

Brigade

winter 2015

Protecting lives
and property
cfa.vic.gov.au



▼ Planning your brigade's future



CONTENTS

- 03 Incidents
- 08 Statewide news
- 08 CEO's column
- 12 Chief Officer's column
- 21 Learning from incidents
- 26 Community safety
- 27 Brigade news
- 34 Health and safety
- 36 Events
- 40 Training
- 42 Through the ages
- 44 Memberlink

COVER PHOTO: BARRAPUDA BRIGADE
BY LEITH HILLARD

SUCCESSION PLANNING 28



04



09



21

CHAIR

Claire Higgins



The values that will guide us

CFA has been working with you to determine the values that will guide us in delivering our mission of protecting lives and property.

Following extensive consultation, five key values have emerged that reflect how we want to work. They are safety, respect, integrity, together and adaptive. In delivering our mission of protecting lives and property in our communities:

- we put **safety** first
- we **respect** each other
- we act with **integrity**
- we **work together** as one
- we are **adaptive** and agile

CFA is its people. Without you, we cannot fulfil our mission. We need to make sure you have a positive, supportive and safe working environment; a place where you're empowered to do your work in a unified team and multi-agency environment within a world where change is a constant.

Our values give us a clear direction and will be aligned with our structure. They provide a blueprint for making that journey safely and with respect for each other.

These values don't replace our Fire Service Star virtues which honour the strengths of our members and are an important part of CFA tradition. These virtues were drawn from the knightly virtues established during the Crusades to guide the thinking and behaviour of leaders on the battlefield. They are a guide to the virtues required of a good firefighter and leader in the operational context and still have an important place in CFA.

Our values articulate how we deserve to be treated and how we should treat our colleagues, as respected members of an emergency service with a long and proud history of serving the Victorian community. Our values are aspirational and working within them gives all of us the opportunity to have a positive impact.

Safety

- We actively pursue zero harm
- We want everyone to get home safe and well
- We have a harmonious workplace
- We encourage discussions on safety matters

Respect

- We acknowledge each other's ideas, opinions and contributions
- We welcome diversity
- We show empathy and understanding
- We respect the time of our people

Integrity

- We do what we say we will do
- We are honest, open and act fairly

- We make transparent and timely decisions
- We are accountable and will hold one another to account

Together

- We unite to deliver on our mission
- We work in and promote inclusive teams
- We work collaboratively with the community and the sector
- We communicate openly

Adaptive

- We are open to the challenge of change
- We are proactive and make it happen
- We challenge the status quo and recognise innovators
- We learn from each other and our community

I encourage all of us to adopt these values, live them, call each other to account on them and support each other to carry CFA forward underpinned by these values.

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

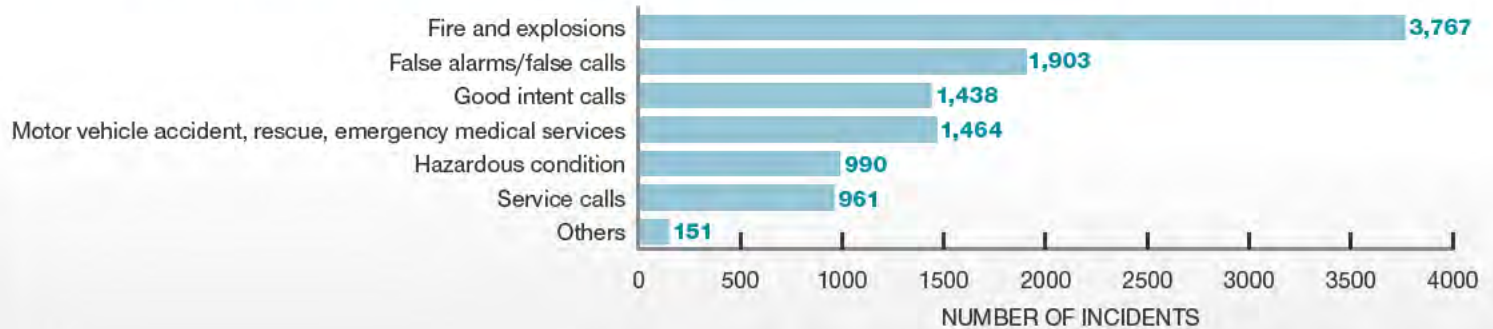


twitter.com/cfa_members

Incident summary

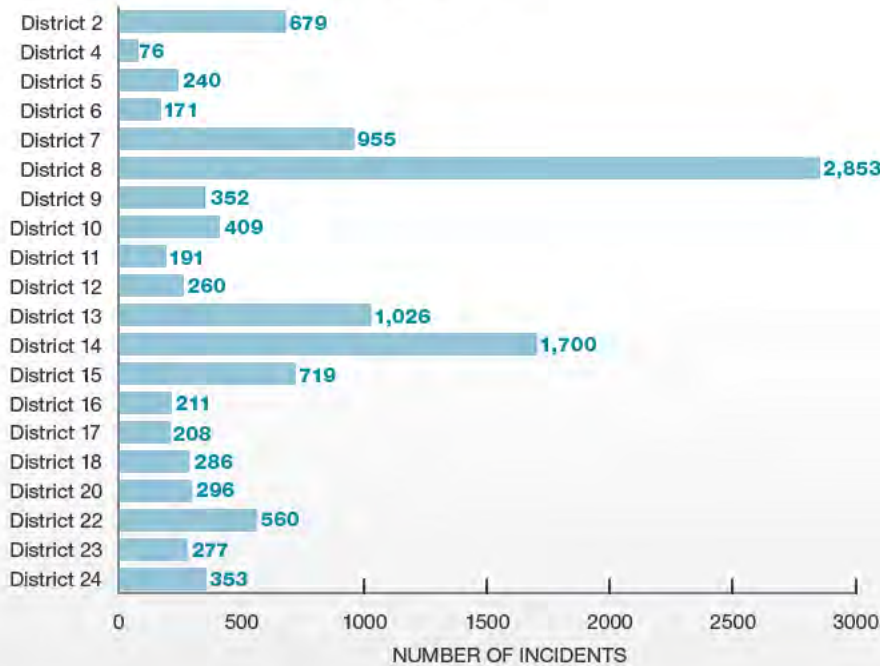
STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY TYPE

1 January – 31 March 2015



STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

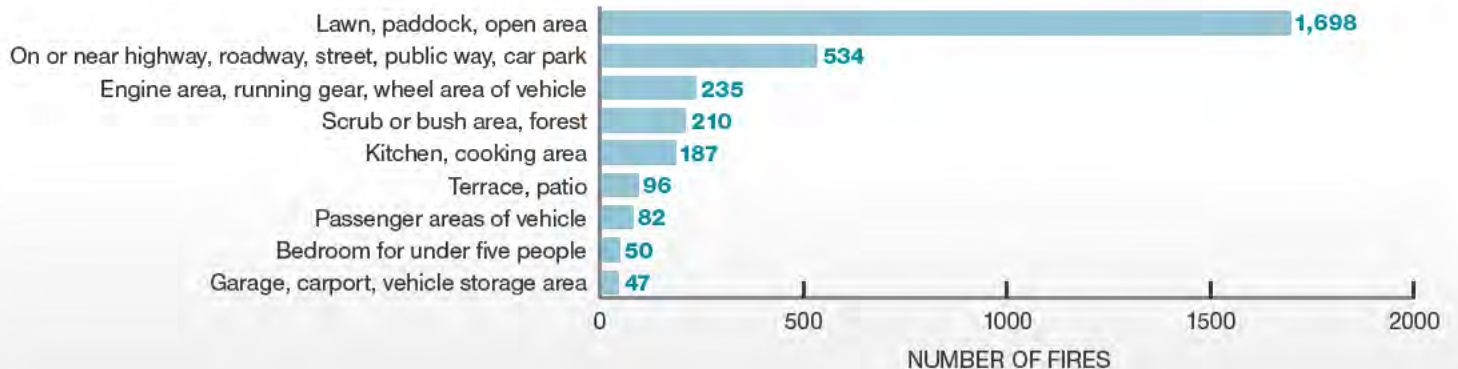
1 January – 31 March 2015



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 January – 31 March 2015



Echuca paddle steamer destroyed



INCIDENT: Paddle steamer fire
DISTRICT: 20
DATE: 9 March 2015
BRIGADES: Echuca, Moama



It's not a call you want to get at 5am when more than half the brigade is away at the State Championships.

The first truck to arrive at the Murray River found the paddle steamer Henry Charles well ablaze and gave a word back of 'not yet under control'.

When the Echuca pumper arrived at the scene the crew immediately called for a second pumper, because the lack of a constant water supply in this part of Echuca can hinder the firefight.

A control point was established by Incident Controller Col Munro. Echuca tanker and support arrived shortly after and access to the secured area was the first of many obstacles. The Shire of Campaspe recently upgraded the river walkways, built a new information centre and increased the security. The fire was directly behind this new building and the initial attack was from the walkway, around 10 to 12 metres above and 15 metres back from the paddle steamer.

Flames from the paddle steamer set fire to a tree further up the bank, threatening the walkway. One crew fought the blaze on the paddle steamer and a second crew extinguished the tree fire and protected the walkway before turning their attention to the boat fire. Incident control was then handed to First Lieutenant Ashley McGraw.

While waiting for Echuca-Moama Search and Rescue Squad, a member was given permission to launch his boat to provide an observation platform from the waterside. This provided valuable information about the location and type of fuel burning.

Some members found a safe path to the river's edge and a branch and extended line were lowered to them for a closer attack on the paddle steamer.

With both its securing lines burnt, the paddle steamer began to drift away from the bank. To prevent it from floating towards other craft, a temporary line was connected.

The tree that threatened the walkway kept reigniting and was in danger of falling across the boat. An exclusion area was established and Moama Urban Brigade kept the tree under control.

Echuca-Moama Search and Rescue arrived with two flat-bottom punts which provided a stable platform for firefighting from the waterside. A pump with a short hose and branch was loaded and the attack from the water immediately helped.

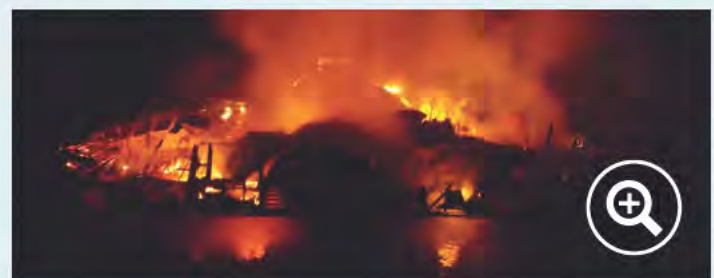
The decking on the boat and around the edge had either been consumed by fire or severely damaged and the boat was too dangerous to access. The firefight had to continue from the walkway, the river's edge and the water.

The NSW/Victorian border is set at the high water mark on the Victorian side. If it's wet it's NSW.

This paddle steamer, tied to the Victorian side below the high water mark, was deemed to be in NSW. The walkway is above the high water mark and therefore Victorian.

So, the fire happened in NSW but CFA had to fight it from Victoria with NSW services travelling to Victoria to take charge of the incident and conduct investigations.

STORY ASHLEY MCGRAW FIRST LIEUTENANT ECHUCA BRIGADE



Hidden dangers in shed fires

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 23

DATE: 9 April 2015

BRIGADES: Oxley, Milawa, Wangaratta, Bobinawarra



Just before 11am, firefighters responded to a reported haystack fire at a rural property in Oxley, near Wangaratta.

The property owner had been working at the front of his workshop cutting a steel beam with a grinder, when a spark landed in the next bay of the shed setting fire to around 150 hay bales.

The property owner tried to douse the flames but the fire kept growing, so he called Triple Zero. Turning his attention to what he could save, he moved a recently-bought skid loader, then returned for his ride-on mower. But the smoke and heat forced him to retreat. The owner suffered burns to his face and arms, though he didn't realise it at the time.

The incident was managed by Milawa Captain David Bienvenu.

When brigades arrived at the scene, the 20-metre by seven-metre shed was fully alight and thick, black smoke filled the air. Firefighters had to use breathing apparatus and A Class foam to extinguish the fire. The scene was declared safe after two hours.

Inside the shed were a workshop, storage area, cool room, hayshed and chicken coop, which added to the complexity of the incident.

During the overhaul of the incident, crews noted the number of different hazards being stored in the shed. It had the usual accumulation of tools and objects that men acquire over the years but, because it was a tradie's workshop, this shed had a number of oxygen and acetylene cylinders alongside jerry cans of diesel and petrol, 20-litre drums of oils and poisons, petrol engine equipment (mower, chainsaw, etc) and a 30-tonne hydraulic log splitter.

When attending this type of incident, brigade members need to be mindful that there are likely to be unknown hazards in the shed. As well as the items mentioned above, people often store ammunition or reloading equipment (including gun powder) in sheds. Older sheds can contain an accumulation of pesticides and poisons that can be

present in the surrounding area within the smoke.

When crews arrived, a number of explosions were heard and, during the overhaul phase, ruptured fuel cans and vented and damaged gas cylinders were found (see photo, right).

Following a discussion which included the incident controller and catchment officer, a number of lessons were identified.

- Attending crews should take note of the smoke colour and density, as it was obvious this incident was more than just a haystack fire. Thick, black smoke indicated the presence of fuels and oils.
- Crews first on scene should undertake a full size-up of the scene, which includes talking to the property owner (if in attendance).
- Always expect there may be additional products stored in a shed, and that the original call may only represent a partial picture of the overall incident.
- Attending crews should always approach this type of fire with a high level of caution because electricity, fuels or gases may be present.
- In a rural area used for primary production, consideration of firefighting water run off needs to be a priority. The use of A Class foam and the run off or potentially-contaminated waters, can pose complications to the future operations on the farmland.
- Minimise crew members' exposure at the scene by using PPE as per standard operating procedures. If contamination of clothing is a concern at the end of the incident, bag it and arrange for cleaning. Don't place it in a private car or wash it at home. Use breathing apparatus if available or, as a minimum, issue dust masks to those at the scene.

Now... what do you have stored in your shed?

STORY MICK DAWS



PHOTO: MICK DAWS



PHOTO: ASHLEY MILLS



PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

Recovering from the Wyndham Vale tragedy

When a car drove into a lake and three children died, local brigade members were the first responders along with members of the community. How does a brigade recover from that?

At Wyndham Vale Fire Brigade they proceed by maintaining both their professional response capacity and their care for each other. Members debriefed immediately afterwards and also attended a CFA incident review led by District 14 Operations Manager Trevor Roberts.

Local Peer Support Coordinator Neville Goddard attended the CFA incident review and praised the exemplary mutual respect and support between local CFA and SES and their excellent communication with Victoria Police.

"The services were able to work through a very confronting incident with absolute professionalism," said Nev. "By the time a brigade arrives at a scene the outcome can already be locked in. This is when all their training comes to the fore – to respond to the incident as it is, not as they may wish it to be.

"CFA members were meticulous and worked with compassion, and all CFA members can feel immense pride in their care and dedication. The Wyndham Vale members also exemplified the principle of being each other's first and best support in the days and weeks following the incident, guided by an enlightened leadership team."

Certainly Captain Trevor Weston (pictured above with Third Lieutenant Andrew Ludeman and Second Lieutenant Simon Gladman) is proud of his Wyndham Vale crew. He gives credit to the brigade's peer network with his brigade management team doing a lot of phoning around to check on the welfare of members for some weeks after the event.

"You couldn't fault them," said Trevor, echoing Nev's view. "The responders gave all the patients the best chance of survival.

"We are also grateful for the support we received after the event. Werribee had a crew sit in our station for three hours that night in case we got a call-out so we could debrief. Thanks to the Hoppers crew which has kept in touch with us and the District 14 operations team has provided unwavering support. The Werribee and Hoppers crews took in the bigger picture and shared their positive observations of how we did and that's carried a lot of weight with us."

Wyndham Vale Fire Brigade is only four years old but has good bones, starting as a satellite station of Werribee with its proud 100 years of tradition and service. Twenty members left Werribee to form Wyndham Vale which now has 40 operational members attending between 350 and 400 incidents a year.

"We're a very junior brigade," said Trevor, "but that means we've been able to model ourselves as the sort of brigade we want to be."

Trevor praises the brigade's skills mix which includes career firefighters, SES members, police officers, tradies, truck drivers, academics and shift workers. Special mention must also be made of Trevor who is both a paramedic and manages the Emergency Co-Responder Program for Ambulance Victoria.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson also attended the debrief and saw firsthand the exceptional degree of expertise of all responders.

"I was impressed by the camaraderie," said Euan. "There was a strong sense of a team among CFA members, SES, Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria members.

"This incident reinforces the fact that, when the pager drops, we never know what we're going to. Each job has its own risks and sometimes its own tragic consequences. On this day at Wyndham Vale, a horrifying scenario played out in front of our members. Training, teamwork and leadership kicked in. It was more than 'doing the best we can'. It was professionalism and compassion of the highest order.

"Many people, including our own, were deeply impacted by this tragedy and the actions taken to save lives. I have no doubt that the members and friends of the family involved, local residents and passers-by were filled with gratitude and respect for the efforts of emergency services.

"It is very important that we take time to assess how we are feeling after such an incident. Check on your team. Ask them how they are feeling. Extend the comforting hand of support to those who might be doing it hard. A tough job done well."

This professional operation is repeated around the state, as tens of thousands of members go about their often-confronting work in emergency response.

For mental health support see page 35.

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Cyclist cliff rescue at Aireys Inlet

INCIDENT: High-angle rescue

DISTRICT: 7

DATE: 30 March 2015

BRIGADES: Aireys Inlet,
Anglesea, Geelong



PHOTO: COURTESY OF GEELONG ADVERTISER

Emergency services worked closely for several hours to rescue a female cyclist who fell off her bike down an embankment on the Currawong Falls walking track at Aireys Inlet.

CFA was called to the incident just before 3pm and, after having difficulty locating the woman, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Parks Victoria and SES joined forces.

District 7 Duty Officer Wayne Aylmer said it took crews an hour to find the woman in the middle of a track which could only be reached by foot.

“It was a 30-minute walk to reach the woman so we knew the rescue would take some time,” Wayne said.

“She was found approximately 20 metres down an embankment so it was a very delicate rescue.

“The woman had back and shoulder injuries and broken ribs so we had to perform a rope rescue.”

Emergency services including CFA members completed the rope rescue at 6pm and the woman was carried to the main road by SES volunteers before being transported to hospital.

“The whole rescue finished just after 7pm so it was a long and difficult incident for all members involved,” continued Wayne.

“This rescue demonstrated great teamwork and communication. The crews should be proud of what they achieved.”

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

Boy rescued after falling through roof

Two young boys were playing on the roof of a single-storey pumping station at Mildura when one of them fell through the skylight. It was not until the brigade forced entry using a rabbit tool, after being alerted by the second boy, that firefighters discovered the boy actually fell 10 metres on to concrete because there were two underground storeys.

Despite suffering a head wound, two broken legs, broken ankles and knee caps and a broken arm, the youngster was conscious throughout the ordeal.

Ambulance Victoria assessed that the boy could not be moved up the stairs so CFA crews set up a rope to carry out a high-angle rescue to lift the patient from the floor to the first floor gantry and retrieve him from the building. They were helped by SES and Victoria Police. Crews worked extremely well to remove the boy from the building in less than an hour. The boy was then flown to Melbourne.

The firefighters received a thank you letter from the boy's parents, commending them on their great work.

Only a week before this incident, Mildura brigade career firefighters and a number of volunteers received training in high-angle and rope rescue work.

“Given the rarity of this type of incident, the rescue went extremely well,” said Incident Controller and Mildura Senior Station Officer Mick Sporton. “Everyone was focused on the welfare of the young fella.

“The way we worked with the SES and ambos was a testament to how well the emergency services work together. It was a great result and the high-angle course was invaluable.”

INCIDENT: High-angle rescue

DISTRICT: 18

DATE: 9 April 2015

BRIGADES: Mildura, Merbein



PHOTO: MILDURA FIRE BRIGADE

CEO

Michael Wootten



Since stepping into the role as CEO I have been working to build a stronger connection with our members – both volunteers and staff. Over the past four months I have visited more than a dozen towns and brigades across the state, from Casterton to Traralgon, and been fortunate enough to hear some of your insights and ideas about CFA.

As a service delivery organisation, support for our front-line people is paramount. For some brigades, it's often fixing the small things that makes the biggest difference. Others want greater support from CFA to foster innovation and find solutions for local issues. To do this, our Service Delivery Strategy will be critical. The strategy will keep our focus on our mission, and will drive CFA to make changes to support local people to solve local problems.

From my travels, I have also gained a better understanding of the crucial role that our operations managers play and I'll be thinking about ways we can help them to support their brigades, volunteers and career firefighters. I heard that we can improve on our communication between centrally-based people (in regions, districts and HQ) and members in regional areas, so our efforts and interactions with brigades will be better coordinated and informed.

Some members also feel that CFA needs to be more agile and decisive, and we have already started work to improve this through our values. As outlined in Chair Claire Higgins' column and on page 15 of this issue, one of our values is to be adaptive when confronted by change. We will be working hard to live by these values and I encourage everyone to hold us, and each other, to account.

Some of you told me that you feel CFA is still based on silos and, at times, the evidence behind our decisions at the executive level is not always clear. I appreciate that you want and need to know more about what is going on in other parts of the organisation – including other districts, regions and directorates. You have also asked me to communicate the reasons behind the decisions of the CFA Board and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). In response to this, I have begun writing a regular blog for all members which will update you

about what is being discussed at ELT and Board meetings. Please look out for my blog, the CFA Board and Executive Update, via email or on the News and Media section of our website.

I have also learned more about some of the great work being done at a local level which deserves promotion and recognition. To note one project, the North West Region (NWR) is leading by example in its work around awareness of diversity and equality and prevention of domestic violence. The NWR Brigade Sustainability team, led by Deb Salvagno and supported by Assistant Chief Officer Mike Wassing, is working to bring about positive change by raising awareness and understanding of the link between gender equality, violence prevention, and building a culture of non-violence; and is developing strategies to support leaders and brigades to achieve this.

It's clear we have an organisation full of dedicated and committed people and I want to thank you for all the work you do to make CFA the success that it is.

Thank you for your insights so far. I look forward to meeting with more of you and hearing your thoughts as I continue to travel to brigades and districts in the coming weeks and months.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Training strategy survey goes live soon

CFA members are being urged to give feedback on Fire and Emergency Management's Training Strategy using an online survey.

After a successful response in 2014, CFA is once again asking members to provide their thoughts on the strategy in 2015.

"This survey is an important part of the annual review to measure CFA's performance against the training strategy," said Manager Training and Delivery James Stitz.

The strategy was approved by the CFA Board in June 2013 and released to members a month later. Since then, Operational

Training and Volunteerism has been working hard to deliver a range of strategy actions.

"I'm seeking five minutes input from everyone to enable us to monitor performance and improve what we do," James said.

Supported by other data analyses, the survey results will be used to assess performance against the baseline results established last year.

The survey will be open for six weeks. Look out for more details in the News and Media section of our website.

STORY HOLLY LITTLE

PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM



Above: Operations Manager Bill Johnstone and Merton Group Officer Steve Barling with Traralgon South brigade members.

District 27 FAST FACTS

- There are 23 brigades in District 27, including the HVP Forest Industry Brigade.
- District 27 brigades transitioned from Districts 9 and 10.
- Two brigades – Rosedale and Willung South – have moved from the old Traralgon Group to groups in District 10.
- The District 27 Planning Committee is working to finalise a new constitution and operational protocols.

District 27 up and running

CFA's first new district since 1962 became operationally active on 1 April 2015, with an interim headquarters building established on Hazelwood Road, Morwell.

The formation of a dedicated district based on the City of Latrobe Valley footprint aims to allow CFA to better prevent and respond to fires in a region which is home to key infrastructure.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson described the change as a "landmark in CFA's history."

"There was no plan, road map or script for us at the start of this journey, but what we did have was the tenacity and resolve from our members to make it happen," he said.

"The introduction of District 27 means we have operations and support staff with more capacity to focus on issues unique to this area."

District 27 Operations Manager Bill Johnstone said his vision for District 27 was for a collaborative approach between CFA, the community, industry and sector partners.

"I see my role as generating and advocating for a greater understanding of the very complex risk environment within Latrobe City," he said. "The absolute priority for us is ensuring our members are safe, and our brigades viable and effective, and that will be achieved through being good at what we do."

Bill said that work would continue over the next few months to bring the district to fully operational status.

"We have district, brigade and group leadership – staff and volunteer – working together to get the groundwork right," he said. "They will be looking to strike a balance between moving quickly and not rushing through critical decisions."

Following brigade consultation, a two-group structure was chosen for the district, with the two new groups being called Merton and Hyland. Hyland Group is named after Sir Herbert Hyland who was the Victorian chief secretary at the time of the formation of CFA in 1944, and was present when the bill was signed by the governor in council.

Steve Barling, District Planning Committee chair and Group Officer for Merton Group, said that brigades' day-to-day business would continue as it always has.

"There has been a strong focus on coal mines and Hazelwood over the past year, but I don't believe that leads to us being coal mine brigades. It will make us more prepared and exercised for any incidents that do eventuate, and that's important," he said.

Moe Captain Rod Day said that, while the impact so far on brigades had been minimal,



there had already been marked changes in the way training was set up.

"We are already seeing more opportunities for training. It's totally different the way training is run and organised with the new group," said Rod.

Members from Districts 9 and 10 have also used this opportunity to review their own group boundaries.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

Hunt begins for new training campus site

Following the closure of Fiskville Training College in March 2015, the search for a new training campus site in the Central Highlands region of the state is continuing. CFA CEO Michael Wootten said the immediate priority was to ensure our people, particularly Fiskville staff, are fully supported while we work with our sector partners to find the new site.

"We are exploring alternative arrangements to meet CFA's training needs, including expanding our training capacity at our other regional training campuses, and the use of mobile training props," Michael said.

"Another priority for us is relocating the Firefighters' Memorial Wall. The memorial is an iconic tribute to those who have died in the line of duty. The wall will be well maintained at the existing location until we have spoken to the families and brigades about its future."

Meanwhile, the remediation program for the Fiskville site that began some two years ago will continue. Major engineering works completed at the facility include stormwater and creek diversion works and the creation of a wetland. Parts of the Fiskville site are heritage listed and these will continue to be safeguarded to protect the integrity of those buildings.

Fiskville training staff continue to coordinate training programs across the state and are currently working from a number of sites including CFA's facility at Darley near Bacchus Marsh.

New tree hazard JSOP



Malmsbury Fire Brigade recently carried out hazardous trees training for its members. The training, which included a video and field visit, centred around the new Tree hazard – bushfire response (Joint Standard Operating Procedure 8.03).

Members learned about the new hazardous trees assessment procedures, marking and identifying exclusion zones, and looked at some of the indicators of a hazardous tree.

The field exercise was led by Benloch Captain Vince Cafari, who is also a Parks Victoria firefighter. Vince took the group to the site of the Blackhill Road fire, Kyneton, that occurred in early January (see photo, above). Hazardous trees were an issue at this fire.

Members had the opportunity to look at trees that had been identified as 'killer' trees and other tree hazards.

There were discussions about alternative methods of blacking out, including avoiding hazardous areas, and about the dangers to CFA members when they respond during a storm.

To read JSOP 8.03 and watch a video, go to emv.vic.gov.au/procedures/incident-management/tree-hazard.

Photo courtesy of Glenn Daniels, Bendigo Advertiser.

STORY ANTHONY STEPHENS

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

Euan Ferguson

Many things are impacting CFA at the moment. Although the fire season was relatively quiet, CFA has been busy preparing for the implementation of a number of government initiatives, including recruitment of an additional 350 firefighters, extending Emergency Medical Response to all our integrated brigades, recommencing secondments with MFB and the creation of District 27 in the Latrobe Valley.

This is in addition to the closure of Fiskville and caring for those who are directly affected. Moving recruit and other fire training courses to the Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre at Craigieburn is a significant shift for CFA.

In this time of change I want to encourage you all to reflect on the many good things happening in the organisation. Here are some examples. We had many great saves during the fire season. Our community preparedness activities made a difference. The large air tankers were successfully deployed in Victoria, SA, WA and Tasmania. The introduction of the Regional Radio Dispatch Service, which means all CFA brigades can communicate directly with VicFire, was another significant achievement. The medium tanker capital enhancement program continues on schedule.

Recently I attended the debrief of the tragic incident at Wyndham Vale where a car ended up in a lake with one adult and four children inside (see page 6). CFA members from Wyndham Vale, Werribee and Hoppers Crossing attended a scene of panic and confusion. Rapid thinking and intervention by CFA members saw patients being recovered and immediate first-aid rendered. This was an incident where the actions of firefighters, police and ambulance personnel were seamlessly integrated. I was proud of the efforts of our people who did their best in tragic circumstances.

It is a dangerous and sometimes hostile environment we work in. Remember to take care of yourselves and each other. Relentlessly pursue our mission to protect lives and property. Service to the community is at the heart of what we do and who we are. Do the best you can, but always allow for the fact that someone out there is doing what we do, but doing it better. There is no room for complacency, but bags of opportunities for continuously improving what we do, day by day, bit by bit.

The world we live in is dynamic and changing. There are risks and sometimes these cannot be foreseen. In many regards, when we head out to a job, we are heading into the unknown. Be ready. We will need every bit of imagination, courage and foresight for what awaits us.

Finally, I encourage you to have a positive attitude. Of all the powers and tools and training and gear we have, the most powerful thing is a positive attitude. We can do great things with great people who have a positive attitude.

Take care and be proud of who you are, what CFA is, and what we do in the community. And thank you for what you do.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North East Region



Garry Cook

As I write my column, the late autumn weather pattern has kicked in. While there has been some welcome rain in areas across the North East Region, much more will be needed over the coming months to recover soil moisture levels. The welcome side to this weather is the summer bush and grassfire season of 2014-15 is now behind us and our community focus will move to other risks such as structure and home fire safety – though we understand these are year-round risks.

This is a time to reflect on the past season and, for many of our hard-working people, take a well-deserved rest. However, it is also the best time of year to make plans based on these reflections. We must generate our preparatory activities to ensure we are ready, not just for the 2015-16 fire season, but for anything that may confront us in the meantime.

The major storms in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne on 28 February and more recently in NSW around Sydney and the Northern Beaches are reminders of how Mother Nature can behave. As a key partner in the Victorian emergency management sector, our readiness to respond and support our partner agencies continues all year round.

During March and April a review of the Stewarton fire on 16 December 2014 was conducted on behalf of EMV under the leadership of Victoria Police in the role of regional emergency management coordinator. This was an opportunity for members of the impacted community to raise issues and have these addressed by emergency service organisations and other agencies involved during the response and recovery activities. While the investigation process was well conducted, it did concern several of our local brigade and group members, who felt their efforts and decision-making were undervalued or disregarded. Although this was not intended, it has been acknowledged and it will be a better-informed process going forward.

Regardless, we must be able to listen to our community and learn from what they saw, distil this information meaningfully and, if necessary, adjust our operations accordingly. We must also ensure that we do this with our people and likewise adjust accordingly. Our best is when we can learn from what we or others observe, make sense of such observations, adjust if necessary and take that into the future.

On a different note, in recent weeks I have had the opportunity to attend a number of brigade and district level functions where members have been awarded the National Emergency Medal, the National Medal, CFA life membership or CFA service awards. While I can't name everyone here who has received such public accolades for service to their community and this great organisation, your individual and collective contributions are to be commended.

Stay safe.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South East Region



Trevor Owen

Often it's the things we take for granted that are the most important to us. When I put this into a CFA context, our members do an outstanding job 24/7 in serving the community. Be proud of those things we do every day, no matter how insignificant they may seem. The person receiving our help is grateful that we responded to their request. The assistance we provide in a time of need is at the heart of what we do. We protect our local communities from emergencies every day by preventing, preparing, responding and recovering. Appreciate the things we do every day to protect people.

The formation of District 27 on 1 April is one of many examples of working together to make the most of an opportunity. I have been very impressed by the efforts of senior leaders in District 9 and District 10 in establishing the new District 27, and also effectively reengineering district and group structures in D9 and D10 along the way. There is much more to be done over the coming months to fully complete this change. I'm confident that under the stewardship of districts 9, 10 and 27 operations managers, supported by their senior leaders, we will have a great outcome which will provide even better support for our front-line members in all three districts.

Excellent work across the districts means we are better positioned for the future. D11 is reviewing and developing a solid foundation for future infrastructure and vehicle typology planning. D10 is reviewing district planning committee (DPC) structures and ways to improve communication, reporting relationship and structures. D9 is proactively introducing new alignment of brigades in groups as a result of the creation of D27. D8 has resolved its new DPC arrangements as a result of the creation of South East Region.

I wish to thank and congratulate all those involved as these few examples clearly demonstrate that, when challenges are put before us, we can adapt and make things even better.

At the very heart of what we stand for in CFA is our culture. To further strengthen and improve our culture, our new values will soon be promoted. Ahead of the official launch, the Regional Leadership Team has been regularly using the new values to ensure we are well prepared to help deliver this important work to groups and brigades. This is a really positive step towards providing clarity about our preferred culture. My challenge to you is to start using the values.

Keep up the great work and remember to appreciate our achievements. Never lose sight of the important service we provide every day in protecting the community. We do it well. Be proud!

"The standard you walk past is the standard you accept." – Lieutenant General David Lindsay Morrison AO, Chief of Army.

Twitter: @CFASouthEastACO

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North West Region



Mike Wassing

A common phrase I hear is "there's a lot going on" and I agree. At every level of CFA and in other emergency services there continues to be an enormous amount of amazing work undertaken by volunteers and staff.

Here are some recent examples of this great work within the North West Region:

- 33 new fire stations#
- 517 CFA courses*
- 3,839 trained firefighters* (not including the weekly brigade training for proficiency and skills maintenance)
- 1,370 land use planning reports#
- 724 fire safety regulatory reports#
- 72 Community Fireguard sessions*
- 168 Bushfire Program promotions*
- 231 Fire Ready Victoria meetings*
- 24 Youth Bushfire Education sessions*
- Response to more than 16,000 fires and incidents#

As you will understand, these figures don't reflect all the work undertaken by brigades, groups, districts and the North West Region. Whatever role you play in CFA, the work we do is something all the team should be rightly very proud of.

There are daily interactions within communities, partnerships with businesses and industry, and important liaison and planning with government and other agencies as well as numerous projects, building projects and vehicle programs underway. Our combined efforts assist our vision of working together with communities to keep Victorians safe from fire and other emergencies.

But we must continue to assess what we do and how much we can do. CFA's new Service Delivery Strategy is crucial to our future focus and collective efforts. The core theme of 'supporting local people to solve local problems' is a strong message. For our continued success, the primary focus of our district and regional staff is to support and maintain the viability of brigades in order to deliver CFA services and build community capability. This doesn't mean we just want brigades to do more. It is, in fact, a focus on better understanding the local risk and the local problems we have that need to be addressed, and using innovative ways to resolve them. We equally need engagement with and support from local communities to provide our services.

To better understand this issue and the current capability and, ultimately, the viability of all our brigades and groups, we have started to use the new Brigade Viability Tool combined with the brigade inspection process (s29). This information is currently being brought together and will help us have discussions at brigade, group and district levels in coming months so that we can better focus our support needs while maintaining the focus on priorities already underway.

*Year to date 2015-16 #Past 12 months

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER West Region



Peter
O'Keefe

Over the summer months, there was plenty of activity across the region and it's great to see there have been many after-action reviews and debriefs which will help us shape our approach for next season.

Already, there are a number of issues that require our collective effort to ensure we continue to improve. Items include private firefighting equipment, communications from the field to the incident control centre, and linkage and connectivity to local municipalities.

On a positive note there was some great work undertaken by many brigades and groups, supported by our team of dedicated staff. Well done for your efforts. The 'hit it hard, hit it fast' approach was a key to this year's operations coupled with plain hard work in periods of high operational activity because of lightning and other weather conditions.

There are many challenges and changes in the environment in which we undertake our duties. I ask you all to appreciate the space in which we operate. We are one of many that work in the emergency management sector. Others rely on our contribution, but we also need the support and partnership of other agencies and the strength they bring.

In our part of the state we have strong foundations with other agencies. However, at every opportunity we must strengthen these linkages by being inclusive and transparent in what we do. There is also an opportunity to be innovative and use some lateral thinking. There are many things we do that are opportunities waiting to be explored. In this regard I ask you to start the discussion with your local district team.

Over the past few months I have had the pleasure of meeting many more people in West Region – at championships, social events and award presentations – and it's always great to see your hard work acknowledged. This year we've had some more formal events to recognise and reflect on the great job volunteers do for our community. In West Region, we officially opened the Firefighters' Memorial in the Avenue of Honour at Ballarat, where we recognise those who answered the call to World War I. This year the CFA annual memorial service for firefighters was held in Ballarat to again pay our respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

With the centenary of Gallipoli occurring this year, it was a fitting acknowledgement of those outstanding volunteers who went to the other side of the world. Many did not return.

For me there is a simple message: we are very fortunate to have so many committed and passionate volunteers. Volunteering can be a very dangerous pursuit, however. As we move into the winter months, remember safety first and let's ensure everyone gets home safe and well.

Twitter: @CFAWestACO

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South West Region



Bob
Barry

Following on from a relatively benign fire season during 2014-15, South West Region is beginning our debriefing processes. We introduced a post-season survey that has enabled all our people to provide feedback into key readiness, response and recovery matters. The survey is an internet-based product. To ensure the survey is not too cumbersome, we have developed four levels of feedback including fireground, IMT, district and regional/emergency management team level. Our members were able to complete the survey based on their levels of deployment.

District operations managers were provided with a link via our normal district communications methods. The survey was open for one month and the results were distributed to districts to inform them of our continuous improvement program.

Sixty volunteers across the region have used the Property Advice Visit Service (PAVS) to doorknock more than 2,500 homes in high bush and grassfire risk areas. The PAVS team is being supported by a regional coordinator assisted by mentors.

During these PAVS visits, residents were shown what vegetation needed to be cleared to allow truck access and encouraged to discuss the local fire risk. CFA members also pointed out fire hazards around their homes. This work has also benefited brigades through the recruitment of new members.

To support PAVS, the region has constructed a display trailer which shows an unprepared and a well-prepared house. It can be manoeuvred by one person and easily towed around the region.

For a number of years South West Region, led by Vegetation Management Officer Ian Morrison, has run burn camps to help firefighters develop their prescribed burning skills, build confidence and provide enhanced training. In late March the region held the Cape Otway Burn Camp, where 10 sites on eight private properties were prepared for burning. Despite being hampered by poor weather conditions, seven sites were burned. It was fantastic that both volunteers and career staff participated. There were 69 participants from 24 brigades across districts 5, 6 and 7.

These camps are an important part of our vegetation management program because they deliver on-the-job training and mentoring, provide an opportunity for participants to test new skills, see burn patterns, discuss outcomes and learn from each other's experiences. The camps also enhance our partnerships with other agencies (including VicRoads, Parks Victoria, DELWP and conservation groups) that participate in the preparation, development and, in some cases, the delivery.

It would be remiss of me not to thank all our staff and volunteers for their contribution to preparedness and readiness for the 2014-15 fire season. Although our operational activity was reasonably light, we definitely provided an excellent service to our community. Well done!

Values lay foundation for positive culture

Since November 2015 CFA has been asking members to put forward suggestions about the values that best reflect our organisation. Hundreds of members provided feedback which was used to help shape our final five values of safety, respect, integrity, together and adaptive.

The introduction of these five core values is part of our commitment to improving our culture. They will help us create a culture in which all our members feel acknowledged and respected for the role they play in CFA.

But what does that mean for you? Our values are not simply abstract ideas – they represent behaviours we live by and hold each other to. They are a statement of what we stand for and will help guide us in how we approach our work and interact with each other.

We know some of you may be already living our values, but there's now a stronger expectation of this across the organisation.

By integrating our values into the way we work, we will be better positioned to deliver our mission of protecting lives and property.

In the coming months, members will see a more formal recognition of our values. They will be incorporated into our recruitment processes, position descriptions and our performance review system.

We will also be recognising our members who demonstrate the values through their work. If you know of someone who should be recognised for their efforts or you have demonstrated one of these values recently, send your story to cfaNews@cfa.vic.gov.au.

To read more about our values go to [Brigades Online > About CFA > Values](#).

There are numerous examples of members already demonstrating these values in their everyday work. Below are two.

STORY AMANDA BOLCH



PHOTO: KEN HARE

WORKING TOGETHER TO DEVELOP A TRUCK

The medium pumper prototype project is a perfect example of how we work together.

Operations Manager Ross Sullivan said this was the first time a prototype truck had been developed well ahead of a planned production run, which allowed for extensive consultation about the final design.

"In the past, the first truck had been attached to the front-end of a production run, which reduced the time we had to consult with the most important people – the firefighters."

Ross said close relationships across the organisation had been integral to the project, with the Fleet Services and Engineering teams playing an important role.

"Our OHS staff had input into ergonomic and manual handling issues, which led to design innovation around the systems in the truck that allow us to access the gear," he said. "We ran district mechanical officer visits and their suggestions were used to influence the final design."

CFA Spatial Information Services provided road network and speed data, and our structural fire safety experts gave specialist advice that influenced the selection of equipment. We also worked closely with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria.

There was also a roadshow around Victoria to demonstrate the pumper's capabilities and get feedback from more than 2,000 members.

"It's an example of how we should and need to come together across the organisation from a business sense," continued Ross, "and bring together user perspective with business support for a successful result."



PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMLIN

KEEPING MEMBERS SAFE

The Healthwatch program, which provides free and confidential health checks to volunteers, is an example of how our people are committed to our value of safety.

The program measures volunteers' height, weight, waist circumference, blood pressure, blood cholesterol, triglycerides and glucose.

Coordinator of the Health Support Team Peter Langridge said a pilot program was introduced more than 10 years ago to identify volunteers with a high cardiovascular risk, despite being told by some it would never work.

The program exceeded expectations and more than 14,500 volunteers have been screened. In one particular example, a young volunteer was advised to visit his doctor due to high blood pressure. This may have saved his life as it turned out the teenager had a serious underlying medical condition.

Over the years, many other members have taken steps to manage their health better after participating in the program.

"We've helped several members with early diagnoses of different health conditions so it's great that, in some small way, we're able to give back to our members who dedicate so much of their time to CFA."

Peter said there had been a decrease in people presenting with high-risk factors, from three per cent in 2013 to just below 1.7 per cent now. The program can be booked through esohealthwatch.gov.au.

A blueprint for the future

The formal launch of CFA's Volunteerism Strategy in May 2015, by CFA CEO Michael Wootten and VFBV CEO Andrew Ford, was an important moment for CFA. It marked a shift from developing to executing strategy, not just for volunteerism, but for CFA as a whole.

The Volunteerism Strategy lays out a network of priorities that will sustain front-line service delivery while building a new approach to community resilience and to fire and other emergencies.

CEO Michael Wootten puts it in simple terms: "The environment in which CFA operates presents enormous challenges and opportunities for the future. What is clear is that change is necessary if we are to sustain ourselves as a service delivery organisation."

CFA's other strategies focus on service delivery, people, assets and finance.

"These five strategies make up Towards Resilience, CFA's 2013-18 Strategy. Towards Resilience is our blueprint for the future."

Acting Executive Director Performance and Strategy Phil Harbutt has helped guide the thinking and planning behind the strategy since its inception in 2013.

"This is an exciting moment," said Phil. "We have moved from thinking to doing. We are now lined up across the organisation to take the ideas we have agreed to and make them reality. We are also much better aligned with the sector."

Deputy Chief Officer John Haynes, a principal architect of the Service Delivery Strategy, shares this excitement but appreciates that some people in CFA are not yet sold.

"There are strategies that sit on shelves collecting dust," said John. "However I've been at CFA for 30 years and this is different. We've moved into a different space. The Executive is committed. The Board is committed."

"It's different in that it's focused on the front-line with brigades and communities at the top. That's why all five strategies have to work together. This is all about supporting the front-line and that's a big cultural change for us."

CFA's Volunteerism Strategy has been distributed widely to volunteers and members. The Service Delivery, People, Asset and Finance strategies will be distributed over the coming months.

STORY PAUL HUGGETT



FINANCE STRATEGY

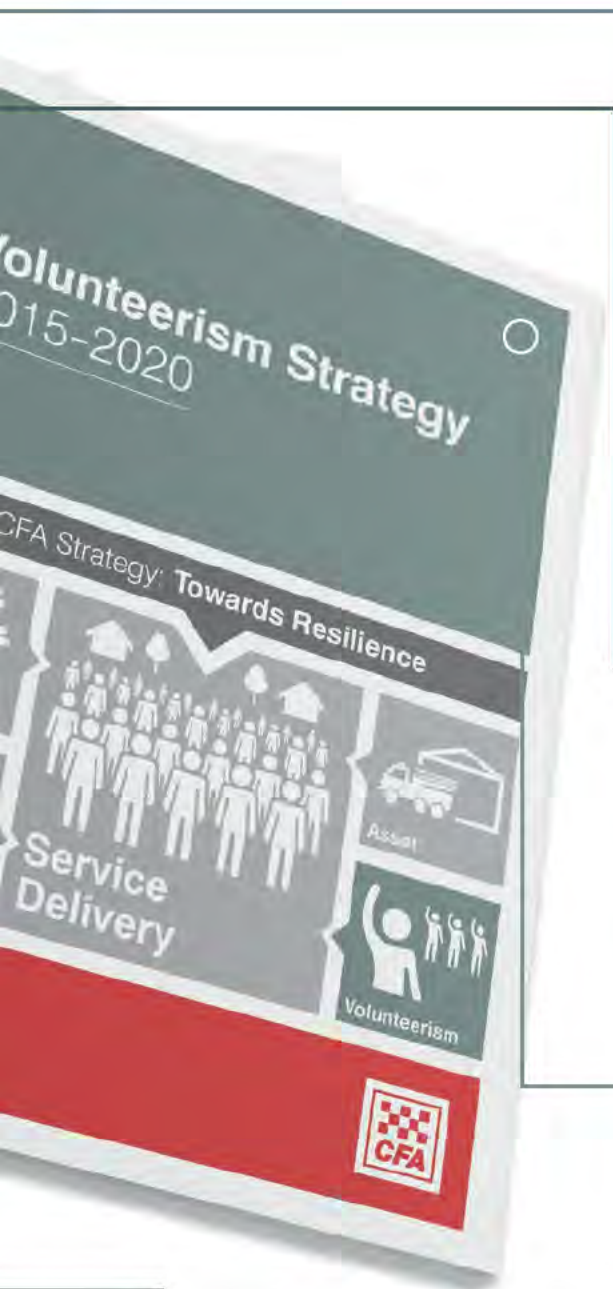
The **Finance Strategy** outlines key priorities to ensure the long-term sustainability of CFA in fulfilling our legal charter and implementing government policy.

FINANCE OBJECTIVES

- Financial leadership and governance
- Financial planning
- Finance for decision-making
- Financial monitoring and forecasting
- Financial and performance reporting



Finance



ASSET STRATEGY

The **Asset Strategy** sets clear priorities to meet CFA's service delivery objectives based on a more interoperable approach to emergency management in Victoria. Achieving this will ensure that CFA brigades have the necessary assets and infrastructure to protect Victorians from fire and other emergencies.

ASSET OBJECTIVES

- Control more effectively where and how CFA's assets are used
- Match the right resources with their intended use
- Support service delivery capability
- Ensure resources are provided at 'best value' to Victorian communities



SERVICE DELIVERY

Service Delivery is at the centre of our network of strategies. Service Delivery will drive CFA as we make changes to support local people in solving local problems, while at the same time keeping the focus on CFA's core business of public safety. Every CFA member plays a role in service delivery, whether delivering services directly to the community or providing support services to front-line members.

SERVICE DELIVERY OBJECTIVES

- Empower and sustain the front-line
- Transform service delivery to meet local needs
- Work with communities
- Strengthen relationships through collaboration



VOLUNTEERISM STRATEGY

The **Volunteerism Strategy** aims to ensure the future capability of community-based volunteer emergency services and recognises the value that our volunteers bring to Victorian communities. The strategy affirms our commitment to ensuring CFA's volunteer-based service is able to embrace and shape the future so that volunteerism will thrive for decades to come.

VOLUNTEERISM OBJECTIVES

- Encourage and value the contribution of volunteers
- Maintain and enhance the role of volunteers in service delivery
- Strengthen connections between volunteers and communities



PEOPLE STRATEGY

The **People Strategy** outlines key initiatives and programs aimed at enhancing our people capability, safety, engagement and sense of direction. Through this strategy, we will position ourselves to meet our service delivery objectives by ensuring we have people with the right capability, skills and knowledge into the future.

PEOPLE OBJECTIVES

- Leadership
- Culture
- Health, safety and environment
- People sustainability
- People capability





CFA's Fire Risk Assessment Framework Development team at the IPAA awards: Jennifer Blyth, Elizabeth Calder, James Fox and Leah McCann. (Team member Tim Baxter not pictured).

PHOTO: COURTESY OF IPAA

Tyre fire risk assessment

Fires involving tyre stockpiles are often difficult to extinguish and damaging to the environment. The toxic fumes can also have economic and social impacts on nearby communities because of temporary evacuation of residents and the shutdown of businesses.

Victorian emergency management agencies and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) have previously not had the legislative power to impose stricter policy and guidelines on the storage and management of tyre stockpiling sites. Thanks to recent inter-agency work led by CFA and the EPA, however, new legislation is soon to be introduced in Victoria.

CFA explored options to regulate orphaned, existing, and future stockpiling of rubber vehicle tyres, resulting in a proposed regulatory framework and guidelines for vehicle tyres.

Victoria has become an attractive dumping ground for tyre stockpiles leading to numerous orphan sites and legacy sites by failed entrepreneurs across the state," said James Fox, leader of the CFA team.

The development of the Tyre Stockpiling Fire Risk Assessment Framework by CFA staff has been highly praised by Deputy Chief Officer John Haynes.

"The CFA team involved in its development is commended for this excellent work", he said. "It has now led to the introduction of clear guidelines for both the indoor and open air storage of new and used tyres."

The development of the framework has been recognised and highly commended in the 2015 Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) public sector leadership awards. The IPAA said the initiative has led to an Interim Waste Management Policy which provides the strongest leverage enforcement agencies have ever had to tackle the issue of poor tyre stockpiling practices.

The guidelines give advice and recommendations to owners and operators for the safe storage of tyres and to ensure that fire protection is provided based on accepted engineering principles, tests, data, fire incidents and field experience.

"It also assists firefighters to be aware of the issues that may affect their standard operating procedures," John said. "Inspecting staff have the ability to calculate a fire risk for the tyre stockpile site. EPA officers are then able to take enforceable action and issue a clean-up notice to owners."

STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

VFBV survey results out now

You can now read the 2014 VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey report.

More than 1,600 volunteers took part in the survey, which tracks trends in volunteers' opinions on matters affecting their welfare and efficiency, and has become a valuable tool for both VFBV and CFA.

According to respondents, improvements were most needed in the training and cooperation areas. Respondents were most satisfied with recruitment and retention issues.

Training was the most important issue to volunteers, but it wasn't meeting their expectations.

There were differences of opinion between genders as to how women are treated in CFA, between volunteer and integrated

brigades, and between newer and longer-serving volunteers about how well CFA is performing.

On a positive note, 80 per cent of volunteers were satisfied with their role as a volunteer and 87 per cent intended to continue volunteering. However, only 59 per cent of volunteers were satisfied with the way they are treated by CFA.

Copies of the 2014 report have been sent to all brigades and you can read it online at www.vfbv.com.au.

The annual survey will open again in mid-July. Previous participants will receive the survey via email and new participants can sign up by sending their name, brigade and email address to vfbv@vfbv.com.au or by calling 9886 1141 to request a paper survey.

STORY PETER BEATON

Changes to CFA service awards



Following a trial of alternate kits, the Honours and Awards Committee has changed the way our members receive service awards.

The change followed a request from our members and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria to consider altering the way CFA service awards are given.

Members eligible for service awards (including Life Member awards) will now receive a full service award set in place of the service award upgrade kits which were introduced in 2008.

As we move to the full service award, members will now receive a newly-awarded medal, ribbon bar and lapel badge service award marking the milestones of 10 years of service and every five years thereafter. Members will receive the full award set at their next anniversary date, and in the meantime members should continue to use the upgrade kits.

Members must remove past service awards at the presentation of the new service award. In accordance

with CFA tradition, the new award/medal replaces the previous service medal – it's not appropriate to wear multiple CFA service medals at the same time.

Members can read the How to Wear Honours and Awards booklet on Brigades Online. Go to **Brigade > Service History & Awards > About the Awards**.

This important change ensures CFA has a consistent approach to recognising the significant contribution our members make over an extended period of time.

If you have questions or feedback, email cfa-awards@cfa.vic.gov.au or phone **1800 232 636**.

STORY BELINDA GILLESPIE

Replacement cylinders

The project to replace CFA and MFB's respiratory protection equipment is now underway after the agencies completed the tender for the replacement of the breathing air cylinders in April. The contract has been awarded to Draeger Safety Pacific Pty Ltd. This is the first stage of the overall program, with the next step being a tender for new respiratory protection equipment.

Recognition of prior learning introduced

Matt Ahern (pictured) is the captain of The Basin Fire Brigade and a community education coordinator in District 13 so he has depth of CFA experience. He was, however, lacking national accreditation for some of his hard-earned skills, but that has changed with CFA's introduction of recognition of prior learning (RPL).

"I've now got the 'Participate in community safety activities' national accreditation," said Matt, "and it wasn't hard. I've attended lots of community events, engaged with the public and done community safety presentations, so I had to compile documentary evidence of that work and skills gained.

"Working through the RPL process has made me realise that you don't always need to sit through lengthy courses for subjects you are already familiar with. That's a huge advantage."

On top of holding the accreditation, Matt is now an endorsed RPL assessor for that unit.

RPL is part of CFA's skills recognition and assessment process, enabling members to have their current skills assessed against CFA standards and accredited national competency standards. Members are supported by endorsed assessors to plan and submit their RPL application.

Other national accreditations now available through RPL are 'Lead a crew', 'Assist with prescribed burning', 'Control a Level 1 incident' and 'Navigate to an incident'. Members are given three months to assemble directly-related evidence such as photos, video, observation reports from a senior officer, strike team records, communication logs and even newspaper or online reports.

"It's worth it," said Matt. "The evidence-gathering was a positive process. It unearths people who have seen you operating and speak well of you."

For an RPL member information kit, which includes a self-evaluation checklist and outlines the evidence required to obtain RPL, go to Brigades Online.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



Engaging women in brigades



PHOTOS: DEANNA NEVILLE

At CFA we believe it's important we are gender inclusive and we are committed to taking action to achieve this.

In mid-April, more than 40 CFA members attended a leadership workshop in Kerang to discuss the vital issue of engaging and encouraging women to be more actively involved in their brigades. A key outcome of the workshop was developing a statement of intent, agreed by all present, which expressed our achievable vision for the future.

Attendees included 25 volunteers from across districts 20 and 18, Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and his wife Kristin, North West Region Assistant Chief Officer Mike Wassing and other CFA staff. The workshop was facilitated by Women's Health Loddon Mallee Executive Director Linda Beilharz.

District 20 Operations Manager Peter Taylor came up with the concept for the workshop earlier this year following a women's forum in District 18.

"To my mind, to be successful in engaging with and being part of communities, brigades need to be a true reflection of the communities they serve," Peter said.

Currently CFA districts 20 and 18 have 14 per cent and 16 per cent female members, respectively, and yet women make up around 51 per cent of the general population.

"These figures present an opportunity to reimagine CFA. If it was started fresh today, who would we seek to have as part of our organisation," Peter said.

Euan spoke of CFA's journey of developing a culture that embraces diversity. He challenged everyone in the room to close their eyes and imagine what a brigade meeting would look like with greater diversity.

"Imagine a 50/50 balance," Euan said. "But it doesn't just happen. It takes a shift in thinking. What do we do differently? We need to think creatively," he said.

Facilitator Linda Beilharz concentrated on the key messages in our gendered lives; that gender is socially determined and gender stereotypes affect both women and men.

"We are all much more complex than the stereotypes," Linda said. "Stereotypes limit our thinking and expectations, and influence the way we treat each other."

An example of this was demonstrated by showing a Youtube clip called Like a Girl, which sent a strong message about gender bias. See <http://goo.gl/w7ZOds>.

Linda also encouraged participants to explore the challenges stating that we need to address how we accommodate the traditional male and female cultures that are embedded in all of us while expanding our expectations about how men and women participate in CFA, work together, act as leaders and participate as members.

The workshop finished with a session that focused on solutions and actions under three key areas and members came up with a range of creative ideas.

1. What needs to change?

- Encouraging women to have a go
- Explain to women what the roles are – how CFA works
- More female involvement in group setting
- Recognise we are equal – men and women are capable of doing all jobs

2. Reimagining CFA

- Community ownership of brigade
- All members self-confident and confident in their role
- Good mix of age and gender
- Existing women members feel encouraged
- New categories of firefighters – urban, farmer, university students
- Encourage families – children move up the ranks
- User-friendly vehicles

3. The steps we need to take

- Inclusion – acceptance/more women
- Women moving up through the ranks
- Equal numbers of male and female
- Our values – walk the talk
- More friendly training – online
- Being inventive

There is still much to do but the workshop helped participants understand gender myths and how they impact on men and women in decision-making. The next step is to develop the above ideas into more concrete actions. More than 90 per cent of the volunteers who attended the workshop wanted to continue to develop strategies and actions for their brigades, so the future looks bright in the north-west.

STORY SALLY TURVEY



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.

GRAIN ENGULFMENT 2015

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

On 10 February 2015, a local farmer became engulfed by grain in a silo on his Axe Creek property. The silo was about a third full, containing approximately 10 tonnes of barley, and the farmer was trapped up to his chest. CFA got the call to respond after people on the farm had worked tirelessly for two hours to free the farmer. It was a warm afternoon and temperatures inside the silo had reached 50 degrees celsius.

The initial call responded Axe Creek and Bendigo brigades, including a ladder platform, for a confined space rescue. The responding officer also requested SES and Oscar 1 Emergency Response Brigade to assist. Oscar 1 is a CFA specialist mines rescue brigade based in Bendigo.

En route the senior station officer (SSO) conducted an initial assessment of the resources available and considered the options to conduct the rescue operation. Although the SSO was a confined space rescue technician, he didn't have any formal grain engulfment training. However, he was aware of a number of techniques he could use to rescue the farmer because of lessons learned from previous grain engulfment incidents. He had also carried out his own research into engulfment rescue techniques.

When crews arrived at the scene, it was decided the control of the incident would remain with the Axe Creek brigade lieutenant and the SSO would perform the role of technical rescue sector commander.

An incident emergency management team was formed during the incident which included Victoria Police, SES, Ambulance Victoria and CFA.



Worksafe also attended the incident but, after the incident, raised concerns about its ability to investigate the incident while it was occurring.

The initial size-up identified that the efforts of the farmer's colleagues had made some inroads to free him. The farmer's colleagues had used a makeshift harness and built a coffer dam around the trapped man and had released some grain from around his chest. Cofferdams are used to shield a victim from further grain engulfment and allow the grain to be removed so the victim can be released.

During the rescue, attempts were made to limit the amount of movement in and on the silo, because any vibration would cause grain to further engulf the farmer. Using the ladder platform, crews accessed the inside of the silo to continue to work on the trapped farmer. Ambulance Victoria officers monitored the farmer's condition remotely from the cage of the ladder platform, and the Bendigo confined space rescue operators, along with the Oscar 1 members, continued the initial plan to free the man using the existing coffer dam arrangement.

All the equipment used inside the silo had to be safe, so there was no threat of a spark that could cause a dust explosion.

The extreme temperatures meant that crews working inside the silo had to be rotated to avoid heat stress.

While rescue efforts were being made internally, SES prepared a number of redundancies. A secondary roping system was set up to help with the internal rescue if it was required. In addition, a fallback plan was prepared to release the grain from below if an urgent evacuation was thought necessary. This process has the potential to cause a dust explosion and may cause more harm to the victim, so an uncontrolled release of grain would have been a last resort.

During the rescue, crews were able to communicate with the trapped farmer and continue to remove the grain from around his body. He was released after being trapped for almost four hours. He climbed the internal ladder to the ladder platform before receiving medical treatment.

Crews working inside the silo were also checked by Ambulance Victoria for heat-related illness because of the extreme conditions they worked in.

After-action reviews were conducted within CFA and at a multi-agency regional level to learn from this incident and to continue to build strong relationships across the agencies involved.



LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Pre-planning for a potential event The members who responded as part of the Bendigo crew had done some mental pre-planning for this type of incident. This pre-planning can be invaluable, particularly if a team reviews the processes that should be considered and thinks about the available options in this situation.

Training and cooperation Increased awareness of the capabilities of SES, Oscar 1 and CFA technical rescue has led to a more collaborative approach when responding to technical rescue incidents. Greater understanding of the various techniques, equipment and procedures will lead to better outcomes for the community. A review has begun of the computer-aided dispatch tables to make sure the correct vehicles are sent to a technical response.

Understanding the risks The agencies and individuals involved in this incident were aware of the dangers of grain engulfment and had varying levels of understanding of the procedures for dealing with this type of incident. A number of agency commanders had previously attended engulfment rescues or had researched risk mitigation for grain engulfment.

Role of Worksafe At emergency incidents Worksafe inspectors may attend to provide support, investigate an industrial accident or review safety management. Crews on scene should give all reasonable assistance to inspectors so they can carry out their duties, which may include providing an escort or a guide while the incident isn't under control. Where an inspector's safety could be at risk because of the nature or status of the incident, or if diverting emergency personnel to help the inspector would jeopardise the welfare of any victims, the inspector should be advised and access restricted until the matters are resolved.

Working in extreme conditions Crews performing the rescue were exposed to extreme temperatures and humidity. To limit heat illness,



a large number of crews was needed and rotated regularly. A rehabilitation unit was available in the area but, because it's a fairly new resource, it was overlooked during the rescue.

Silo awareness for the farming sector Given the time it took to notify emergency services, the farmers may not have fully understood the risks. Thankfully this incident had a successful outcome as the farmer was released, but there have been similar incidents where victims have died either by working inside a loaded silo or entering a silo to rescue a colleague. Engulfment, oxygen depletion, excessive heat and combustibility are significant risks for farmers working inside silos. These incidents can turn into disasters very quickly and the farming community needs to be more aware of the dangers.

CONCLUSION

In 2007, a farmer tragically lost his life during a grain engulfment in Hamilton. This incident was the catalyst for a number of initiatives to better equip our members with the skills and knowledge to deal with silo entrapments.

- In late April this year, two CFA officers attended a train the trainer course on rescue techniques for grain engulfment, conducted by Kansas Fire and Rescue Training Institute and Purdue University in Fargo, North Dakota. This will establish CFA as a leader in grain engulfment rescue training in Australia and will no doubt save lives in the future.
- CFA is currently developing technical rescue resources to deploy to complex incidents such as grain engulfment.
- Local initiatives and expertise mean we can train members to deal with incidents. Through increased knowledge, equipment design and multi-agency exercising, we can limit the impact of these emergencies on our communities.

Photos: Courtesy of Brendan McCarthy, Bendigo Advertiser.

Incidents involving CFA vehicles

CFA has around 3,300 vehicles in its fleet which are used to attend more than 80,000 incidents each year. They are driven by a wide range of people with varying levels of skill. Despite taking care, our vehicles are occasionally involved in collisions or incidents and it's important we investigate them to find out how we can minimise the risks. State Driving Coordinator Glenn Jennings takes a look at some of these incidents to discover what we can learn.

TANKER GOING DOWNHILL



INCIDENT OVERVIEW

A tanker was part of a strike team that had finished operations and was returning to the staging area. The return trip involved a long downhill section that required constant monitoring of the truck's speed. Towards the bottom of the hill, the driver noticed a lack of braking efficiency and then a total loss of brakes. The driver made the brave and probably lifesaving decision to steer the tanker off the road and into trees to slow down and ultimately stop the vehicle. The tanker was stopped by a large tree and one crew member received minor injuries.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Strike team leaders (STLs) need to plan ahead and identify any possible hazards when moving vehicles from one location to another. The STL's vehicle should lead a convoy to control its speed and to inform the following vehicles of any identified hazards.

Drivers need to observe warning signs and act accordingly. For long downhill sections, drivers should select an appropriate low gear early in the descent to reduce reliance on the braking system. The gear that should be selected will depend on the grade of the descent, the vehicle's weight and the type of ancillary braking system fitted (eg exhaust, engine, transmission).

In this incident, crew members wore seatbelts. It's imperative that drivers and crew leaders make sure all vehicle occupants wear seatbelts.

Drivers can read more online in the AFAC publication Drive Vehicles Under Operational Conditions (go to repository.cfals.info/content/drive_vehicles_under_operational_conditions) and CFA Safety Alert No.28 issued in February 2013 following this collision.

DRIVER DISTRACTION



INCIDENT OVERVIEW

A tanker rolled over after the driver lost control of the vehicle. He was distracted by using the CFA radio at the same time as negotiating a right-hand turn into a narrow roadway. The driver was the only occupant.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

When negotiating hazards such as cornering, ensure that you have two hands on the steering wheel. Drivers should not attempt to use communication devices or operate other controls when negotiating hazards. Where possible, it's recommended that at least two members respond in firefighting vehicles so the driver can concentrate on driving and the other person can operate communication devices.

DRIVING THROUGH RED LIGHT



INCIDENT OVERVIEW

A pumper collided with another vehicle at an intersection. There were two sets of traffic lights in close proximity that are not synchronised with each other. The pooling of different coloured lights and the environment created a situation where the driver mistakenly drove through a red light at a speed higher than intended.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

When approaching red traffic lights and stop signs, drivers must slow down to a speed that will enable them to stop and avoid any possible collision. Depending on the circumstances, the driver may need to come to a stop and remain stationary until the intersection is safe to enter. At night in particular, drivers need to be aware of the pooling of lights and slow the vehicle speed accordingly so they have enough time to process the information. The pooling of lights will create a more hazardous environment when it's raining or when the roads are wet.

REVERSING ON A HILL



INCIDENT OVERVIEW

A slip-on rolled over several times after the driver attempted to make a U-turn while reversing down a hill. The driver was helping a neighbouring brigade to crew the vehicle and this was the first time he'd driven the vehicle. In addition, he had very little experience in this type of terrain.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

The investigation identified areas for improvement in relation to transferring information on maps and in briefings to include all identified hazards and the importance of drivers having the appropriate skills for the environment.

This was one of several serious incidents over a few days at a campaign fire. Most damage and injuries occur after the first three days of a fire starting. This is most likely because of fatigue or less-experienced replacement crews who may not have been as familiar with the vehicles or terrain.

When reversing, drivers should use a guide where one is available. The guide should inspect the intended path of the vehicle and advise the driver of any hazards.

When traversing steep gradients, it's important the vehicle travels as straight as possible and never attempts to turn across a slope.

The wearing of seatbelts is reducing serious injuries to CFA members and this incident was another reminder of their effectiveness.

Drivers can read more online in the AFAC publication Drive Vehicles Under Operational Conditions (go to repository.cfals.info/content/drive_vehicles_under_operational_conditions) and CFA Safety Alert No.28 issued in February 2013 following this collision.



TANKER CROSSING BRIDGE

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

A tanker attempted to cross a bridge on private property. Due to damage from a previous fire and lack of maintenance, the tanker damaged the bridge deck, fell through it and required heavy salvage.

Before attempting to cross the bridge, the driver and crew leader discussed its suitability for the tanker. However, they didn't get out to inspect it because there was evidence that other vehicles had recently used it.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Drivers and crew leaders need to properly inspect all bridges and/or seek expert advice in relation to load capacity and other hazards. This is to ensure the bridge doesn't have previous damage, rotten or burnt timbers, and no washaways at the approach or exit ramps. Drivers need to consider whether there's a safer alternative to access the area.

A Red Flag Warning should be issued if a hazard is identified. Any information that's critical for vehicles at the scene should be communicated in accordance with SOP J3.11 Red Flag Warnings.

This is not the first time a CFA tanker has fallen through a bridge on private property. A CFA Safety Alert (No.6) was issued in 2000 and there have been a number of similar incidents since then.



STRIKING A STATION DOOR

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

CFA vehicles hitting station doors during a turnout is becoming one of the most common causes of damage to vehicles and fire stations. Causes include faulty door catches or loss of safety systems when the power fails. However, the most common reason is drivers ignoring warning systems and proceeding against lights and/or alarms.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Drivers or crew members need to ensure that station doors are fully up and that any locking mechanisms are working. If warning systems are installed, drivers must only exit the station in compliance with these systems.

Due to vehicle and station designs, it's recommended that passengers in the vehicle double check the position of doors before moving forward.

If the door is electrically operated, brigades should check their door systems to find out what happens during a power failure.

Members' portal goes live soon

Imagine being able to update your availability for call-outs with little more than a tap on your phone – or replace your yellow sticky note gear request to the captain with an easy-to-use online system.

This will soon be possible when CFA's new Members' Portal is released in July.

The mobile-friendly Members' Portal will let you manage your CFA transactions online, including your availability, booking training, updating contact details and ordering personal protective clothing all on one platform. It can be accessed on a desktop computer, tablet or smart phone.

Deputy Chief Officer Bruce Byatt said a social media approach was taken in developing the Members' Portal.

"The portal will save time for members and help them to better manage their role at CFA," said Bruce. "For example, if a member needs new boots or a helmet, they can simply log the request from their phone and it will be sent instantly to their captain for consideration."

"As well as managing their personal details – including training and certification reminders – members will be able to personalise their home page and tailor the information they receive."

Bruce cited the alpine firefighting vehicle as an example. "The Alpine First Attack vehicle is obviously of great relevance to members covering alpine areas, but perhaps not to those from the Mallee. Through this portal, members can filter the information they receive and subscribe to their topics of interest."

Members can also subscribe to interest groups to receive updates and share information with each other. Members will also be able to subscribe to receive news updates via the portal instead of email.

Bruce said an important aspect of the portal is that it will help brigade captains with readiness, and they will have access to weather, fire danger ratings and member availability at their fingertips.

"With the portal, captains can use their smart phone to see which members are available for local call-outs at any given time and date. This is particularly useful for advanced planning for high fire danger days.

"It also supports the creation of strike teams – again, the captain can see who's available for a strike team and what skills they have, and then build the team accordingly."

The portal project team has been working with members from both volunteer and integrated brigades in the development and testing of the portal, to ensure it meets the needs of all our members.

STORY AMANDA BOLCH



Teamwork delivers results in Eildon

With a little thought and cooperation between teams, North East Region effectively used a single event to meet the needs of two significant programs.

The Eildon community had been identified for the Property Advice Visit Service (PAVS) and, because a significant fuel reduction burn was also planned, Eildon brigade members took the opportunity to doorknock residents.

At the end of February, personnel from all five districts in the region helped Eildon brigade members visit 400 homes within the Eildon township with the dual objective of conducting the PAVS visit and giving residents important information about the proposed burn. In addition, Eildon volunteers promoted the broad range of work done by the brigade.

This doorknock was the first truly regional activity undertaken since the introduction of CFA's five-region structure last year, and the first to deliver two messages at the same time. The diverse group of CFA people worked seamlessly as a team.



PHOTOS: ALEXANDER CAUGHEY

"This was an integral part of the communications plan and has delivered the message better than we thought it would," said Operations Manager Rob Van Dorsser about the doorknock. "This part of the overall plan was an important milestone."

Darren Viney and Tammy Garrett, who are managers of Community Safety, were pleased with the team's achievements and complimented them on a job well done.

A follow-up public meeting was held in Eildon in early April and news articles were published in local media outlets.

STORY NICKI LUND

Helping Jindivik residents to prepare

As part of their community engagement strategy, Drouin West brigade members used PAVS resources to talk with Jindivik residents who lived through the 2009 fire about how their plans may have changed since that experience.

Having completed PAVS training in October 2014, brigade members used local knowledge to target at-risk properties within one to two kilometres of the Bunyip State Forest.

The brigade found PAVS was an effective way to actively engage with residents who may be at high risk of forest fire. Residents were grateful for the visit from their local CFA members and were happy to receive information about how to prepare and stay safe.

Pleasingly, the brigade found that more than 80 per cent of residents had thought through a plan of action to take on high-risk fire danger days. Most residents would elect to leave early and those who would stay and defend were well prepared.

The PAVS material was an effective way to generate discussions about what people might do on days with a high Fire Danger Rating. It also helped brigade volunteers to point out fire hazards and encourage people to have a plan.

It was also a great opportunity to connect with newer residents and have frank discussions about the potential risks to lives and property based on what was learned from the 2009 fires.

Overall, Drouin West brigade members think PAVS is an effective way to engage with your local community on their doorstep. If your brigade is interested in having a PAVS awareness session, contact your brigade administrative support officer, who will arrange a visit by a qualified PAVS facilitator.

STORY RUTH MCGOWAN



Jacy Keith, Elmhurst Fire Brigade District 16

faces of
CFA



PHOTO: JESSICA ANNEAR

What is your involvement with CFA?

I'm the Elmhurst brigade comms officer and the Pyrenees group comms officer. I also assist the management team and the group officer and deputy group officers [DGOs] during Level Two and up incidents at the Elmhurst local command facility [LCF], and do casual admin at District 16 headquarters.

My husband, son, one daughter, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren are all in CFA too. My husband was captain for 17 years and my son was captain for six years and is now a DGO. Our three children all took part in the Junior champs.

Why did you join?

I never put my hand up! My husband came home from a brigade election in 1987 and said, "You've been nominated as comms

officer". Later on, the group officer brought over a radio and said, "It won't be an imposition. We'll just put it in a corner of the cupboard," and that's how I became group comms officer. The roles have evolved and I've grown into them. I was never left in the lurch on my own. Often to be thrown into the deep end is the way to go if you have the support. If you weren't pushed, you might have missed out.

What incidents have had the greatest impact on you?

Before VicFire, working the radio from home, any structure fire when occupancy was unknown.

Black Saturday, of course, when we realised lives had been lost and we had strike teams at Alexandra. You're thinking of the enormity of what people have gone to. It was very rewarding getting crews on the bus at 6am but after three weeks you could no longer ask people to turn around and go back again.

Which role gives you most satisfaction?

I've chosen to remain local where I feel most comfortable and able to best assist those around me.

I really like working with the management team in the LCF, getting strike teams up and running and supporting people doing the hard yakka in the field. I like liaising with the group officer, captains and other officers to ensure the brigade can find relief crews, and forward planning for catering.

What CFA training have you got the most out of?

I'd been one of a group responsible for sending crews on the tanker, so doing Minimum Skills in 2002 really helped me get a grasp on what people really do on the fireground and understand better what they might need. I learned more about people protecting themselves on the truck and am better able to visualise what's going on.

What are the benefits of volunteering in CFA?

It's a contribution to the wider community but you have to look after yourself first before you can keep the community safe. I'm busy, I'm active and I'm very fortunate to work with kind, courteous people and made to feel part of the team.

What's your future in CFA?

I'm looking at winding down but not immediately. I want to keep supporting the group and brigade management teams during incidents and I'm looking around to see who I can mentor into the roles.

What do you do in your spare time?

I play tennis. I play golf badly. We've got kelpies and a labrador and I love to walk. I enjoy gardening and cooking for the shearers. Most of all, I spend as much time as I possibly can with my family.

INTERVIEW BY LEITH HILLARD

Succession planning in brigades



PHOTOS: LEITH HILLARD

Baranduda ain't broke

Once an all-farmer brigade, Baranduda Fire Brigade has kept pace with the land-use changes on the Wodonga fringe and now bustles with young families.

With four children of his own, previous captain and 58-year CFA veteran Ken Bowran clearly has an established interest in succession planning.

"It was sad to step down as captain," said Ken, "but no worries because the younger blokes came along and they've nearly got everything worked out."

"Nearly, Ken? Nearly," laughed current captain Paul Allwood who has been in the role for eight years and appreciates retaining the expertise of someone "who's seen it all and done it all."

"Our strengths come from when Ken was captain. We've carried good practices through. When blacking out, get amongst it, save water, be efficient."

"We have some good natural leaders who can stand back, remain calm and take control. We delegate roles according to people's strengths and they're given room to grow in activities of their choosing. Let's make the most of things people already know then boost their training. We've got six people involved in ICCs [incident control centres] and others who coordinate our involvement in the Good Friday Appeal. Our community safety coordinator is a real people person."

"It's an informal succession plan but, as our Ops Manager Paul King says, 'Don't make it too complicated if you don't need to and don't fix it if it ain't broke.'"

First Lieutenant Mark Goldsworthy agrees. "The brigade is full of capable people from farmers, tradies and mechanics to teachers, engineers and academics."



"We've got respect for experience but we've also got respect for people trying other ways of doing things. Our mentoring philosophy is to let others have a go and everyone is willing to share the responsibility. Our experienced leaders are prepared to step back and let others safely have a go."

"We have crew leaders watching over our newer members and chatting in their ear about their decision-making process. 'Have you thought about this?' We don't play the hierarchy game but we're serious when we need to be."

Other future leaders are no doubt in the Junior ranks. It's only been running for two years but already has 28 members, one third girls, along with six Junior leaders.

There are 65 in the senior ranks with 30 operational who attended 134 calls last year. While there are currently one in five women in the active ranks, there are 15 crew leaders and a "ludicrous" number of drivers.

Leave it to the self-described "warm and fuzzy" Rosalie Dows to explain what it's like being a Baranduda insider. She is the delegated wellbeing and welfare officer who checks up on the families of members away on strike teams.

"We have a healthy let-go and handover of roles," she said. "When you give up a role, you remain of value. We also don't have a macho attitude. We're all here for the same reason and that's the safety of the community ... and to have some fun."

STORY LEITH HILLARD



1st Lt Joe Kane, 2nd LT Vaughan Toose, Captain Simon Henderson, Secretary Craig Allison and 3rd Lt Matt Kane

“Get in, do your term, get out”

The population is decreasing in the twin District 20 settlements of Barraport and Gredgwin, but numbers in the recently-merged Barraport-Gredgwin Fire Brigade are increasing.

It's a relatively new development that roughly coincides with their succession plan to tackle a reluctance to step up into leadership positions. It's a country mile from the days when current Captain Simon's Henderson's father Daryl wanted to step down from the captaincy.

“No one wanted to take it on,” said Simon. “You had to die to get out of the job.” Fortunately, Daryl didn't take such a drastic step but something had to be done.

The guiding principle of the succession plan was laid down by then-Operations Manager Stuart Broad who said, “Get in, do your term, get out”.

As Simon explains, now they do just that. “You start as third lieutenant for two years and you're in charge of the truck roster.

You move to second lieutenant for two years where you're in charge of training. You're two years as first lieutenant where you're mentored to step up to the captaincy. From there you're the captain and an active mentor for two years, then you're back to being a regular member.

“It means you can have more of a go and it spreads the workload.”

It's a no-nonsense plan for this brigade of 50 members, half of them operational, who attend an average of 12 incidents a year.

Simon is now the sixth captain in 10 years and the brigade is fortunate to have the experience of nine former captains in its ranks.

“It has renewed interest in the brigade,” continued Simon, “because you don't just give, give, give.”

Brigades wanting support to develop their succession plan with the Brigade Sustainability team should first talk to their catchment team.

STORY LEITH HILLARD

A brigade as a small business

When Diana Ferguson was elected Bayswater captain four years ago she became the first female captain of an urban brigade. Now she and the brigade management committee are painstakingly planning her handover of the role in two years. Her successor is being actively mentored, all members have updated personal development plans, and the brigade has a five-year business plan.

“We have a blend of business-minded members who regard the brigade as a part-time unpaid job,” said Diana.

It's a practical and professional response to Bayswater's risk profile: the fifth-largest industrial suburb in Melbourne with a significant road network and a brigade of 80 members (including Juniors) who attend up to 500 incidents a year on top of their substantial commitment to community engagement.

“In order to keep up the momentum and match the area's growth and diversity, we have to succession plan or we'll burn our people out,” continued Diana. “We have to get people interested and keep them. Their personal development plan helps them set goals with training structured according to their ambitions.

“They make a commitment to the brigade and can see that the brigade has also made a commitment to them.

“The structure provides guidance. It allows me to look at the bigger picture and strategically plan while the lieutenants do the day-to-day running of the brigade. The brigade runs with or without me on the fireground, although it's also important for the captain to lead by example.”

In fact, Diana attends between 150 and 200 calls a years. With a career as an SES operations officer, she's one of a number of Bayswater members who have used their high-level skills to transition into paid emergency services roles.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



CFA firey receives bravery award



PHOTO: AMY SCHILDBERGER

A CFA firefighter received a bravery award at the end of February for his efforts in saving a man's life following a car accident.

Traralgon Leading Firefighter Alex Batty was awarded a Citizen's Commendation from Victoria Police. According to the police, this award is given to community members who've "performed a conspicuous act of bravery or provided exemplary service in connection with Victoria Police operations or for the community".

On the night of the accident, Alex was off duty walking along Alexandra Parade in South Yarra when he saw a crash between a motorcycle and car.

The motorcyclist was unconscious and not breathing so Alex made the life-saving decision to remove his helmet and start performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

"In certain situations we wouldn't remove a helmet or remove someone from a vehicle after an accident because it could add to injuries, but this was a life-or-death situation," Alex said.

"Ambulance Victoria arrived quickly so I remained on scene assisting paramedics with CPR."

Paramedics told Alex he saved the man's life. "It's not something I thought too much about at the time. My job is to protect and save people so I did what I could and I'd do it again."

Alex was previously a firefighter at Hallam Fire Brigade which is part of the Emergency Medical Response (EMR) program. EMR-accredited firefighters can respond to life-threatening 'priority 000' calls – such as cardiac arrest and any incident where a person is unconscious and not breathing – while an ambulance is en route.

"I'm proud to be a firefighter and to save lives. It was a team effort that night and I want to recognise and thank the other emergency services involved," continued Alex.

"I'm extremely honoured to receive this award and I want to thank Victoria Police for nominating me."

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

The Chief leads Jamieson Anzac Day

Excellent forward planning by Mitchell Shire Group Officer Noel Arandt secured Chief Officer Euan Ferguson three years ago for the Jamieson 2015 Anzac Day commemorations. Three years ago!

Despite heavy rain, more than 300 locals attended the dawn service followed by a gunfire breakfast. The Chief joined Jamieson members for the march



PHOTO: FREDDIE LEONG

and flag ceremony with the group forming a semi-circle around the memorial stone.

The memorial hall then packed to capacity for Euan's speech to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Anzacs at Gallipoli.

"As a young officer, the Army taught me about self-discipline, navigation and infantry minor tactics," said Euan. "The principles of war, the appreciation process and the method of briefing I have continued to use and apply in my civilian fire job.

"Much of the language of fire and the doctrine around fire control has been shaped by returned servicemen who have brought these terms into their local fire brigades, which have then been adopted at an organisational and industry level."

The Chief also drew links between the all-volunteer first Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and the CFA ethos of volunteering.

"In December 1914, the then Country Fire Brigades Board (CFBB) had 2,444 registered volunteers. By 1917 the numbers had fallen to 2,265. By the end of the war, a total of 893 of the then 2,308 registered volunteers had enlisted in the AIF – that is more than one in three.

"Between 1914 and 1918, 147 CFBB volunteers were killed in action and a further 191 were wounded.

"It has been suggested that many returned soldiers turned to the local fire brigade to be with like-minded people. There was an on-going sense of duty, service and, in a different way, sacrifice."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Dedicated to farming and CFA

As CFA volunteers, dairy farmers Janet and Rob Auchterlonie from Dumbalk have travelled across the state and Australia for more than 30 years to help communities in their hours of need.

The constant demands of twice-a-day milking make the sacrifice of this South Gippsland couple even more remarkable. Both Rob and Janet, who is Dumbalk Fire Brigade captain, are all too familiar with the work that awaits them when they return exhausted from an emergency call-out.

"There have been times when I've got home late from a call-out and had to go straight into the shed to milk," Rob said, "and it's had a negative impact at times."

Both Janet and Rob regularly attend major fires. Rob, who's also a deputy group officer and peer support officer, spent weeks mopping up after the February 2009 fires and fought fires in WA in February this year.

"We're both strike team leaders, which means when she goes I'll stay and when she comes back I'll go," Rob said.

Son Doug who's also a CFA volunteer, works on the farm, which allows Janet and Rob to attend more call-outs than would otherwise be possible.

On the fireground, they use their professional knowledge to protect the most important assets of farms that are under threat.

"I don't think non-farmers appreciate the value of a dairy herd and dairy sheds," Rob said. "They tend to look at saving a house as being the most important thing, whereas farmers look at the herd and think, 'That's what has to be saved'."

The only time that Janet won't leave the farm for an extended period is during calving and joining, when the health of her 240-strong herd is the number one priority.

"Because herd health is really important to me, that's the one time of year when the farm comes first," she said. "My aim is never to lose a cow in calving, which takes a fair bit of work."

It's a labour of love for the Auchterlonies, both on the farm and on the back of a fire truck.

"You couldn't be a farmer unless you really like the job, and you couldn't put the time into the CFA unless you enjoyed not only the work, but the people you're working with," Rob said.

STORY JESSE GERNER

New stations in the Upper Murray



PHOTO: KEVIN WHITEHEAD

In late March in the Upper Murray region of Victoria, Biggara and Berrigama brigades welcomed Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and his wife Kristin to open their new fire stations and to present service medals representing over 900 years' service to each community.

The new two-bay stations have toilet and kitchen facilities, external drying rack, turnout provisions for volunteers and a 15,000-litre water tank that feeds the station's amenities and can be used to fill the tanker without going off site.

Both stations were opened in the presence of District 24 Operations Manager Paul King, local Member of Parliament Bill Tilley, and members of the brigades and the community.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson emphasised that brigades such as Biggara and Berrigama are not only important to the district but also to the whole CFA community. Euan said that these new stations are an asset for the whole community, and he encouraged everyone to use them as such and not just as fire stations.

Euan gave a special mention to Bob Coulston, ex-captain of Berrigama brigade, who was captain for 37 years before stepping down in 2002.

Biggara brigade Captain Gordon Nicholas spoke about the history of the brigade and acknowledged CFA for building the new fire station. "I am grateful for the support from the staff at District 24, the local community and fellow brigade members," Gordon said.

Among the 31 service medals presented at Biggara were 55-year service awards for Roscoe Damm, Keith Whitsed and William Whitsed. At Berrigama Ken Coulston and Bob Coulston were recognised for over 65 years of service.

STORY ALEX TODD



PHOTO: COURTESY OF DAIRY AUSTRALIA



Longwood community thanks firefighters

PHOTOS: ROBBIE RAE

Around 450 people attended a special barbecue at the Longwood Community Centre at the end of March, to thank firefighters and landholders affected by the devastating 5,500 hectare bushfire at Creightons Creek in December 2014.

The thank you event attracted members from about 25 fire brigades, the Minister for Emergency Services Jane Garrett, Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley.

The brainchild of Longwood Fire Brigade Captain Shaun Hearmon, the event was a reminder of the hard work and dedication of thousands of volunteer firefighters who battled the blaze morning and night, including on Christmas Day.

Shaun said the support he'd received for the event was outstanding.

"No one that was approached said no to coming to the barbecue," he said. "The amount of people who attended was mind-blowing. It's actually quite humbling. It was a beautiful day at a lovely venue. I couldn't have asked for more."

He said he was incredibly appreciative that Chief Officer Euan Ferguson changed his plans at the last minute so he could attend the event.

During his speech, Euan said the district faced a "serious situation" last year and emergency service workers and volunteers rose to the occasion.

"The CFA is born of the community. The organisation is nothing without volunteers," said Euan.

"In times like these, we ask more of our members to take on various roles on the fireground, which means younger members stepping up and making important decisions.



"I take great pride in seeing how hard our volunteers work so it is fitting that we come together and unite.

"Whatever role you played during the Creightons Creek fire, I thank you for being there."

Affected resident Brian Kelly said, as a volunteer firefighter, he was used to being on the 'giving end' and never on the receiving end, but he was forced to defend his own property.

"You don't think of going home to defend it from fire," he said. "I can't begin to thank the community for their efforts last year."

Violet Town brigade member Robbie Rae was at the event in her capacity as Strathbogie Shire Rural Recovery Officer.

"If you want something to happen just get a bunch of farmers together who volunteer for CFA and they just get it done," she said.

"I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the local community. We went to pick up some salads from the local cafes and what they had all made was far above and beyond our expectations. The two bakeries gave all the bread and bread rolls. The local supermarket gave soft drink, and all the beer and wine was donated from local breweries.

"We were also joined by Need for Feed – the Pakenham Lions – who came up the day before, delivered fodder to the various property owners then camped the night at the Longwood Rec Reserve and were on hand to join in with the festivities. They had a display and right on cue a big semi full of hay pulled in for a lunchtime feed."

STORY ANTHONY CINI

Brigade thrives under Emma's captaincy

In early March, CFA celebrated International Women's Day by asking several women in various CFA roles to tell their stories. Emma Brennan, captain of Laceby West Fire Brigade was happy to take part.

"It doesn't matter what colour helmet you're wearing, we all work as a team," Emma said, and she's put this into practice very successfully since stepping into the captain's role last September.

The brigade was on the verge of closing its doors late last year, but under Emma's guidance Laceby West is now a thriving social hub for the whole community.

"After an incident or job, I make a point of calling members involved to give them feedback – ie you did that really well, or that was a good idea – and people really appreciate that."

On being the brigade's first female captain Emma said, "I did get a few smart alec

comments, but I guess it helps that I don't take any rubbish."

Having grown up on a farm and being used to manual labour, Emma hasn't struggled at all with the physical demands of the job.

"It's a bit daunting to walk into a room of 40 blokes for a regional leadership team meeting and being the only woman, but once you get past that initial discomfort it's fine."

Emma thinks CFA could benefit by having more women in the organisation and hopes she can motivate others to follow in her footsteps.

"I hope that I can be a role model for other women who are thinking about joining CFA, but think it might not be for them because of the stereotypes around it."

"By seeing me on the back of a truck or being an incident controller, they might see that it's OK for them to join too."

STORY ANDREA MASON



PHOTO: MARC BONGERS

Upper Ferntree Gully honours Brian Potter



PHOTO: DUNCAN RUSSELL

Former Chief Officer Brian Potter began his long association with CFA as a child living in the foothills of the Dandenongs, mingling with Upper Ferntree Gully brigade members.

"He started as a kid hanging around the fire station and ended as the Chief Officer," said Upper Ferntree Gully Fourth Lieutenant Mark Goodchild. "Having a member who got all the way to the very top is something the brigade is proud of."

Brian was made an honorary life member of the brigade in 1993 and, at the brigade's 2012 dinner – attended by Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and the then Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley – "Brian gave a speech that moved a lot of people," said Mark.

In honour of Brian, the brigade created the Brian 'The Chief' Potter Captain and Brigade Appreciation Award last year.

"The award is for a brigade member or a member of the community who has been of particular value to the brigade over the past year; someone who has done outstanding work in a variety of areas," said Captain Peter Smith.

Brian's wife Dianne and his son Mark presented the 2014 award to Third Lieutenant Darren Johnson (pictured).

"This award is an appreciation of commitment to the brigade, but I have to say I'm surrounded by a great bunch of people who do their best," said the very humble Darren.

"Darren's involved in everything we do and puts his heart and soul into the brigade and does an outstanding job," said Mark Goodchild.

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL



Mildura career firefighter Nathan Shanahan walked almost 400 kilometres to reach Adelaide by Anzac Day to actively combat his diagnosed depressive disorder and anxiety.

This ex-soldier's walk also raised funds for Soldier On, a charity that supports injured soldiers and those with post-traumatic stress and other mental disorders.

"My wife and I came up with the Soldier On fundraising idea to take the focus off the negativity around depression," said Nathan. "As well as fundraising for them, this was a healing process for me and about raising awareness.

"Anxiety and depression can accumulate and something like 72 per cent of men go untreated. They go on in silence. That was me. I was silent for a long time but it was going to consume me."

Beyondblue statistics show that, on average, one in eight men will have depression and one in five will experience anxiety at some time in their lives.

Last Anzac Day, Nathan revealed to his wife Kosha that he was "really struggling.

"Every so often things just didn't seem right. I'd lost confidence and motivation but I put it down to being tired or maybe not eating right. I was feeling a bit vague and not really enjoying new challenges but I kept ignoring it until the feelings came more often.

"I did the beyondblue checklist of the signs and symptoms then saw a doctor, and I've been seeing a counsellor for the past year."

This is a man who has never shied away from a challenge. He joined the Australian Army in 2005, aged 28, and trained as a tank soldier before joining the 1st Armoured Regiment in Darwin. The following year he was deployed to the Solomon Islands in an infantry role.

Nathan returned to Darwin after a four-month deployment and applied to join the SAS; something he saw as a dream role. He was successful but soon realised it wasn't the right lifestyle for a family man.

Nathan can carefully lay out the path of his life, but even a year into counselling he can't put his finger on the source of his depression and anxiety.

"It can be triggered by a particular incident but that doesn't seem to be the case with me," he said. "It's been there for a long time. The arrows point to the army, but things I've seen as a firefighter are probably worse."

Nathan left the army in 2010 to become a Northern Territory firefighter before moving with his family to Victoria to be closer to their extended clan. That clan now also includes members of Mildura Fire Brigade, both career and volunteer, who were right behind this walk.

"Everyone at Mildura brigade has been fantastic," said Nathan. "I wondered how to tell them about my struggles and what they would think, but people aren't judging and you can still function.

"I told my boss to have a second set of eyes and then I told C shift, family members and close friends. I'm ready to tell anyone. I've felt okay at work. It's the thing that's kept me together the most. Your training takes over."



In fact, the understanding that has flowed since Nathan started talking about his depression and anxiety has toppled some of his own limiting beliefs about masculinity.

"I'd thought it was a weakness for men to show chinks in their armour," he admitted. "I'd been the captain of a football side and we'd won premierships. I was looked on as a leader and people trusted my judgement, so how can I tell guys who looked up to me for leadership about my depression and anxiety, but it sometimes reduced me to tears.

"We're scared of what we don't understand. You're afraid that it's shameful and no one wants to talk about it but people have been more than supportive. I've spoken to a lot of people since then who've said they have depression or someone else in their family has it. I've known some of these people my whole life and didn't even know – that's the sad part."

But back to those 400 kilometres...

"I'd been training for six months but I felt anxious about getting underway," said Nathan. "By day two I was already ahead because my self-confidence and self-belief were strengthened.

"We were blown away by the response and having Kosha there the whole time created that special bond. Newspapers and radio were checking in along the way and I raised triple what I'd aimed for. I'd never expected people along the road to stop and donate and that generates its own energy.

"This was about me healing but also about raising awareness. We shared stories with people from all walks of life along the way and it seemed to strike a chord. I hope it showed people that if you get the right help you can achieve all your goals and more."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

To read more, see Nathan's Facebook page at: [facebook.com/walkingoffthewarwithin](https://www.facebook.com/walkingoffthewarwithin)

Addressing mental health issues

■ One-on-one confidential support

- Peer Support Program (trained members offering support and guidance): cfa.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth
- Member Assistance Program (24-hour counselling): 1300 795 711
- Chaplaincy Program (24-hour pastoral care): 1800 337 068

■ Brigade support

- Wellbeing Pilot Program (experienced field officers working with brigades on mental health and relationship issues): 9262 8409 or wellbeing.intake@cfa.vic.gov.au
- *Managing Mental Health – Tips from Brigades* guide book: available on cfa.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth

■ Resources

- HeadsUP online tool (information and advice about managing mental health and relationship issues): cfa.vic.gov.au/headsup
- Mental health videos: <http://bit.ly/cfaMH>



PHOTO: TIM MCNEILLY

The importance of rehab units

For too long, issues such as heat stress, dehydration and smoke inhalation have caused ill health to firefighters on the fireground. Fortunately, following the development of purpose-built rehabilitation units, these issues are now being better managed and prevented, allowing volunteers to return home safe and healthy after an incident.

"When we first developed the Health Support Team 12 years ago, people were really grateful that we were there to help," said Coordinator of the Health Support Team Peter Langridge. "It took a while for members to trust that we were there for the right reasons. It's great to now see that more and more brigades are setting up rehab units to support their peers."

The rehab units, now operating in Yellingbo, Dandenong, Wonthaggi, Golden Square and Ocean Grove, consist of a dedicated vehicle fully equipped with cool chairs, hygiene stations, hydration products, first-aid equipment and a defibrillator.

Yellingbo brigade's First Lieutenant Brett Kerford played a key role in setting up one of the first rehab units in the state. "Primarily, we're there to look after the firefighters and other emergency services personnel," said Brett.

"It's also a safe place for residents to wait during a house fire, and has been used as a meeting place for all emergency services during hazmat incidents. It's really expanded over the last year or two."

As the number of rehab units continues to grow, several brigades are tailoring their recruitment strategies to target individuals with health backgrounds, with the intent of further building the capabilities of their rehab units.

New rehab units at Rochester and Mernda brigades will be launched in the next few months. Requests for rehab or health support at an incident can be made through VicFire or the rostered duty officer.

STORY TEAGAN KNIGHT



This year's Champs

The 2015 State Championships have come to an end and the teams are taking a well-deserved rest. Almost 300 teams from across Victoria competed in events based on practical firefighting activities.

The Urban Junior State Champs at Horsham were dominated by Tatura brigade who finished first in all five events. Meanwhile, at the Urban Senior Champs in Bendigo, Kangaroo Flat won for the third year in a row.

At the Rural Champs at St Arnaud, Willaura A was the Junior champion team and Napoleons/Enfield A won the Seniors A Division.

Next year the Championships will be held in Tatura, Mildura and Colac. See you there!



URBAN RESULTS: SENIOR

Dry Aggregate		
1st	Kangaroo Flat	40 points
2nd	Narre Warren A	16 points
3rd	Maryvale	10 points
Wet Aggregate		
1st	Corio	56 points
2nd	Drouin/Bunyip	48 points
3rd	Sale	40 points
A Section		
1st	Kangaroo Flat	76 points
2nd	Drouin/Bunyip	48 points
3rd	Wendouree	40 points
B Section		
1st	Corio	77 points
2nd	Benalla	45 points
3rd	Morwell, Patterson River & St Arnaud	34 points
C Section		
1st	Warracknabeal	52 points
2nd	Sale	44 points
3rd	Warrnambool	37 points

RURAL RESULTS: SENIOR

Division A Aggregate		
1st	Napoleons/Enfield A	38 points
2nd	Napoleons/Enfield B	32 points
3rd	Hurstbridge A	32 points
Division B Aggregate		
1st	Torquay A	42 points
2nd	Dunrobbin/Nangeela B	32 points
3rd	Hurstbridge B	26 points
Division C Aggregate		
1st	Dunrobbin/Nangeela B	42 points
2nd	St Arnaud A	38 points
3rd	Strathdownie B	33 points

URBAN RESULTS: JUNIOR

Dry Aggregate		
1st	Tatura A	35 points
2nd	Benalla	23 points
3rd	Drouin/Bunyip	21 points
Wet Aggregate		
1st	Tatura A	37 points
2nd	Swan Hill A	16 points
3rd	Euroa A & Moe A	13 points
Under 14 years Aggregate		
1st	Tatura A	43 points
2nd	Drouin/Bunyip	26 points
3rd	Benalla	18 points
Under 17 years Aggregate		
1st	Tatura A	29 points
2nd	Swan Hill A	24 points
3rd	Moe A	22 points
Grand Aggregate		
1st	Tatura A	72 points
2nd	Benalla	28 points
3rd	Drouin/Bunyip	26 points

RURAL RESULTS: JUNIOR

11-13 years Aggregate		
1st	Springhurst A	42 points
2nd	Greta A	32 points
3rd	Hurstbridge A	26 points
11-15 years Aggregate		
1st	Willaura A	46 points
2nd	Eldorado A & Sedgwick A	32 points
Champion Team		
1st	Willaura A	56 points
2nd	Sedgwick A	46 points
3rd	Springhurst A	42 points



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM AND BLAIR DELLEMIN



CFA's record Good Friday Appeal

CFA members surpassed last year's total of \$1.6 million by raising \$1,713,432 for the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal.

In addition to the funds raised and collected by CFA tin shakers, members teamed up with MFB firefighters for a 14-hour treadmill challenge which raised \$23,000.

Members of Longwarry and District brigade and CFA Deputy Chief Officer Bruce Byatt presented a bucket during Seven Network's telethon on Good Friday, to represent the money collected by CFA.

"This is a wonderful achievement and I thank all our dedicated members for their hard work in raising funds for the Good Friday Appeal," Bruce said.

"We're extremely proud of all our members who volunteered their time to help raise money for this worthy cause."

CFA also entertained the crowds at the popular Kids Day Out event with the Captain Koala and Friends Show and CFA band the Red Austins. Langwarrin brigade members also invited kids to jump on board a tanker and our mobile education unit team was on hand to show people through the bus.

"We would like to thank everyone who was involved with this year's event," said Bruce.

CFA brigades have been raising and collecting money for the appeal for more than 60 years – that's \$24.7 million raised to date.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM



Cultural Diversity Week

CFA was again proud to sponsor and participate in Cultural Diversity Week which was held from 14 to 22 March 2015. Cultural Diversity Week is one of Victoria's largest multicultural celebrations and is an opportunity for all Victorians to celebrate our rich cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.

As part of the celebrations, the Victorian Multicultural Commission hosted the Viva Victoria Multicultural Festival at Federation Square. Like last year, CFA took part in the festival and had a joint display with MFB providing information on home fire safety, bushfire safety and what to do in the event of a grassfire.

Members from Truganina, Lake Tyers, Noble Park and Keysborough brigades did a great job during the day talking to the community. The drawcard for both young and old was the little kids' red firefighter hats, which were handed out after a child had correctly answered a fire safety question. Children loved sitting in the 'Little Lex'

helicopter and, while they were entertained, parents chatted to CFA members about fire safety. The kids were also entertained by a live performance from April and Captain Koala.

CFA sponsored the Ballarat Harmony Fest held on 22 March. CFA had a marquee with activities, fire safety information and material printed in numerous languages. The public particularly liked having their photo taken and trying on turnout gear at the marquee.

Over a whirlwind five hours, the Harmony Fest included a traditional welcome and smoking ceremony, a parade of nations, a live concert, multicultural expo, sports, crafts, children's activities and delicious international cuisine.

Cultural Diversity Week is always a great event to be part of. It is an opportunity for CFA to showcase what we do in the community and our commitment to embracing and encouraging diversity among our members.

STORY GEORGINA HILL AND ANGELA COOK

PHOTO: SHERENE MOURNIER



Mitchell Shire Deputy Group Officer Peter Roylance and his son Simon who's a vegetation management officer and volunteer firefighter.

Give Happy Live Happy

The theme of this year's National Volunteer Week, held from 11 to 17 May, was 'Give Happy Live Happy'. More than six million Australian volunteers give happiness to others each year. Research shows that those volunteers are happier as a result.

CFA's volunteers were celebrated during the week. Across the state, events such as barbecues, morning teas and movie nights were held to acknowledge the volunteers and their families for the sacrifices they make day in, day out.

Dandenong and Wodonga councils and Federation Square once again supported CFA by displaying on their big screens encouraging messages from the public to our volunteers during National Volunteer Week.

On Monday 11 May, Diamond Creek Fire Brigade hosted the launch of the digital storytelling workshop stories. Acting Executive Director Operational Training and Volunteerism Kate Harrap took to the stage and also launched the Volunteerism Strategy.

"It's our formal commitment to volunteerism," she said. "We want to actively engage and involve volunteers in decision making and cultivate an environment where more voices are heard. The digital storytelling workshop is an example of this."

CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson added, "The concept of storytelling is very powerful: it passes on valuable knowledge to future generations and potentially to those young men and women who are considering joining CFA."

"Being a volunteer in this society places you at the pinnacle of citizenship. In light of National Volunteer Week, thank you for what you do for your individual communities and for the ethos of volunteerism."

STORY SASKIA VAN BEVER

PHOTO: WARREN MITCHELSON

Burn camp at Mallacoota



PHOTO: LYN HARWOOD

Mallacoota brigade had been planning a controlled burn for the outskirts of the town for four years. The prep had been completed years ago and was upgraded each season, but the go ahead to burn never came.

But this year, in benign autumn conditions, a burn camp was allocated to the town and over 40 volunteers participated. This training coincided with a series of large Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) burns which circled the south-east perimeter of the town. These burns were of such a scale that Mallacoota crews were taken away from the original program and allocated to containment of the DELWP fire.

The burn camp team, comprising brigades and vehicles from Newmerella, Paynesville, Mount Taylor and Mallacoota and CFA district headquarters, burnt part of the prepped area on Karbeethong Hill but then weather intervened to stop the program.

The following week, however, the local brigade burnt a large area beside the airport and then focused on completing the Karbeethong burn in a tricky hill and gully location. This area was prepped and the burn was completed before the heavy rains of April arrived.

Mallacoota crews gained a great deal from working with DELWP and having the burn camp crews in town. Even on the rainy Sunday that cut short the camp, members from all brigades took part in a simulated fire attack program and a debrief on the work already completed.

Most town members were glowing in their praise of both DELWP and CFA. There were still a few complaints about smoke in the air and the scale of the burns, but that's all part of the educational experience Australia must have living in this dry, fire-prone country. As more people become familiar with the role of controlled burns and the fire management principals of Aboriginal Australians, maybe the public discussion about fire will be more informed.

STORY BRUCE PASCOE SECOND LIEUTENANT MALLACOOTA FIRE BRIGADE

*Bruce Pascoe is an Australian author whose latest book **Dark Emu** calls for a radical re-evaluation of our understanding of Aboriginal land use before European arrival.*



PHOTO: NOEL MCWILLIAMS

D9 leadership forum a huge success

Captains and first lieutenants from 34 brigades across District 9 gathered over two weekends in March to participate in the first of a series of leadership forums for the district.

While we acknowledge that a significant number of captains and brigade management team (BMT) members are well informed and possess key leadership skills, there are a number of captains who may not be as confident in managing some of the day-to-day issues.

The Volunteer Sustainability Project had previously identified that District 9 volunteer leaders wanted leadership training.

Forums were run in two locations to make it easier for our volunteers. The logical choices were the new Leongatha Fire Station (which has the space to house around 50 or so members) and the well-equipped and impeccably-maintained Drouin Fire Station.

Feedback from participants overwhelmingly supported the continuation of this type of leadership networking forum. Some of the comments received were:

"Great forum. Would like to see more regular gatherings."

"Terrific day with lots of new information and support."

"I like this. I've been in the district for over 10 years and never done anything like this before!"

Captains and first lieutenants are all looking forward to the next forums which will include discussions about succession planning, conflict resolution and how to run meetings.

STORY JESSICA PLOEGER

Replacement for Minimum Skills training

Minimum Skills training has been a successful program over the past decade, but the 2012 Minimum Skills Review found that improvements can be made to the delivery of introductory skills training.

It has been proposed that two new training programs – Recruit Program and Bushfire Skills Program – will replace Minimum Skills.

Both programs will see the introduction of a 'learning log' designed to support new members and improve quality and consistency in training delivery and assessment. Similar to a workbook, it contains short-answer questions, activities and skills practice tasks to complete, and means that learning and participation in training can be recorded.

Regions and districts have begun initial planning to implement the programs and it's expected they will be introduced during the 2015-16 financial year.

The Recruit Program is being developed as an 'all-hazards' training program, and is designed to get new operational volunteers on to the back of a truck, under direct supervision, earlier in their training. The program intends to provide new members with broad skills and knowledge that will allow them to understand their role within a crew and the types of incidents they are likely to attend as a member of their brigade.

Working together and safety on the fireground are important subjects reinforced throughout the program, and these are reflected in the assessment which will allow new members to attain the following nationally-recognised units of competence: *PUATEA001B Work in a team*; *PUAOHS002B Maintain safety at an incident scene*; and *PUAFIR215 Prevent injury*.

These units of competence are assessed as part of the current

Members will need to complete the Recruit Program before further operational training can be undertaken. The proposed Recruit Program consists of the following seven training modules: working as a team; personal safety on the job; types of incidents CFA responds to; using the selected vehicle and equipment; turning out and maintaining communications; command and control; and using additional vehicles and equipment. The last module is optional.

A pilot of the proposed Recruit Program was held in October and November 2014 with volunteers from across the state. Feedback helped make further improvements to training materials. These member contributions have been invaluable and their input is greatly appreciated.

The proposed Bushfire Skills program is being developed as a mandatory training requirement for all new volunteer firefighters who will respond to bushfires. The program builds on knowledge and skills gained during the Recruit Program, allowing opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in a bushfire context. The program is being developed to address the *PUAFIR204B Respond to wildfire* nationally-recognised unit of competence, which is assessed as part of the current Minimum Skills program.

The Bushfire Skills Program consists of the following training modules: fire danger ratings; bushfire behaviour and development; responding to bushfire; extinguishing methods; command and control; and personal safety. The program will address working with other agencies and current emergency management arrangements for bushfire in Victoria.

Further work will be done to develop additional training materials to address current Minimum Skills training requirements for pump operation and radio communications.

STORY: CHRIS RIVIERE



PHOTO: MARK SLATER



At the end of March, 27 female CFA members from District 24 met at the Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre Wangaratta Campus to participate in a CFA women's training and networking day. District 24 Operations Manager Paul King developed the idea to recognise women in CFA and celebrate International Women's Day.

The purpose of the day was to let the women establish and reinvigorate their networks and give them information about roles available across the organisation. It was also a great way to update and broaden their skills in operational training scenarios, share stories and have fun.

Participants gained a lot from interacting with other women from their district.

"As a new CFA member, it was inspiring to meet the other participants and to have them so generously share their knowledge and teach us newbies," said Kiewa brigade's Bridget Doyle.

"It was a great day with plenty of hands-on exercises that I love," said Margrit Beemster from Yackandandah brigade. "All good experience, particularly the exercise in the house full of smoke. I hadn't done that before, so I was pleased to see how I reacted."

STORY: CHRIS RIVIERE

Through the ages – Eaglehawk





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:
Natalie Pearson

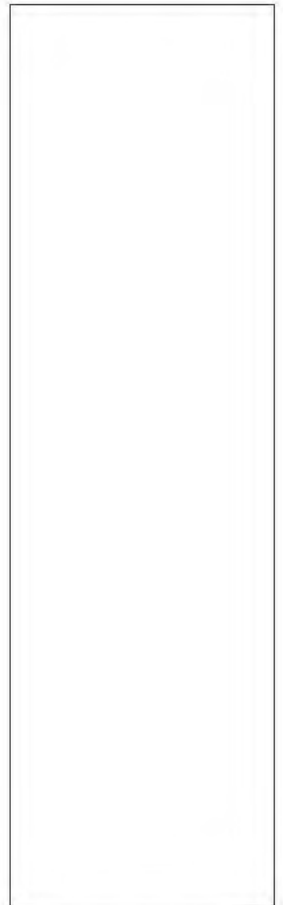
Articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of CFA. The Editor reserves the right to refuse or edit articles.

Printed on paper from sustainably-managed forests.

- Free medium drink (soft drink, orange juice or standard espresso pronto) with any purchase over \$3 at any **McDonald's** restaurant in Victoria.
- Save 40% on **AIG Travel Insurance** and protect you and family on your next trip.
- Members are eligible for corporate pricing on **Rex Gorell Family Group's** range of new vehicles.
- 5% discount on a range of pre-purchased **gift cards** including Woolworths WISH, Coles, Myer, Supercheap Auto and Rebel Sport.
- 10% off your next manufacturer's handbook service at **UltraTune Auto Service Centres**.
- **Officebarn** in Gisborne offers members preferential prices (representing around 10% discount) on stationery and office products.
- Exclusive discounts and offers through the **JB Hi-Fi Family & Friends Program**.
- Save up to 15% on the latest range of laptops, desktops and monitors at **Powerbuy.com.au**.
- Get a corporate offer at **Goodlife Health Clubs** including a seven-day VIP experience, 15% off the standard All Club membership rate and a free health consultation.
- **Bairnsdale Camping & Outdoor** offers members 10% off all purchases.
- Get six weeks free health cover when you join the Emergency Memberlink **Bupa** health plan.
- **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 wholesale prices at four **Plantmark** locations – Langwarrin, Wantirna, Thomastown and Werribee.
- **Searoad Ferries** offers a 10% discount on ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff on presentation of your Emergency Memberlink Card.
- Save 15% on flowers and gifts from **Petals**.
- **Thrifty** offers exclusive rental rates and a reduced liability fee on all cars, trucks, buses and 4WDs.
- Special offers for new and existing customers on **Elgas** LPG cylinders.
- Members have access to 20% off bath house bathing during off-peak periods (Tuesday to Thursday outside public and school holidays) at **Peninsula Hot Springs**.
- 5% to 10% off the best unrestricted rate of the day at over 2,400 **Accor Hotels** worldwide.
- Receive \$20 off when you spend \$79 or more an experience from **RedBalloon**.
- 10% off all items in-store or online from **The Farm Store**.
- Get corporate rates on a 12-month membership to the **Virgin Australia Lounge**.
- 10% off the best available rate at **The Hotel Windsor** in Melbourne.
- Save up to 42% with a **Magsonline** annual subscription to a magazine.
- Receive up to 40% off a range of kitchen appliances from **euroappliances.com.au**.

Visit your Emergency Memberlink website 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