new recruits

With a population of 523 (to be exact) and an influx of up to 6,000 lakeside holiday makers in summer, Glenmaggie Fire Brigade faces the familiar challenge of weekday turnout. It's a struggle that had them suspended between the threatened closure of their brigade and a community made startlingly aware of bushfire risk by the 2013 Aberfeldy fire which roared through the township.

"The fire caught people off guard and stirred up emotions good and bad," said Secretary Peter Dymond. "At the same time, the brigade was in danger of becoming a satellite station. Residents at a 2014 bushfire awareness meeting were told, 'Help out or we close' and they came on board 100 per cent committed."

While a recent graduation of five firefighters in the brigade and 14 in the Thomson Group in Minimum Skills hasn't yet solved weekday turnout, things are moving in the right direction.

Consider Simone Bradley-Smith who innocently turned up to a Fire Ready meeting and is now an operational firefighter soon to be licensed to drive the truck.

"I thought I'd join and do behind the scenes, but then I liked the practical side and can help out mid-week," she said.

"New recruits have lowered the average age of our membership," continued Peter, "but we're lacking experience. Four members have given in excess of 200 years of service combined, then we have a bulk of enthusiastic people like me who haven't been in the brigade long who are improving our skills.

"We're getting members through First Aid and Low Structure, training in Heyfield with the group and planning for strike team deployment.

"I'd encourage any brigade going through recruitment issues to work it through with their BASO and the Brigade Sustainability team."

Glenmaggie members man the fire station in daylight hours during a Total Fire Ban (TFB) with Peter describing the combination of a TFB and campers as "eerie". Fortunately, a good relationship with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning in Heyfield means 22 project firefighters and a helicopter in summer strengthens local response.



PHOTO: SHANE PALMER



Charlton raises its profile



PHOTO: COURTESY OF CRAIG WALSH

No one expected the one-in-200-year flood that hit Charlton in 2011 to return with full force a few months later. Touch wood, fire brigade members who worked alongside the local football club, Rotary and Lions to rebuild the community will never again see such a deluge.

In the same spirit of renewal, the brigade with 12 operational members is recruiting. One aspect of its campaign has been to hang posters in local shop windows with profiles of current members.

"We include a quote about what each person enjoys about the brigade," said Second Lieutenant Michelle Ryan. "It gets you recognised and we hope it also makes us more approachable. We'd like to get some young ones from college, even if we only have them for a year before uni."

"Being in the brigade has given me so much confidence within myself and it could do the same for them."

"We're also looking at re-engaging some drifting members with a family day barbecue. It's a chance for a casual chat about the different ways they might be able to contribute and reinvest their time."

All suggestions made by members to generate local interest and educate the community are written on a board and given a time frame: what can they work on now; what can they complete within a year. The brigade will also stir up interest by appearing at this year's local agricultural show, boosted by two mobile training props.

"At last year's show we had kids shooting barrel targets with the hoses," said Captain Craig Walsh, "and this year we'll put on a show with the props. We've also built a burn table and there's a replica kitchen in the planning stages."

Benayeo's significant turnaround

While Benayeo Fire Brigade is a member of the Apsley Group, it's also an unofficial member of the South Australia Country Fire Service's Naracoorte Group.

"We're backup for them and vice versa and happy to be so," said Captain David Sambell who's been in the position for three years. "Fires don't know to stop at a border."

"They have different equipment which they're happy to demonstrate and we carry their fittings on our tanker and communicate on their channel."

"About twice a year we'll have a shared exercise between the groups where we build up friendships. They have big dealings in hazmat and rescue and we're able to draw on their skill base."

Benayeo is strengthening its own skill base with seven locals under 20 years of age recently completing Minimum Skills. For a brigade with a 95 per cent farmer base, 15 operational members and about 20 incidents in a bad year, it's a significant turnaround.

"A few of them joined and I think the rest wanted to be in on the action too," continued David.

"Once a month we have a whole-of-community barbecue at the local hall which adjoins our station. It's a good place to have a chat and I think that social aspect introduced them to the idea of the fire brigade."

"We have a campfire going and the CFA members head off and have a meeting for an hour or so while everyone else stays on and socialises."

"These young ones will expand our core group of four or five who always turn out and give some people who want to wind back the chance to do just that."



PHOTO: COURTESY OF BENAYEO BRIGADE

Benayeo brigade members David Sambell, Travis Langford, Hamish Kester and Tom Sambell

Brigades helping brigades

After completing Section 29 inspections and sitting on foam drums while meeting with some brigades, I decided I wanted to make a difference to the rural brigades in District 4.

Having come from a background of working with brigades in thriving communities with ample opportunities to raise funds, it was a real eye opener for me to then work with rural brigades where fundraising was extremely difficult.

As their BASO, I thought I could improve some of the basics, such as providing chairs and tables or getting them a barbecue to make the station a more sociable and comfortable place.

Maroondah Group Officer Ken Reed and I set up a partnership arrangement with the brigades in Maroondah Group. The group was quick to get on board and started offering numerous items that might be of use to improve member comfort in rural brigades. I contacted the rural brigades in District 4 and put together a wish list of items: chairs, tables, coat lockers, barbecues and fridges.

We're now delivering items and those brigades who've received items can see the positive effect it will have on the brigade.

"The items that have been donated to the Mount Richmond [Gorae West] satellite station will encourage future training," said Gorae West Captain Henry Compton. "It will benefit the whole Mount Richmond community."



PHOTO: WILL JOHNSTON

I would love to see this kind of partnership extend to other brigades across the state. If your brigade is updating any equipment, please consider rural brigades which might be able to use your unwanted items.

STORY WILL JOHNSTON, BASO IN DISTRICT 13

PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD



Coming in loud and clear

While Peter Busch was born deaf, this experienced Glenaladale firefighter knows that a roaring bushfire leaves everyone on the fireground hard of hearing and gesturing wildly to get their messages across.

As a CFA member for 36 years, Peter lives the safety-first message. When he saw photos of two NSW Rural Fire Service members wearing stickers and patches saying, "I'm deaf," he was keen to use this same shorthand.

"I let Captain Rick O'Haire know and he ordered them straight away," said Peter.

"People who are deaf can do anything: there's no barrier. I really enjoy firefighting and everyone here knows me. If we're at a fire and they need to get my attention they wave, pull the hose or grab my jacket and I lip-read. It's never been a problem although I wish I had one more eye at the back of my head.

"The patch and stickers will help CFA or SES people at a scene who don't know me, then we can get back to the job. They also make me feel safer."

One thing Peter did hear loud and clear – along with every other local – was the wake-up call that was the 2014 Mt Ray fire which came close to his farm and burnt out the property of another brigade member.

"Before the fire we were a struggling brigade," continued Peter. "There'd been no major local incidents and people were very complacent, but the fire woke us up. Now we're more prepared and brigade numbers have just about doubled. It's been a huge boost to morale and really brought the community together.

"I think my new stickers and patch just go to show that we're communicating better than ever."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Tyson Poole, Bonnie Doon Fire Brigade District 23

faces of
CFA



PHOTO: MARK POOLE

What is your involvement with CFA?

I did Minimum Skills at the end of 2013 and at the moment I'm a firefighter.

Why did you join?

Well, the fire station is about 10 metres from my house. It has a siren and it does work! Now they've fully renovated and it doesn't go off at night but you still hear it during the day.

My dad [Mark Poole] has been in the brigade for 10 years and if there's an incident he's always the first at the shed. He opens it up and gets the truck out then mans the shed and writes down all the fire and crew details on our whiteboard.

My friend Brodie joined the brigade the year before me. Everyone I knew in Bonnie Doon was in it and I knew it would be fun.

I was interested in mechanical things anyway and I know how trucks work. That makes me useful and [Captain Stuart Evans] Stuey says it's helpful that I'm so mechanical.

What was the first incident you attended?

There was a really big grassfire in summer along the Midland Highway. It was started by an angle grinder and I couldn't believe someone was using it in long grass in a paddock.

What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

Probably one of the biggest and most out of control was near Strathbogie Forest. The helicopters were water bombing and there were lots of trucks there when we stopped for dinner. We were also at the Kancoona bushfire until about midnight keeping the fence line wet.

After turning out to an incident, what meal do you crave?

A good old chicken parma.

What CFA training have you got the most out of?

Minimum Skills, obviously, because it really helped me understand what's expected.

I also did a structure fire course at Wangaratta and learned about flashovers and the different colours of the smoke. I haven't used what I learned there yet but I will.

What are the benefits of volunteering in CFA?

You get community recognition and you stand out more. There's the chance to be kept busy and spend more time with people I already know from around town.

What CFA roles do you see yourself pursuing?

Our captain and a few others keep planting the seed that I'll be the captain one day because I'm so enthusiastic and I started so young. Stuey's teaching me the ropes in an informal way.

Also, we just got a brand new tanker – our other one was 28 years old and has only done 64,000 kilometres but there's plenty of wear and tear. Stuey is leading me towards being the tanker expert because I'm a practical thinker. We've all done the formal training course for the new tanker but I might train any members who missed out on how to operate it.

What do you do in your spare time?

I'm in Year 12 and I also pack shelves at night at IGA. I go four-wheel driving, motorbike riding and camping with friends.

Next year I'm going to TAFE in Wodonga to start a two-year course in motorsports and mechanical engineering. I still want to be involved in Bonnie Doon brigade when I come back on weekends.

INTERVIEW BY LEITH HILLARD

Firefighters kicking goals

Bendigo career firefighters Nicole Eames and Stuart Laing met with players from the Bendigo Thunder Women's Football Club in mid-May to talk about their career in firefighting.

Thunder players Kayla Shepherd and Cassie Blakeway got behind a hose to find out what a firefighting drill is like.

CFA has a partnership with the Victorian Women's Football League in a bid to raise interest in firefighting careers among young women who enjoy community involvement, keeping fit and being part of a team.

CFA District 2 Operations Manager Steve Smith said firefighting and team sport have a lot in common, so it made sense to talk to people at sports clubs about future careers in the fire brigade.

"If you look at how firefighters work, it's very much about having a broader team approach, and about working not just with your immediate team but with the broader community," he said.

"We look for people with good leadership skills who are also practical. You can't get limited to a certain stereotype – we need people from all sorts of backgrounds with all sorts of skills. But being able to work well in a team is essential."

Thunder player Cassie Blakeway said firefighting was definitely a job she would think about in the future.

"I've got a friend who's a firefighter so I was aware of it," she said.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN



PHOTO: SONIA MACLEAN

NSW company helps Wahgunyah brigade



Rivalea, a major pork producer in Corowa, may be on the New South Wales side of the border, but the company had no hesitation in making a \$2,000 contribution for a potentially life-saving piece of equipment to Wahgunyah Fire Brigade.

Thermal imaging cameras are mainly used by brigades to find people in poor visibility or to locate an unconscious person in a burning building. Wahgunyah brigade Captain Mal O'Halloran said the camera would enhance the brigade's search and rescue capability, help locate the source of a fire more quickly, and let members check for hotspots at an incident.

"We've had a few house fires in the area recently," he said. "The thermal imaging camera allows you to locate the exact sources of heat when there's quite a bit of smoke. Previously, we had to wait for this equipment to come from Wodonga which is half an hour away."

Wahgunyah Third Lieutenant Chris Davies (pictured with his daughter) works for Rivalea and said the company didn't hesitate for a moment in deciding to contribute, even though it's in New South Wales.

"They wanted to support us to support the community," he said. "It's a close-knit community. We have got Wahgunyah on one side of the river and Corowa on the other, and a lot of people who work at Rivalea live in Wahgunyah."

"We have very good relationships with the NSW fire services and we help each other out," Chris said.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

CFA Open Day

Brigades around Victoria are once again asked to open their doors to the community between September and December for CFA Open Day. All registered participating brigades will receive some funding and have access to handy online resources through the Template Toolkit. Register now via cfa.vic.gov.au/about/cfa-open-day and help us again make CFA Open Day a great success.

Two brigades transform



The new South Warrandyte Fire Station

PHOTO: COURTESY OF STRATA/PWA

In June, the moving of a front-end loader's bucketful of dirt was the first step in transforming a muddy field into a state-of-the-art integrated fire station for South Warrandyte Fire Brigade.

The month of June was an even more significant milestone for South Morang brigade, as career firefighters took their place among volunteers for the first time as fellow brigade members. This change followed a substantial renovation and extension to the existing fire station.

As far as integration is concerned, there is one message that operational leaders on both sides of town want to emphasise – while the role of volunteers will change, it should not, cannot and must not diminish. Volunteers remain at the core of the brigades.

Speaking about South Morang, Operations Manager Trevor Roberts praised the dedication of members who maintained outstanding service to the community through a period of rapid population growth.

"South Morang is a strong brigade," he said. "They have kept homes and families safe through their dedication and commitment over many years."

Lindsay McHugh, who recently stepped down from the captain's role after 18 years of service, remembers when the station was a tin shed.

"Things have come a long way to where we are now. This community has grown fast and we've had to grow with it," he said.

Lindsay said the development of the brigade has not just been in terms

of fighting fires, but all the other aspects of a fire brigade that were less obvious to outsiders.

"To keep up that enthusiasm in the brigade and in yourself, it's important to have a good team of people around you, which is what I've had. I'm very proud of the way the brigade has developed and the way it sits in the community now," he said.

While the transition to integration can have its challenges, one of the most immediate benefits for members is new opportunities for training. First Lieutenant James Stephens has taken up the mantle of highest-ranking volunteer. He said volunteer members were keen to increase their structure fire knowledge by training with career staff.

"With the area becoming more and more built up, it will be good to have that expertise within the station – it's a definite plus," James said.

Over at South Warrandyte, Captain Greg Kennedy said the volunteer brigade recognised some time ago that the brigade would benefit from the support of career staff.

"We [brigade leaders] took the concept to the members and we put it to them that our real task was to make sure we provide a service to the community, and if we can do it better than we are now, we should go that way," he said.

"Having staff means the response times reduce and clearly that's got to be a better service being delivered to our customers, the community."

As with South Morang, the community is a big one and growing fast. The brigade will be servicing not only the Greater Warrandyte area but suburbs including Donvale, Park Orchards, North Ringwood, Warranwood and Croydon Hills.

When built, the two-storey station will incorporate a three-bay drive-through motor room and facilities for career firefighters to be present around the clock.

Operations Officer Jamie Hansen, who will eventually be the officer-in-charge at South Warrandyte, has been working closely not only with brigade members, but neighbouring residents to keep things running as smoothly as possible.

There have been doorknocks, community meetings and even a newsletter, and the brigade will maintain a regular presence at the monthly local farmers' market with building plans and updates on show.

"We did community consultation over a 12-month period and before that there was a four-year search for the right location. The upshot is we're very confident of the location and design," Jamie said.

PHOTO: DAVID NIGHTINGALE



South Morang brigade members: Third Lieutenant Carl White, Senior Station Officer Adam Whitford, First Lieutenant James Stephens, Firefighter David Nightingale and Secretary Michael Vermeulin



Rosebud Senior Station Officer Neil Schlipalius with Lieutenant Ian Dickson

What is Integration?

Integration is one measure used to support brigades in areas with rapid population growth. Integrated brigades have been part of CFA since the 1960s and CFA is the only fire service in Australia that operates in this way. Most of the current integrated brigades are located in major regional centres or the outer suburbs of Melbourne.

Operating models for integrated brigades vary. Career firefighters not only service the primary brigade response area, but also support varying numbers of brigades in a larger area.

When brigades become integrated, one of the most significant changes is the appointment of an officer-in-charge – the official head of the brigade. Generally, the first lieutenant becomes the most senior volunteer role, which is often taken on by the former captain.

Fire stations are modified or rebuilt to become workplaces suitable for full-time staff. That means incorporating office spaces, dormitories, a gym and a kitchen/day area.

When not at incidents, career firefighters can be found doing anything from drills or training to community engagement, writing fire reports or cleaning duties. They help with brigade training, skills maintenance and one-on-one personal development and many other things that help run the brigade.

Many career firefighter platoons (staff who work together on one shift) take on responsibility for a brigade management function such as community safety, operations, training, or equipment.

Integrated brigade profile: Rosebud

Year integrated: 2007

Personnel: 30 active volunteer members. 15 staff on rotation, with three per platoon (shift), including one station officer, one leading firefighter and one firefighter.

Number of call-outs: More than 550 a year.

Area covered: Through a 'hub and spoke' model, staff from Rosebud support southern Mornington Peninsula brigades including Rye, Sorrento, Boneo, Main Ridge, Dromana and Flinders, as well as their primary role in the Rosebud fire district. Rosebud was considered the most logical choice as a base for staff because of its central location on the Peninsula.

Reason for integration: The Peninsula has experienced rapid population growth from both permanent residents and holidaymakers. Traffic congestion can be a barrier in peak tourism periods.

Paging and incident control: Volunteers are paged for all Code One incidents. They are not called to Code Three events unless genuinely required.

Training: Training and assessment is shared between staff and volunteers. Any night of the week might see volunteers and staff working together on skills maintenance.

First Lieutenant Andrew Egan's view

"When the plan to integrate the brigade was first presented to the membership it was met with some trepidation but – once some of the rumours were cleared up – the brigade has gone from strength to strength.

"Our team was already strong, but this change has allowed our volunteer members to train to, and maintain, a higher standard of competence. It also means that even if no volunteers are available at the time, tasks like equipment maintenance, administration or community engagement will still get done.

"We rank Rosebud's integration as a model of success, and that's down to the dedication and focus of both the volunteers and the staff. In particular, Operations Officer John Francis played a vital role in making the transformation a successful one."

Senior Station Officer Neil Schlipalius's view

Neil Schlipalius was a key figure in guiding the process of introducing career firefighters and working with volunteer members to find an arrangement that worked for everyone. He said the paging system was central.

"Volunteers are only paged when genuinely needed, so they don't waste precious time turning up to bin fires or other minor incidents. Employers are more willing to release members knowing that they are responding to a genuine emergency.

"Eight years in, I can confidently say that staff and volunteers alike see each other as assets. Our volunteer members, who were understandably very sceptical of losing their autonomy, are proud of our integration."

STORY SONIA MACLEAN



Innovative art raises funds for Warburton

Around \$2,500 from sold artworks will bolster Warburton Fire Brigade, after decommissioned helmets were made into art and auctioned in June at the Melba Estate, Coldstream.

The HelmART exhibition featured 32 decommissioned fire helmets, which were turned over to Yarra Valley artists to make into works of art. From decorative paintings and mosaics, to miniature gardens and even a functional lamp, the former helmets took on a new life.

Leila Smith, Warburton brigade's centenary events coordinator, said the exhibition was organised for the brigade's 100th birthday. "As part of that, we were trying to engage various community members to help celebrate the occasion," she said. "It started off as a fun project; something a little bit different to engage the artists."

She said the response to the exhibition had been "amazing", and that the money raised from the event was all going to the brigade.

Warburton brigade and the Melba Estate have a historical link – Dame Nellie Melba opened Warburton Fire Station in 1915.

The artwork on many of the helmets paid tribute to the work that firefighters do to protect their communities. One helmet was fashioned into a bird's nest, with three eggs that read 'thank you CFA'.

Leila said that some pieces had been bought by members of the public and then donated to Warburton Fire Brigade.

STORY JESSE GRAHAM, MAIL NEWS GROUP

Rosebery Fire Station doubles as museum

Rosebery Fire Brigade, on the Henty Highway between Hopetoun and Beulah, has become the local museum of past community history. Now, as families leave the area, their significant memorabilia is passed on to the brigade.

Rosebery brigade member Trevor Starbuck (pictured right) organises the displays, though the instigator was Allan Chivell who spent many years compiling the material displayed.

"Allan asked if he could put some of this memorabilia in our previous station," said Trevor. "We didn't realise how much he had – sporting trophies, pennants, football memorabilia and memorabilia from other sporting clubs. Some material covered farming activities and photos of businesses in the township that aren't there now."

The display is in the meeting room of the new fire station which opened in March 2014.

"The collection isn't finished – we've got about half of it on display in the engine bay, the hallway and the meeting room.

"There are photos from as far back as the early 1900s. We have account and minute books from some of the sporting clubs. There are also family histories, though not much in the way of brigade memorabilia."

Some photos show the way harvesting used to be done. They show horses with strippers and threshing machines.

If you'd like to visit Rosebery Fire Station, ring Trevor on 0428 837 266.

STORY JAYDA HUNT



New beginnings for Woosang brigade



PHOTO: HANNAH GOULD

It was a cold winter's day, but locally-made hot soup and food warmed up those who attended the opening of the new Woosang Fire Station.

CFA Board member Michael Tudball officially opened the station, which replaced the old shed that was used for more than 45 years.

Woosang Fire Brigade, along the Calder Highway between Wedderburn and Charlton, includes Chief Officer Euan Ferguson as one of its members.

"The brigade has proudly represented the district on many occasions for strike team deployments and has always had strong representation in the Wedderburn Group," said District 20 Operations Officer Bryan Suckling.

As well as opening the station, Michael Tudball handed over the keys to a new four-wheel-drive Hino 2.4C medium tanker with all the latest safety features.

"Two significant awards given out on the day were for Stafford White (70-year CFA life member) and Graham Turnbull (60-year CFA life member) who have both gone 'above and beyond' to significantly enhance the safety of their community," said Bryan.

"Ex-captain Fred White was sorely missed on the day. He was unable to attend due to ill health."

Other awards given were: Roger Paterson (50-year clasp), Anthony Curnow, Malcolm Burge and Garry Hayes (40-year clasp), Ian and Murray Gould (35-year clasp), Alistair White (30-year clasp), Cameron Turnbull and Frank Cooper (25-year clasp), Anthony Stewart (20-year clasp) and Jake Hayes and Ross Burge (five-year certificate).

STORY AMANDA BOLCH

Presentation marks end of a Potter era

Mark Potter ended his career with CFA on 1 July to take up an executive operations role at Federation Training in Yallourn.

In a moving gesture, Mark's mother Diane presented CFA with a framed picture of her husband and his medals on behalf of the Potter family. Mark's father Brian was Chief Officer from 1985 to 1991.

Between Mark, his father, and his uncle (former General Manager Paul Potter) the Potter family has more than 50 years' continuous employee service to CFA. Mark will continue as a volunteer with Glengarry brigade.

"The frame was made to recognise my father's service to CFA over a 51-year period," Mark said. "My father passed away last year and I have been keen since then to recognise his service to CFA. Dad was passionate about CFA and loved the people and what the organisation stood for. This is a small way of recognising his contribution."

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said the Potter family had left a lasting legacy.

"A few weeks back, I dropped in at Frankston Fire Station for a coffee. The two SSOs on duty fondly recalled how Brian, with Mark in tow, used to drive up to the fire station when they got a call. Together, they would don PPC and jump on the truck to the job, big or small."

Mark, too, has made a significant contribution to CFA. He's been a longstanding volunteer and became a CFA employee in February 1999 as a community support facilitator. He went on to serve in a variety of roles before becoming regional director of the old Gippsland Region.

"I've been provided many opportunities to learn new things, new skills and travel. This is a strength of CFA – it supports its people to undertake different roles and encourages them to learn new skills," said Mark.

"Mark was instrumental in developing bushfire sprinkler technology, he's an expert in both structural and rural fire safety and he drove the pioneering approach to community engagement in CFA and in Gippsland," said Euan.

"Just as importantly, Mark promoted and exemplified a values-based culture of integration, volunteer spirit and member diversity and inclusion."

STORY AMANDA BOLCH

PHOTO: LUKE PATTERSON



Grants for fuel reduction

Two brigades in the Dandenong Ranges have been given funding for fuel reduction and weed management.

The Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority is coordinating a new program designed to improve the biodiversity of the Dandenong Ranges while reducing the bushfire risk.

This program brings together environmental organisations, community groups, State and Federal governments, councils and agencies to find solutions and take action.

The Dandenong Ranges Wildlife Recovery, Weed Management and Fuel Reduction Program is funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, which is providing \$3 million over three years. A program of this scale in the Dandenongs requires collaboration, coordination and community participation.

Belgrave Heights and South brigade was successful in its bid for \$95,000. One of

the coordinators of the work to be carried out, Wol Worrell (pictured) is looking forward to getting started and working with other groups.

"We'll initially establish fuel breaks on private property using a forestry mulcher and we hope to begin planned burns this spring – weather permitting," said Wol.

"Getting rid of fuel and bark will improve fire safety for the community and open it up to let flora regenerate.

"We will also develop a better working relationship with the Shire of Yarra Ranges, Parks Victoria and environmental groups in the area."

Macclesfield brigade was successful in obtaining \$15,000 over two years to continue mosaic burning over 100 hectares, including significant weed reduction and control line work.

STORY SHARON MERRITT

Advancing Orbost youth

While Newmerella brigade's Graham Wilson (pictured) has recently stepped down from fire equipment maintenance and the Orbost Group secretary and treasurer roles, he's not giving up teaching Advance, previously known as Youth Crew, at Orbost Secondary College.

"I'm enjoying it so much," said Graham. "Treat the kids with respect and you get respect in return. I'm seeing so many young people flourishing including school refusers. Advance is a place to succeed if you're not succeeding in the classroom and have some fun along the way."

Operating from Orbost Fire Station, Graham and Orbost Captain Dick Johnstone offer a comprehensive program for Years 9 and 10 students who gain qualifications in Minimum Skills and Level Two First Aid.

"They learn their way around Orbost's new tanker," continued Graham, "and we get

them to the lagoon to learn draughting and boosting from a pumper to a tanker. They take it in turns to be crew leader but they also thrive on competition and we do some Juniors-style exercises with a stopwatch. We do the two-line fog attack and they go through the turnover drill on a hot day. There's also map reading and radio procedures and they went out with DELWP to assess fuel loads."

Interaction with every emergency service is one of the program highlights with visits to SES, the new Marlo joint fire brigade and Coast Guard facility and being shown over an ambulance. Once a year, the group travels to West Sale for a day of live fire training.

"The kids have asked for two days," said Graham. "They learn so quickly and I only have to show them things once. They're a disciplined group at the end, with a sense of esteem and achievement."

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD



Cigarette smoking at CFA

The Tobacco Act 1987 was recently amended to include stricter legislation regarding smoking around Victorian Government buildings, including all CFA locations. These changes mean that smoking within four metres of an entrance to any CFA building, including fire stations, is now prohibited.

Operations managers will be consulting and collaborating with CFA members to ensure that the specifications within the Act, and the associated CFA procedure are adhered to at all CFA offices and fire stations.

For some locations, changes to current practices will be necessary, and others may stay the same. However, this is a good opportunity for all CFA members to review and assess how cigarette smoking at CFA locations may affect others.

"While evidence is clear regarding the health effects of smoking, and we encourage members to give up smoking, we recognise that it's also important to provide a suitable area for those who still choose to smoke," said Manager of Health Safety and Environment Jeff Green

CFA offers support for all members who want to stop smoking, including resources for quitting, seminars and training. To discuss the options available to you contact the health team on 9262 8843 or by emailing esvhealth@cfa.vic.gov.au.

We ask all CFA members to respect the health and wellbeing of others by following the guidelines, and ensuring that only designated areas are used for smoking. For more information about how these changes may affect your brigade contact your operations manager.

STORY TEAGAN KNIGHT

Get active, get healthy... Get Moving!



Get Moving is an eight-week competition for CFA members to encourage them to increase their physical activity, by increasing the number of steps they take each day. It runs from 28 September to 22 November.

Members compete in teams of five to 10 and each team member will be given a pedometer, a drink bottle and a step tracker poster to help them throughout the competition. Team members will wear their pedometer each day, keep track of the number of steps they've taken and report back to the team captain each week.

Walking boosts energy, improves your mood and reduces the risk of chronic diseases. Being active every day also helps to improve mental health, reduces your risk of Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular

disease, and helps to improve sleep and manage weight.

This year the competition will include weekly challenges to encourage participants to make small changes to improve other aspects of their health, including sleep and nutrition. Teams or individuals who participate in the challenges can win prizes by sharing a photo on the Get Moving Facebook page.

To register, put your team together, nominate a team captain and enter your details at esohealthwatch.gov.au from 7 September – but be quick as places are limited.

For more information about the Get Moving Challenge email getmoving@cfa.vic.gov.au, visit the health and safety section of Brigades Online or 'like' the Get Moving Challenge on Facebook at [Facebook.com/GetMovingChallenge](https://www.facebook.com/GetMovingChallenge).

STORY TEAGAN KNIGHT



PHOTO: SONIA MACLEAN

CFA support not just for work issues

In February 2009, serving as a resources unit leader during the bushfires, Jess Harris was proud that she actively sought counselling for both herself and her team between shifts.

A few years later, Jess, a project coordinator in Fire and Emergency Management, went through tough times of a different sort. But this time, she didn't think to access CFA welfare services – and now wants to urge others to make sure they do seek help when they need it, and to do it early.

Jess is one of the more than one in seven mums in Australia to have experienced postnatal depression, and she hopes that sharing her experience might encourage others.

"I've only just realised now that my first port of call could have been those three free sessions every CFA member is entitled to," Jess said. "It was a lost opportunity. But at the time, it just didn't occur to me that those services were available for issues that weren't related to work or an incident.

"The delay in getting help for me led to issues becoming entrenched and a longer recovery time."

For Jess, one of the biggest hurdles – especially with young children to care for – was getting caught up in the day-to-day need to 'just get things done'.

"There was no way I'd prioritise anything to do with me," she explained. "I started feeling I wasn't good enough, not just at being a mother and partner, but also as an employee. It was hard to break the habit of thinking this way after so long."

Jess eventually found good information and sustained support through the organisation Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA).

These days, back on track and better informed, Jess is also conscious of how issues such as stress, anxiety and depression not only affect the sufferer but also the people around them – especially partners. She points out it's important for people in that supporting role to know services are available for them too.

"The stigma surrounding depression is changing with better awareness, but it still can be very difficult for people to know what to do or how to act," said Jess.

"I think it's good for people in leadership roles, whether that's a manager or your captain, to know about the kind of tools and strategies that will help them to help someone who might be going through a rough patch."

Her partner also called PANDA on its helpline, 1300 726 306, and that single phone call was enough to run him through the main practical tips about how to support Jess, including the triggers or signs to be aware of.

"Blokes need a hand too. They also experience sleepless nights, learning how to be a parent and how to support their partner, but they are often expected to just man up because they weren't the one who delivered the baby."

PANDA's website (panda.org.au) highlights some eye-opening statistics, especially when it comes to new dads. As many as one in 10 dads suffers from postnatal depression. More than 100,000 parents struggle with perinatal (the period shortly before and shortly after birth) depression each year in Australia.

The symptoms are serious and can include panic attacks, increased sensitivity to noise or touch, extreme lethargy and feeling physically or emotionally overwhelmed or unable to cope.

"It's not something people should feel they just have to put up with," said Jess.

Jess has this message for any CFA member concerned about depression, stress or anxiety from any cause – be proactive about seeking information from good sources.

"Sometimes it does need to be the right person at the right time, with the right information, and that might come from a service.

"So even if there is just one person – a partner, friend, fellow brigade member – who can relate to what happened to me, my story is worth sharing."

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

CFA welfare support

- Member Assistance Program (1300 795 711): 24-hour counselling available to CFA members and immediate family
- Peer Support Program: trained members offering support and guidance (cfa.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth)
- HeadsUp online tool (cfa.vic.gov.au/headsup): information and advice about managing mental health and relationship issues

The new health and safety coordinator role



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

One of the three new compulsory roles under the Brigade Membership Classification program is the brigade health and safety coordinator. This important role can be filled by any member of the brigade and doesn't have to be part of the brigade management team (BMT). The role was created so that someone at the brigade level can promote the safety-first message.

Members in this role will work with the BMT to coordinate and promote health and safety in the brigade. The role is designed to be flexible so the coordinator can choose aspects of the role that fit in with the amount of time they have to give. Some of the activities the coordinator may perform are:

- promoting CFA health programs such as HealthWatch
- keeping the health and safety noticeboard up to date
- carrying out inspections of the fire station
- ensuring first-aid kits are appropriately stocked
- maintaining the chemical register
- promoting health and safety events.

To help new coordinators perform effectively, CFA has developed a toolkit that contains general health and safety information and resources that coordinators can use. Training sessions in each district began in August with all participants receiving the toolkit. Attending the training course isn't compulsory, but it will be a good place to hear about introductory health and safety information and practical guidance on activities they may perform in the role.

Although the health and safety coordinator is a new role, some brigades have had a similar role in place for a few years. Steve Boot (pictured) has been the health and safety coordinator for Plenty Fire Brigade for about 10 years.

In his time in the role, Steve has learned a lot about effective ways to pass on health and safety information.

"You know the old saying you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink? I have learned that you need to give health and safety information in a range of forms like presenting at brigade meetings, emailing everyone, printing out information and placing documents on the noticeboard. The more formats you give it in means there is a greater chance of others taking on the information," said Steve.

He has also been known to call members and discuss issues with them.

"I have been a part of the significant changes in CFA's OHS [occupational health and safety] culture, the changes in people and the policies and procedures. I have assisted members and groups to adapt to these changes by communicating with them as best I can."

Steve has coordinated the ongoing promotion of health, safety and environment in conjunction with Plenty brigade's BMT and brigade members and has brought them to a place where health and safety is something they talk about regularly.

"Safety isn't expensive, it's priceless" is one of Steve's sayings.

The health and safety coordinator role is an important step in CFA's commitment to enhancing the safety-first culture. While everyone has a role to play in ensuring CFA's buildings, training grounds and firegrounds are as safe as possible, having someone dedicated to health and safety at each brigade is an important complement to CFA's existing health and safety resources.

For more details about this role, go to the Brigade Membership Classification page of Brigades Online or contact your district office.

STORY TINA MARCHINGTON AND CHRISSIE STONE

Through the ages – Drouin West





COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM

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, including:

- accommodation
- home and garden
- attractions
- retail
- dining
- technology
- financial services
- travel
- health and beauty
- wine

Details of the offers are in the Emergency Memberlink Guide, which is posted with all new Memberlink cards, and they are also on the emergencymemberlink.com.au website.



Contact Memberlink

To get a Memberlink card, phone 1800 820 037 or register online at 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/emergency-memberlink.

Brigade magazine is published by CFA Communities and Communication

PO Box 701 Mt Waverley Vic 3149

Executive Director Communities and Communication:
Mark Sullivan

Manager Corporate Communications:
Emma Tyrer

Articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of CFA. The Editor reserves the right to refuse or edit articles.

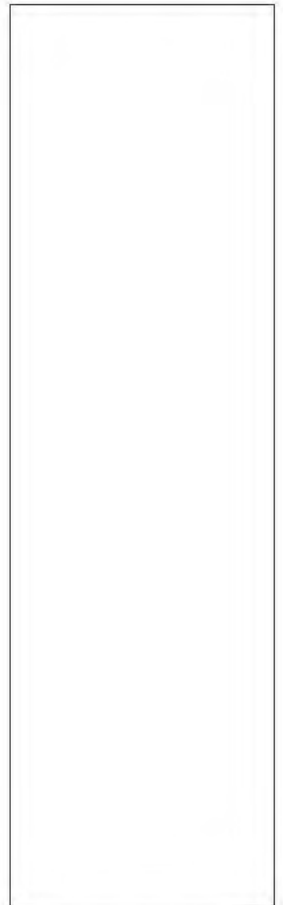
Printed on paper from sustainably-managed forests.

POPULAR OFFERS

- Discounts are available on a range of pre-purchased **gift cards** including Woolworths, Coles, Myer, Kmart, Target, Supercheap Auto, Rebel Sport, David Jones, Big W, Ray's Outdoors, BCF, Goldcross Cycles, Masters and Flight Centre.
- Members receive a saving of \$20 on defensive driving courses offered by **Driver Dynamics**.
- Members receive discounted tickets for the **Last Laugh at The Comedy Club**.
- Members receive 10% discount at **The Athlete's Foot** on presentation of your Memberlink Card in store at time of purchase.
- Members have access to discounted accommodation rates at **Quest Dandenong Serviced Apartments**.
- Members have access to government accommodation rates at **Quest Caroline Springs Serviced Apartments**.
- Members receive \$5 off each new tyre, \$5 off a new battery and front wheel alignment for \$40 with the purchase of two new tyres at **Tyrepower**.
- **Ranges Alarms** offers discounts on alarm installations and monitoring.
- Members have access to a corporate offer at **Goodlife Health Clubs** including a seven-day free trial, 15% off the Active Plus membership rate and free guest membership.
- **The Zone Family Entertainment Centre** in Bendigo offers members 10% off a selection of unlimited passes.
- **Endota Spa** offers members \$20 off their first remedial and deep tissue massage.
- **Flight Centre** offers members \$50 off their next booking. Valid on new bookings with a minimum spend of \$1,500.
- Save money on pre-purchased **movie tickets, theme park and attraction tickets**.
- Buy your plants and garden products at trade prices at **Plantmark** at Langwarrin, Wantirna, Thomastown and Werribee.
- **Searoad Ferries** offers 10% discount on ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff.
- **Wyndham Hotel Group** offers 10% off the best available rates at 22 hotel locations in Australia and New Zealand.
- 15% discount on takeaway wine purchases at **De Bortoli Yarra Valley Estate**.
- Save 40% on **AIG Travel Insurance**.
- Members receive discounted passenger fares when sailing on **Spirit of Tasmania**.
- **Ashcombe Maze and Lavender Gardens** on the Mornington offers members one complimentary admission when a second of equal or greater value is purchased.
- Receive \$20 off when you spend \$79 or more on an experience from **RedBalloon**.
- Members receive 10% discount on accommodation rates at **Erindale Bed and Breakfast** in Beechworth. Minimum two-night stay.
- **Isubscribe** offers an additional 10% off the listed price of a range of magazines.
- Members Receive 10% discount on a regular excursion train fare, Day Out With Thomas, Steam and Cuisine Luncheon train and Dinner and Dance train on **Puffing Billy**.

Visit the Emergency Memberlink website www.emergencymemberlink.com.au for more details and terms and conditions on the above offers.

If undeliverable
please return to:
Printelligence
11 O'Hara Street
Blackburn
Victoria 3130



PRINT
POST
100010934

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA