



cfa.vic.gov.au

SPRING 2026

Brigade



How CFA designs a truck

PLUS: Bridging generations in brigades ● Get Fire Ready ● Tanker entrapment case study

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

**Manager Member Communication
and Engagement:** Bradley Thomas

Editor: Duncan Russell
duncan.russell@cfa.vic.gov.au
0428 907 053

Graphic Designer: John Knight

Printer: IVE Group

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

The editor reserves the right to amend articles.

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

CFA encourages the dissemination and re-use of
information in this publication. The State of Victoria
owns the copyright of all material produced by CFA.

All material in this publication is provided under
a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 international
licence with the exception of any images,
photographs or branding including CFA and
government logos. In some cases a third party may
hold copyright in material in this publication and
their permission may be required to use the material.
See creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0.

Material obtained from this publication is to be attributed
as: © State of Victoria (Country Fire Authority) 2026



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

COVER IMAGE: FLEET SERVICES

USEFUL RESOURCES

BRIGADE MAGAZINE

cfa.vic.gov.au/brigademag

f FACEBOOK

facebook.com/cfavic

NEWS

news.cfa.vic.gov.au

@ INSTAGRAM

instagram.com/cfavic

MEMBERS ONLINE

members.cfa.vic.gov.au

X (TWITTER)

x.com/cfa_updates

Free CFA images for download: digitallibrary.cfa.vic.gov.au

Community engagement material: cfa.vic.gov.au/cecontentportal

CFA templates for download: cfa.vic.gov.au/templatetoolkit

IN THIS ISSUE

04 News from our leaders

07 Strong eyes save lives

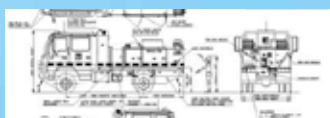
08 **FEATURE:**
Get Fire Ready



12 Members lead the way to improve inclusion

13 The two of us

14 **FEATURE:**
How CFA designs and builds a new truck



16 Capturing what happened to learn and improve

17 How Victoria contributes to the AFAC Seasonal Bushfire Outlook

18 Australian Fire Service Medals

19 Chief Officer's message

20 Tanker tactics

22 Radio communication

24 Bushfire vehicle entrapment

25 Update on post season

26 Case study: Lara tanker entrapment

28 **FEATURE:**
Bridging generations in brigades



31 Update: youth and young adults

32 **FEATURE:**
Volunteer Forum



34 Faces of CFA

35 Tracking exposure to trauma to better protect mental health

36 School's out for Fireman Ken

37 Wyndham Vale's new station

38 The digital download

39 Successful planned burning season

40 Incident statistics

41 In brief

42 **THROUGH THE AGES**

Winchelsea Fire Brigade



44 Memberlink offers



Greg Leach AFSM

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

As we look toward the 2026-27 fire season, I want to thank our members for their ongoing dedication, service and efforts in your local communities, nationally and internationally.

I was proud to see four members honoured with Australian Fire Service Medals (AFSM) in the King's Birthday Honours. Congratulations to Chief Officer Jason Heffernan AFSM, Edenhope Fire Brigade Lieutenant and Group Officer Peter Irving AFSM, Fire Medical Response Program Manager and Diamond Creek Fire Brigade Lieutenant Fiona Macken AFSM and Raglan Fire Brigade firefighter Rodney McErvale AFSM for achieving this prestigious honour. Read more about them on page 18 and remember nominations are open for the next round of both the AFSM and Public Service Medal.

An AFSM is a fitting tribute to our Chief Officer Jason Heffernan, who will start a new chapter in November, when he takes up the role of Chief Executive Officer at

St John Ambulance NSW after six years with CFA.

During his time here, Jason has led widescale modernisation and reform, working to ensure the whole of CFA is oriented to support our volunteers and the safety of the communities we serve. His contribution has included the introduction of the annual volunteer recruitment campaign, which has stabilised a long-term trend of declining volunteer numbers. He also championed Fire Medical Response, the Remote Area Firefighting team and the expansion of CFA's aviation capability.

As CFA's Child Safety Officer, Jason oversaw the development of the Child Safety Action Plan and the introduction of a simplified and more consistent Child Safety Risk Assessment to support safer planning and delivery of activities and programs involving children and young people. Behind the scenes, Jason has strengthened our approach to asset management, service delivery and appliance design and the ongoing transformation of CFA's training program.

While we will be sorry to see Jason leave, it is great to see his experience and skills continue to contribute to the volunteer emergency services sector. Thank you to Jason for all his work and dedication to CFA; I wish him all the very best in his new role.

We remind our volunteers and life members they can claim a rebate on the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund payment by using the Eligible Volunteers Rebate Scheme (EVRS). A new EVRS application form must be used for the 2026-27 financial year. Members who successfully claimed their rebate for the 2025-26 financial year will have received an email from the Department of Government Services containing information about how to complete your 2026-27 application. Members who haven't claimed for the 2025-26 financial year can submit applications for both

financial years, with eligibility assessed separately for each application. First time applicants must use the CFA Portal (<https://link.cfa.vic.gov.au/esvf>) to check eligibility and access the required forms.

In another example of CFA developing its members into future leaders, I was pleased to see the launch of the fourth Emerging Leaders Program in July when participants gathered at Bairnsdale Fire Station. This program continues to provide important opportunities for members to develop their leadership capability, build confidence and strengthen their understanding of effective leadership practices. The program's ongoing success is a testament to the commitment of facilitators, presenters and participants who invest in developing future leaders. I wish the new group every success as they embark on this exciting journey. I would also like to congratulate our latest graduates in the Certificate IV in Leadership and Management. During the 12-month course, the participants worked on interesting and useful projects such as an emergency services expo, brigade youth engagement session, brigade community day, Get Fire Ready Open Day, General Firefighter group training, structural ensemble cleaning project and a VESEP grant application.

Annual CFA women's challenge camps also ran in every region this year, throughout May and June, giving women of CFA the opportunity to come together, push their limits and get inspired.

In addition to operational training and development, these programs are a great example of the personal and professional development opportunities available through your role at CFA.

Every CFA member's contribution demonstrates our commitment to protecting lives and property. This fire season could be another challenging one, so please look after yourselves and each other.



Jason Heffernan AFSM

CHIEF OFFICER

As many of you know this will be my last Chief's column in Brigade Magazine, and whilst in this column I would normally focus on factors affecting CFA, this one will not.

After considerable reflection, in early August I provided formal advice to the CFA Board of my resignation as your Chief Officer.

I have accepted the position of Chief Executive Officer of St John Ambulance New South Wales and will transition to that role later in the year. The role I am moving to is another worthy volunteer organisation with community service at its heart and I look forward to taking all that I have learned at CFA with me.

This has been an incredibly difficult decision, and not one that I have taken lightly.

Serving as your Chief Officer has been the greatest privilege of my professional career.

To lead an organisation deeply defined by service, courage, commitment and community is something I will always carry with me.

What many people do not see behind a role such as Chief Officer is the sacrifice made by those closest to us. Emergency services leadership is not simply a profession; it is a vocation. It demands long hours, difficult decisions, missed family occasions, interrupted weekends, and a constant sense of responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of our people and communities.

While I have been privileged to serve in this role, that service has only been possible because of the unwavering support of my family. Melissa, Poppy and Cooper have borne most the burden of my leadership. They have accepted my absence during major incidents and brigade events, tolerated late-night phone calls and ever-changing plans, and provided the support and perspective that every leader needs.

My son Cooper has remained in Sydney and has missed his dad for six years as he enters the formative period of his teenage life. Like the families of so many CFA volunteers, staff and operational leaders, my family has made sacrifices that often go unseen but should never go unrecognised.

There will be opportunities in the coming weeks to reflect more broadly on the journey we have shared. For now, I simply want to thank each of you for your leadership, your support, your friendship, and your unwavering commitment to our members and communities.

CFA has a proud history, but more importantly it has a bright future. I leave knowing the organisation is in capable hands and that the leadership at brigades, groups, district, region and state will continue to drive the improvements necessary to meet the challenges ahead.





Rob Hurley

CAPTAIN WENDOUREE FIRE BRIGADE

Wendouree Fire Brigade has a long history in Ballarat. The original brigade was formed in 1913 and disbanded during the Depression in 1932, before being re-established under CFA in December 1960.

In 2023, Wendouree was one of 13 CFA brigades identified for review by the Fire District Review Panel (FDRP), reportedly because of an increase in fire risk within our primary response area. The then Captain Don Garlick and First Lieutenant Brad Woods put in an enormous amount of time and effort to justify and defend the viability and value of our brigade. It was strange to have to prove you were worth keeping and it took a toll on brigade morale.

During the process, service delivery standards became a major focus, and we again raised the idea of a satellite station as a way to bring our response times down. By that point, the brigade had been suggesting a satellite for more than a decade. We included this idea in our response to a question from the FDRP, rather than an expectation. Nobody in our brigade thought it would get a second look.

The FDRP report was submitted and the panel recommended no change to the Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and Wendouree brigade boundaries. As you can imagine, that announcement produced a collective sigh of relief from our members. Then, to our complete surprise, members read in the 2025-26 Victorian State Budget papers that Wendouree was to receive funding for a satellite station. The brigade was completely gobsmacked and unprepared.

To everyone's astonishment there was none of the 'hurry up and wait' that many

of us have come to expect, and within a few short months a location was found. District 15 Commander Chris Bigham met with the Eureka Group of brigades to propose a new alternative response model, designed to cover an area of Ballarat where neither FRV nor CFA could meet the required service delivery standards.

Under the model, members from Wendouree, Invermay, Miners Rest and Ballarat City brigades respond out of the new Wendouree satellite station. At the time of writing, about 32 CFA members have been inducted to respond. The new station is also home to the District 15 Headquarters Brigade, which has been a welcome addition to the project. It also means Wendouree brigade can continue to work closely with a valued and essential arm of District 15.

Establishing the satellite station has not been without its challenges. There have been differing views about its location and, as with any new initiative, we've experienced several teething problems along the way. The station is managed by a committee made up of the captains from surrounding brigades and is chaired by Commander David Clancy, ensuring strong local leadership and collaboration.

The response from our members has been extremely encouraging. Those who volunteer from the satellite station have demonstrated outstanding commitment and a genuine desire to see the model work. Throughout this process our purpose has remained unchanged: to serve and protect our community. The satellite station provides us with another valuable way to achieve that goal.

Strong eyes save lives

Seven Werribee Fire Brigade members were recently awarded a CFA Unit Citation for Service for their quick-thinking and intuitive actions that saved a life.

The collective honour recognised the outstanding acts of service by brigade members Sean Cross, Joshua Redman, Paul Ryan, Michael Wells, Brendon Gill, John Ryan and Cameron Ward.

In the early hours of 18 February 2025, the crew was returning to the fire station from a response when they noticed a large plume of smoke and orange glow in the distance. Werribee Fire Brigade Captain Michael Wells said the crew located the source and found a fully alight structure fire. They immediately began to fight the fire.

"As they conducted normal fire operations, one of our firefighters, Brendon, noticed a person inside the structure during their initial search," Michael said. "Without hesitation he extracted the person from the window of the burning structure with help from other members."

As no one had yet called Triple Zero, the brigade paged another crew to help them.

Michael said he was extremely proud of his brigade members and their early detection and observation.

"They used strong detective work to investigate what was going on as soon as they saw it, and their prompt actions allowed a person to leave the scene unscathed," Michael said. "We would've been behind the eight ball otherwise waiting



for someone to report it and the fire could have become more established.

"They are a reasonably young crew, but well trained, and they operated well above their capability. It was fantastic. Everything they did was great.

"The recognition came as a surprise to them, but they took it in their stride. They're incredibly proud of belonging to CFA and I think it's great we acknowledged them for the work they've done," Michael said.

"It was about the team coming together as one and achieving an outcome, and in this case it went towards saving a life."

Bartlett, helping your brigade stay prepared



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

- Utilised in firefighting applications
- Suitable for training and field use.
- Available tank sizes 500L - 24,000L

- Supplied with ground sheet / carry bag
- Detachable lids available
- Helicopter capable collar available



**Order
today!**

Free Call 1800 115 440
172 Ring Road, Ballarat, Victoria
www.bartlett.net.au

Bartlett
Industrial Textile Product
Manufacturing

Get Fire Ready



As bushfire risk continues to increase and recent fire events have demonstrated the devastating impact fires can have on our communities, strengthening preparedness and resilience has never been more important.

The AFAC Seasonal Bushfire Outlook for spring states that below average rainfall has increased bushfire risk potential across parts of Victoria. Spring rainfall is likely to be below average across parts of southern and eastern Australia. Victoria is facing a warm and dry spring, with increased bushfire risk for East Gippsland, the far south-west, the Surf Coast and the area west of Geelong to the southern Wombat Forest.

Get Fire Ready 2026

The seasonal outlook reinforces the importance of preparedness, which is why Get Fire Ready (GFR) will return in 2026, running from 1 October to 3 November.

The statewide initiative will play a fundamental role to help strengthen community resilience ahead of Victoria's fire season, engaging with people at a local level to shift the focus from awareness to action.

GFR supports community members to take simple, practical and achievable steps to create a fire plan, prepare their homes and know where to get emergency information by downloading the VicEmergency app.

Last year's inaugural GFR saw more than 530 brigades host events across Victoria, with 60 per cent delivered in high fire-risk areas, ensuring preparedness information reached communities most at risk. More than

96 per cent of attendees reported they had taken or intended to take steps to prepare their property, while 70 per cent said they learned something new.

The initiative also saw a 70,000 increase in active users of the VicEmergency app between September and October 2025 – a promising result as one of our strongest sources of information during emergencies.

This October, we're once again encouraging all CFA brigades to host a GFR event – big or small. Tailored to local needs, they could be open days, information sessions, pop-ups in high-traffic locations, or fire safety conversations at community events such as markets and festivals.

\$250 funding to support your GFR event

Brigades are eligible to receive \$250 in funding by completing the following three steps:

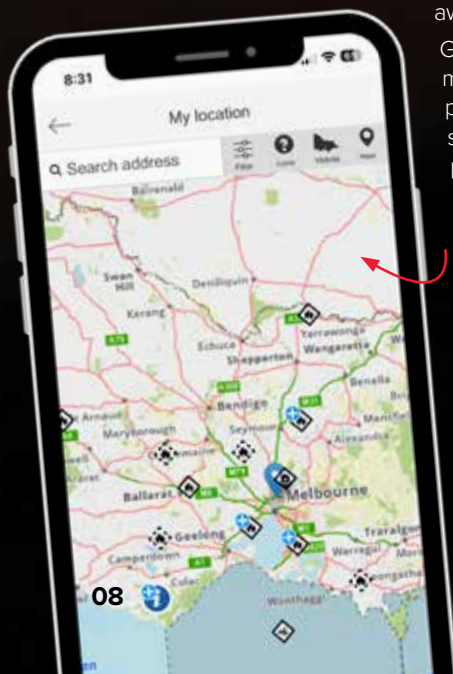
1. Register and promote a planned GFR event in CFA's Community Engagement Activity Reporting Tool (ART) before the event is delivered.
2. Deliver the activity between 1 October to 3 November 2026.
3. Within two weeks of the event, complete the activity record in ART, including the number of people directly engaged and a list of all CFA members involved in delivery.

Brigades are encouraged to plan and promote their GFR event in ART as early as possible to maximise the benefits of statewide promotion and geo-targeted Facebook advertising designed to increase community attendance at events.

If you need help planning, promoting or completing activities in ART, brigades can contact their community engagement coordinator (CEC) to help maximise campaign benefits and meet funding eligibility requirements.

200+ brigades registered
at the time of printing

Sign up today



Helping your community take action

One of the most effective ways to encourage preparedness is to make your messaging relevant. By helping people reflect on their own circumstances and local risks, conversations become more applicable and are more likely to lead to action. Where possible, encourage community members to complete a preparedness action during the event or commit to one before they leave. This could include:

- identifying local risks using the large brigade area map
- starting or updating a bushfire plan
- preparing their property for summer
- downloading the VicEmergency app and setting a watch zone.

Consider creating interactive opportunities at your event, such as a bushfire planning station or a VicEmergency app download station, where members can give practical support and answer questions.

People are more likely to act when information feels relevant to their own situation. Try asking questions such as:

- What do you know about the fire risk where you live?
- What would you do on a high fire danger day?
- Have you discussed your fire plan with your family?

A simple commitment made during an event can significantly increase the likelihood that someone will follow through with preparedness actions, helping make them and their families safer this summer.

For additional tools, resources and training to support your community engagement activities, visit the Community Engagement Hub on Members Online.

To support event delivery, brigades can work with their CECs and access a wide range of GFR resources, including campaign materials, household information bags, children's activity resources, promotional giveaways, and other tools to support local event planning, delivery and promotion.

Harcourt Fire Brigade

After experiencing the devastating Ravenswood Fire earlier this year, Harcourt Fire Brigade Captain Andrew Wilson knows firsthand just how important it is to be prepared. The fire had a significant impact on the community.

"We lost about 50 houses and multiple businesses were affected in the loss of the Harcourt Co-Operative Cool Stores," Andrew said.

At Harcourt's GFR event last year, community members received tailored advice, explored local risk maps and connected with CFA volunteers. The family-friendly format, complete with activities for kids, helped bring people together while sparking important conversations about fire safety.

Andrew said they had signed up to host another GFR event this year and that it was more important than ever with another challenging fire season ahead.

"The upcoming fire season will be hard for our community, but that makes it even more important to come along to these events and gather the information required."



Ruffy Fire Brigade

For Ruffy Fire Brigade, the Longwood bushfire in January was a stark reminder of how rapidly a bushfire can escalate. Captain George Noye described conditions where temperatures reached 40°C, winds exceeded 100 kilometres per hour and the fire was "jumping from hilltop to hilltop", highlighting the importance of being prepared before an emergency occurs.

Those experiences will now help shape local GFR conversations, giving residents the opportunity to learn from real events, share knowledge and prepare for future fire seasons. For communities recovering and rebuilding, these events are also an opportunity to strengthen local connections and encourage a shared approach to preparedness.

"It only works if we're all in it together. The more you talk about it, the better things can be with preparedness," George said.

Before



After

Euroa Fire Brigade

While Euroa was not directly impacted by last season's fires, the devastation experienced by surrounding communities reinforced the importance of being prepared. For Euroa Fire Brigade, GFR events are an important way to help residents understand local fire risks, prepare for worst-case scenarios and make informed decisions before the fire season begins.

These events are an opportunity for brigade members to share practical resources and information while building stronger connections with the community. They also help volunteers gain a better understanding of local properties and residents' needs, supporting more effective planning and preparedness across the district.

Euroa Fire Brigade's Community Safety Coordinator and Junior Leader Teagan Kubeil said people needed to understand that they could be impacted by fire.

"It's very important to have those conversations with the community because we can get complacent about things like this," Teagan said. "We don't think it can happen to us so getting out into the community and having those conversations can really help."

With strong community engagement at previous events, Euroa brigade is looking forward to hosting another GFR event this year, continuing to support residents with the knowledge and resources they need to be prepared for the fire season ahead.



Gnarwarre Fire Brigade

The small rural district of Gnarwarre is home to about 150 people in the south-west of Victoria, 20km from Geelong. It was not impacted during the 2025-26 fire season but hosting a GFR event played a pivotal role in preparing their community.

Gnarwarre Fire Brigade Community Safety Coordinator Evan Belfrage held seven valuable events across October 2025. But because Gnarwarre is a country town with no shop or corners to meet at, the brigade's events looked a little different.

"We don't have a place to meet and previous experience told us that people don't come to the brigade often, so I decided to go to them," Evan said.

"I held events with Barrabool Hills Landcare and Geelong Landcare, our local environmental volunteer groups that work with landowners, where we told them what GFR was all about and gave out the show bags.

"I did a property visit to about a dozen homes to speak to the householders and I did a whole heap of letter drops.

"I also went to the men's shed and presented there and to their overarching body which includes women as well. It was interesting speaking to them as many had come out of the city."

With a strong passion for preparedness, Evan regularly engages with local residents throughout the year to assess their properties.

"It's important to us to understand if we can fit our truck into their property and whether they have suitable fittings on their water tanks to allow us to get water out," Evan said.

"All of the people I visit and speak to are very engaged, and we'll talk more broadly about how prepared they are for the fire season, how to keep their vegetation down around the property and whether they have any general concerns.

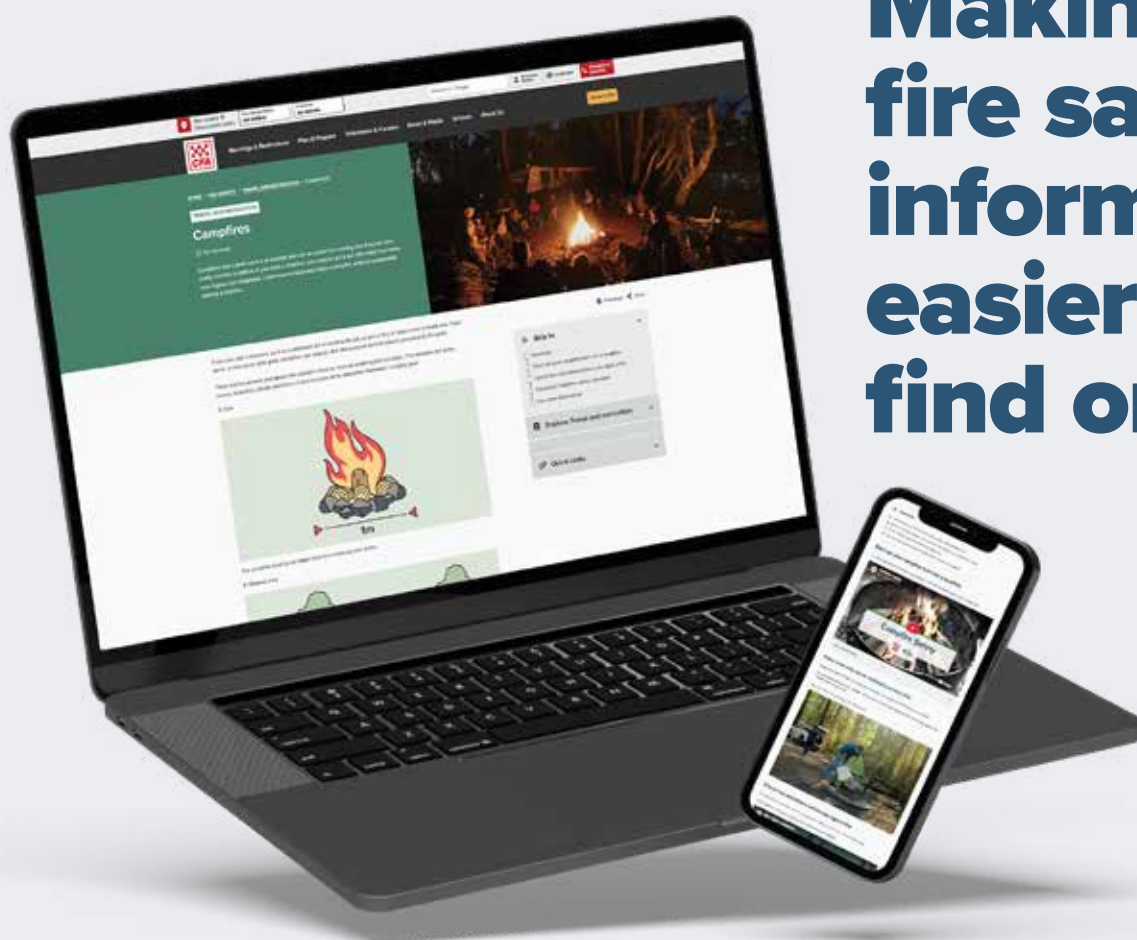
"GFR gives me the opportunity to take a slightly different approach, especially when visiting new residents in the area, as I can talk through things in the information bags as opposed to leaving them with a handful of pamphlets."

Evan said most people in the area were fairly well prepared and aware of fire, though friendly reminders were always worthwhile.

"Some people do get lackadaisical, but that's the beauty of doing property visits," Evan said.

"If I get the opportunity I often take the fire truck around so I can demonstrate how much room we need to get the truck in and out. That's always a good lesson and people start trimming hedges and things like that."

STORY KATE RITCHIE AND LUCY BISHOP



Making fire safety information easier to find online

When communities have questions about fire safety, reducing fire risk, or preparing their homes, properties and loved ones for the fire season, they often turn to their local CFA members for trusted advice and information.

Whether it's at a community event, home visit, brigade open day, school visit or a conversation with a neighbour, members play a vital role in connecting people with trusted information that helps them make informed decisions.

To help support these important conversations, CFA has spent the past three years reviewing and redeveloping the Plan and Prepare and Schools sections of the CFA public website.

This has been much more than a website refresh. The project has focused on making fire safety information easier to find, easier to understand and more useful for both members and the community we serve.

The work began by listening. Through member and community feedback, website analytics, exploring digital trends and expert advice, we gained a better understanding of how people access and use CFA's fire safety information online. These insights helped identify barriers, understand community needs and guide improvements that would deliver a better experience for both community and CFA members.

We recognised that people access and absorb information differently. Some visitors want a quick answer to their question, while others prefer more detailed information. The new page designs, navigation features and layout cater to both needs, making important information quick and easy to find while still providing more comprehensive advice for those who want it.

"Ultimately these improvements strengthen CFA's role as a trusted source of fire safety information for both members and the wider community," Deputy Chief Officer Alen Slijepcevic AFSM said.

The scale of the project has been significant. Alongside rewriting content, more than 1,200 images, videos, illustrations and resources were sourced, developed or updated. The Fire Safety and Resources sections have expanded from about 120 pages to almost 200 pages, bringing important information out of PDF documents and onto web pages where it is easier to access. This not only improves the user experience but also helps search engines such as Google to connect people to the information they're looking for.

Finding information will also become easier thanks to a redesigned navigation structure and updated page names that better reflect the words and phrases people use when searching for information.

With more users accessing information via mobiles and tablets, the website has also been optimised for different devices and screen sizes, ensuring a seamless experience and making information available whether at home or out and about.

A new Resources section will replace the Schools section and be a central hub for publications, fact sheets, checklists and other community education materials. Schools content will be found in both the Resources and Fire Safety sections.

The new Fire Safety and Resources sections will launch in late September. We encourage volunteers to take time to explore what's available and start using the updated resources to improve your own knowledge and support conversations with the communities you serve.

STORY LISA MACKENZIE

Members lead the way to improve inclusion

CFA staff and volunteers are working hard to create a positive and inclusive culture across the organisation, and over the past couple of years many have been recognised through prestigious awards.

A CFA member has won the 2026 Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Champion award at the Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) International Women's Day (IWD) Forum – the third consecutive year a CFA member has won it. This award recognises individuals who are role models for making a significant impact to advance diversity, gender equality and inclusion.

This year, Angela Cook, CFA Senior Engagement Adviser - People at Higher Risk, was named D&I Champion, an achievement that reflects CFA's ongoing commitment to creating an inclusive, equitable and supportive workplace for everyone. Angela was recognised for her work on the People at Higher Risk project.

"People with a disability manage every day to overcome inaccessible environments and overcome barriers. These are strengths that people with a disability bring to emergency preparedness. Harnessing these strengths and building on them to create workable emergency plans is critical," Angela (pictured receiving her award) said.

"This is why CFA led the development of the Emergency Planning Advice Service (EPAS), a pilot program that has proven to make a difference."

In 2025, former CFA General Manager Infrastructure and Environmental Services and volunteer Paul Santamaria was recognised for his outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion, creating a culture where people feel valued, respected and heard. He won the D&I Champion award for his leadership that delivered practical initiatives to improve equity and inclusion in CFA, particularly for women and under-represented groups. Paul was instrumental in leading the women's boot and glove trial project.

In 2024, Regional Brigade Administration Support Officer Beth Taylor won the same award for her outstanding leadership and tireless efforts to raise awareness of, and address, the need for equity, diversity and inclusion within CFA and the wider community.

"Winning the inaugural Diversity and Inclusion Champion award meant so much to me on a personal level," Beth said. "It was incredibly special to be recognised for something I am passionate about – creating a CFA environment where members feel welcome, safe, supported and comfortable being themselves. It reminded me that the work I'm passionate about is having a positive impact and creating change, and this motivated me to keep advocating for D&I across CFA."

This year at the ESF IWD Forum, Werribee Fire Brigade received the Women's Equality Initiative Encouragement Award for its Inclusive uniform initiative, highlighting how practical action can drive lasting cultural change and help foster a more inclusive environment where all members feel valued and able to contribute. In 2025, the Young Leaders Mentoring Program received the Gender Inclusivity Encouragement Award to acknowledge the commitment to leadership, inclusion and professional growth among young volunteers.

Winning the D&I Champion award for three consecutive years is a significant achievement that reflects the consistency and authenticity of CFA's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Most importantly,

it represents the collective efforts of our people, with teams and leaders across the organisation continuing to foster inclusive behaviours, challenge bias and create opportunities for diverse voices to be heard.

The recently submitted Gender Equality Action Plan 2026-2030 further demonstrates CFA's commitment to driving meaningful change, by providing a clear roadmap to strengthen gender equality, actively support women's representation in development and leadership, removing barriers and ensuring all employees can thrive.

D&I isn't just an initiative at CFA. It's part of how we work every day. While we're incredibly proud of our people and these awards, there's more to do and we remain committed to listening, learning and evolving together to ensure CFA continues to be a place where everyone feels they are valued and empowered to succeed.

STORY CFA D&I TEAM



THE TWO OF US

Taradale Fire Brigade Captain Lachie Elliott followed in his father's footsteps as a CFA firefighter. His son Ollie, aged 18, is now continuing the legacy and is attending turnouts alongside his dad, who couldn't be prouder.

Lachie

"I've come from a CFA family, so to see Ollie start at CFA was really rewarding. It's nice to have him involved.

There's a lot of things I'm proud of that he's done. When he finished his General Firefighter, that was great. I knew he was going to breeze through it, but it was a nice feeling that he got there. On 9 January this year, we had a big day up at the Harcourt fire. That was significant for him to be involved in such a massive campaign, to experience something like that and be able to protect the community in such a massive event. I was just proud of him getting involved and putting his training into practice.

On another strike team, his first one, I was actually on the back of the tanker with him on the way to the staging area. We chatted the whole time and it was a really nice moment. I generally sit in the passenger seat, drive the truck or crew lead, but it was just the two of us on the back and I thought 'this is pretty cool. This is a nice little moment'.

He doesn't mind doing the hard stuff; he just does it and never complains. That's what I'm most proud of, I think, that he is so enthusiastic and a great firefighter. Everybody at the brigade thinks he's really fantastic, and he helps everyone out. You'd think he'd been doing it for 10 years because he's just so passionate about it.

He's taught me to just keep at it. I've been really proud of him, and he's just thrived and done really well so far."

Ollie

"As soon as I was old enough (I think it was actually the day of my birthday) I signed up for Juniors. When I was 16 I did my General Firefighter training so I could start turning out.

On the day of my first turnout, I was on the same truck as dad, and that's a memory that really stands out. During the big fires in Harcourt on 9 January, dad was on tanker 1 and I was on tanker 2. Being at such a big fire so close to our home and experiencing that together, was special.

There was another time we were called to a strike team for a fire in the Cobaw State Forest. We picked dad up in Malmsbury on the way to the staging area and he was on the back of the tanker with me. We were just talking the whole way and I remember him saying 'it's been a long time since I've been on the back!'

What I admire most is how down to earth he is. He's so level-headed about pretty much everything and so easy to talk to. He has so much experience and I think that really shows, as a captain, as a crew leader and as an incident controller. He really knows what he's doing and gets things to run so smoothly, especially on the fireground.

A big thing he's taught me is resilience. On 9 January this year, some of the situations were quite tough and he showed me how to keep going. He's taught me not to get tunnel vision, to look at the bigger picture.

He's got such a good relationship with everyone he knows, and I think that helps him as a captain to build those relationships.

Volunteering together has 100 per cent brought us closer. I don't think many people can say that they've put fires out with their dad. Overall, I think it's just pretty damn cool."





How CFA builds a new fire truck

Building a new fire truck is a complex process that can take up to five years from the initial funding announcement to the truck being operational at a fire station.

However, the production time will vary substantially depending on the type of vehicle and whether it is being delivered through an established contract or a new contract. For example, an ultralight tanker may take 12 to 18 months for a bulk production unit under a new contract, but this reduces to six to 12 months under an existing contract. A more complex vehicle, such as a heavy tanker or pumper, may take four to five years under a new contract where there's no comparable existing contract benchmark available.

CFA's Head of Fleet Services Dan Jones takes us through the step-by-step process in detail.

Develop the role statement

After the need for a new vehicle has been identified, representatives from Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), volunteers, fleet operations, state and regional operations and the Health and Safety team create a working group. This group first develops the role statement which identifies the functional requirement of the vehicle – what the vehicle needs to do.

This process requires extensive stakeholder input, including from volunteers, and can take between six and 12 months.

When the working group has finalised the role statement, it is endorsed and approved by the relevant Deputy Chief Officer and then the Chief Officer.

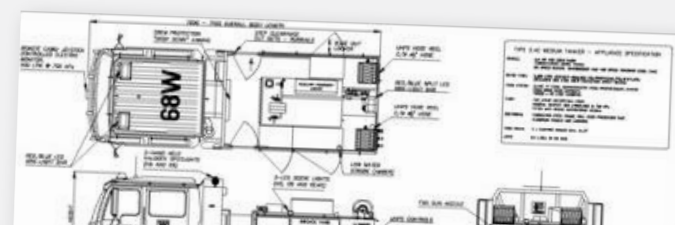
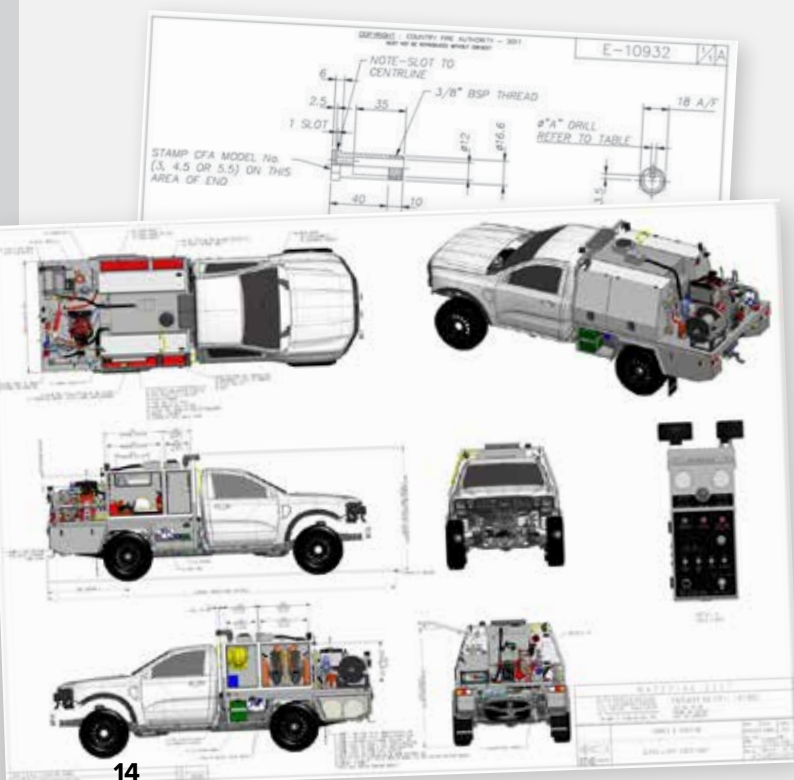
Develop technical specification

After the role statement has been approved by the Chief Officer, the Fleet Services team develops a technical specification in preparation to go to market. This moves on from what the vehicle needs to do to how it is designed to do it. The technical specification forms the basis for tenderers to submit their pricing and timelines.

It takes about three to six months to draft the technical specification depending on the complexity of the project. It is then reviewed by the working group and then is given to Head of Fleet Services for final approval.

Release to market

To prepare for release to market, a procurement request is created and submitted through CFA's Procurement Authority Board (PAB) which meets monthly. This includes a recommended procurement approach, generally via a tender to a pre-approved panel. When approved by PAB it's released to market with a defined timeline for offers to be returned. This period may also include an open supplier briefing to clarify any specific requirements and answer any queries they may have. A tender evaluation plan is also finalised and approved prior to the closure of offers.





VEHICLES



Evaluation

After the tender process has closed, the evaluation process begins. A panel assesses each submission against the established criteria to determine overall value for money. It covers commercial and technical compliance, with short-listed offers moving to a detailed assessment. This period may also include seeking clarifications from suppliers.

When the panel has determined a recommended supplier, an outcome report is submitted for relevant endorsements including PAB and finally to the relevant financial delegate for approval. Depending on the estimated value, it may need to be approved by the CFA Board. In accordance with financial delegations, a contract valued between \$2 million and \$5 million requires CEO approval and above \$5 million requires CFA Board approval.

Contract award and orders placed

After the relevant financial delegate has approved the recommendation, we move into contract negotiations, finalise the contract and get the contract executed by both parties. This process can take some time as both legal teams work through the terms and conditions of the contract before CFA and supplier representatives sign and execute the contract.

Engineering drawings

The supplier develops engineering drawings to enable manufacturing to commence. During this period there's quite a bit of back and forth and engagement between CFA and the manufacturer. For example, for the latest next generation pumper there are more than 2,000 drawings.

Towards the end of this phase, the supplier will start to schedule production of the first vehicle. The supplier may also require access to an example cab chassis for this process. This drawings phase take about six to 12 months.



Manufacturing the first unit

Suppliers start taking delivery of components and sub-assemblies and begin to manufacture unit one. This phase also requires a significant amount of engagement with CFA's engineering project manager to ensure the proposed solutions meet the required engineering, technical and operational requirements, while also identifying and resolving any issues before progressing to the next stage of the build. Up until now, all discussions have been based on general arrangement and detailed drawings, 3D modelling and schematic diagrams.

When CFA receives unit one, engagement with the working group and testing is undertaken.

As part of the engagement process, CFA volunteers are given opportunities to provide feedback through targeted engagement with brigades, by taking the vehicle to events such as the State Firefighter Championships and sometimes through roadshows. CFA considers all the feedback and may vary the specifications accordingly.

The testing regime may include an ergonomic assessment, lighting and sound, weight loading, foam system calibration, ambient heat performance and a static tilt test. CFA also carries out pump and reticulation performance testing at one of CFA's training grounds to ensure everything is working correctly and meets the specification. This collaborative process can take about six months.

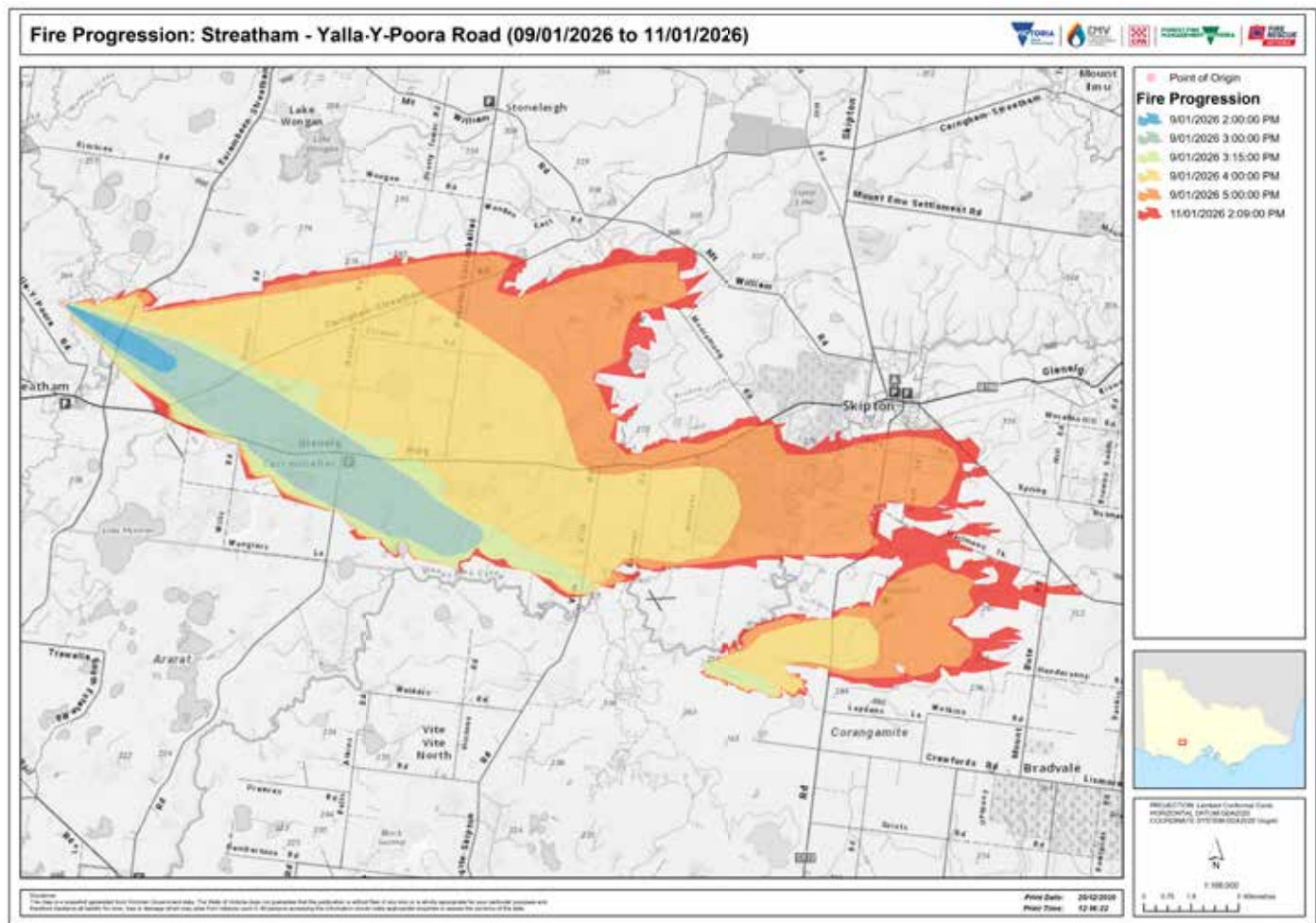
The manufacturer won't start building the second unit until the first one has been signed off by CFA, which is why there can be a significant gap between the delivery of unit one and unit two.

Manufacturing the second and subsequent units

Any manufacturing changes required as a result of unit one testing and engagement are finalised and production of the remaining vehicles begins. The length of this process is dependent on how many vehicles are being produced and the supplier's capacity to deliver. For example, the 28 new pumpers currently on order are scheduled to be delivered at an average rate of one every three to four weeks.

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER





Capturing what happened to learn and improve

The devastating fires in January 2026 were an opportunity to learn and improve practice. A coordinated investigation was done to improve fire prevention, preparedness and prediction by learning directly from the incidents.

A joint team of research scientists and fire behaviour analysts from CFA and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action created reconstructions that provided a rapid overview of each fire that could be used in after-action review processes.

Additionally, six detailed reconstructions were completed that documented fire behaviour chronology, suppression actions, prediction performance and the influence of weather and environmental conditions. The team coordinated information sharing, engaged with operational personnel and combined field observations with technological analysis over several months.

CFA Deputy Chief Officer Alen Slijepcevic AFSM said reconstruction reports ensure lessons from major bushfire events are recorded and shared across the sector so that we continually improve mitigation, planning and operations.

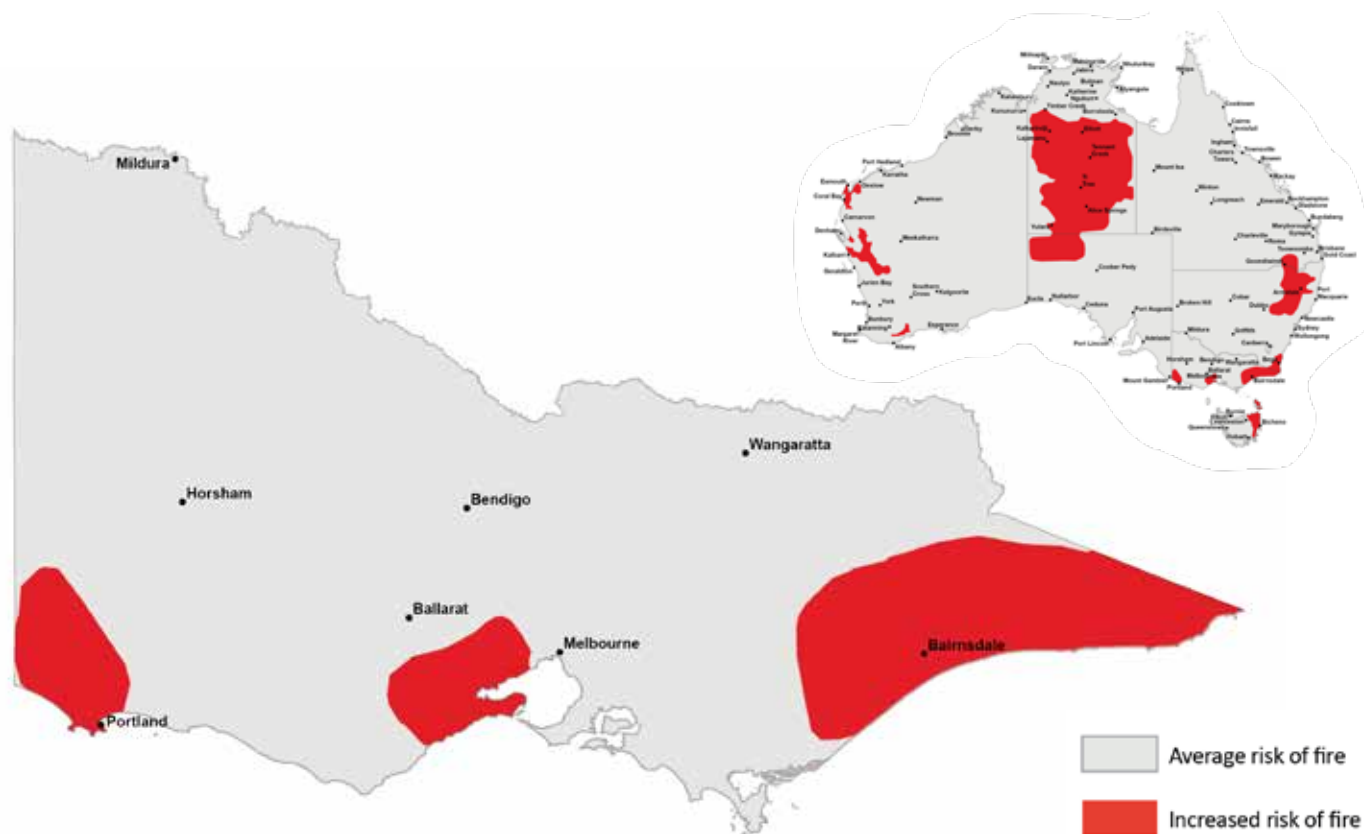
“By combining field data with operational experience, we’re strengthening the evidence that underpins both fuel management and fire response,” Alen said.

“Each reconstruction helps build a clearer picture of how fire behaves under extreme conditions. This work is crucial to improving preparedness, supporting firefighters during incidents and making Victoria more resilient ahead of future fire seasons.”

STORY LUCY BISHOP



How Victoria contributes to the Seasonal Bushfire Outlook



Every quarter, Victoria plays an important role in contributing to the AFAC Seasonal Bushfire Outlook by providing the mapped area and key points about Victoria's potential for significant bushfire activity in the months ahead.

While the final outlook is a national product, Victoria's contribution is developed through a highly collaborative process led by predictive services specialists from CFA and DEECA, drawing on both scientific indicators and local operational expertise.

CFA Head of Research, Innovation and Predictive Capability Sarah Harris said the aim of the process is to balance objective evidence of seasonal fire risk with valuable regional knowledge from across the state.

"The outlook focuses on areas where there is an increased risk of significant bushfires compared with average conditions," Sarah said. "Significant bushfires are those that are large, complex or impactful enough to require resources beyond the region in which they occur." The Victorian seasonal outlook process begins with the analysis of a range of indicators that help identify areas of concern.

"These include longer-term drought measures such as Bureau of Meteorology rainfall deficit, drought maps and soil moisture products," Sarah said.

"Recent conditions are assessed using more recent rainfall, grassland curing and fire incident trends from both CFA and Forest Fire Management Victoria.

"However, data alone does not tell the whole story. A critical step in the process is seeking regional input and field validation.

Local personnel provide essential insights about fuel availability, vegetation condition and other factors that may not be fully captured by remote sensing or climate datasets.

"Field inspections can be particularly valuable where conditions are borderline or where available indicators present conflicting signals."

Using this information, an initial draft of Victoria's outlook is prepared by a predictive services specialist with expertise in seasonal risk analysis. The result is a concise state summary and supporting text that contribute directly to the quarterly AFAC Outlook.

"Producing a seasonal bushfire outlook is not without challenges. Seasonal rainfall and temperature forecasts contain inherent uncertainty and can change as conditions evolve," Sarah said.

"While fuel dryness is an important indicator, the science linking fuel moisture to future fire activity is not always well established and can vary between landscapes and fuel types.

"Wind is also a critical driver of fire behaviour and spread, yet there is currently no seasonal outlook product that reliably predicts future wind conditions. As a result, outlooks rely on a combination of climate data, expert judgement, regional knowledge and field validation to assess potential bushfire risk."

The AFAC Outlook is just one of several predictive services products developed by the team, with a range of seasonal, monthly and emerging risk assessments produced throughout the year to help inform operational preparedness and decision-making.

STORY LUCY BISHOP

Australian Fire Service Medals

On King's Birthday, 8 June 2026, four highly regarded CFA members were awarded an Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) in recognition of their outstanding service to CFA and their communities.

The AFSM is the highest award for a member of an Australian fire service recognising exceptional commitment, expertise and leadership as they guide their communities and the wider Victorian population through major natural disasters.

Collectively, the four CFA members have contributed more than 115 years of service to CFA and the fire services. They have all worked on the frontlines as well as providing valuable knowledge and skills back into the organisation so that everyone in CFA may benefit from their experience.

The 2026 CFA Australian Fire Service Medal recipients



JASON HEFFERNAN

Chief officer Jason Heffernan has provided distinguished leadership in fire and emergency management in New South Wales and Victoria for more than two decades. Appointed CFA Chief Officer in 2020, he has held senior roles within the NSW Rural Fire Service, including Acting Deputy Commissioner, and has played key operational roles in major emergencies such as the 2019-20 NSW fires and the 2024 Grampians fires. He has strengthened Victoria's emergency management arrangements, led CFA through significant organisational reform and championed an inclusive, volunteer-focused culture.



PETER IRVING

Peter Irving exemplifies leadership, service and commitment, making a significant and lasting contribution to CFA and his community. As a long-serving volunteer, he has held key leadership roles at Edenhope Fire Brigade and served as Edenhope Group Officer since 2006. He's widely respected for his calm and decisive leadership during major fire events, including his pivotal role in managing the 2024 Kadnook plantation fire.



FIONA MACKEN

Fiona Macken demonstrates exceptional dedication to her brigade, CFA and the wider Victorian community through her sustained professional and volunteer service. She has served as a CFA volunteer since 2008, holding leadership roles at Diamond Creek Fire Brigade and responding to more than 1,260 incidents. As CFA's Fire Medical Response Program Manager, she led the development and statewide rollout of the program in partnership with Ambulance Victoria.



RODNEY MCERVALE

Rodney McErvalle's long-standing dedication, service and commitment to Victorian communities are exemplary. He has dedicated 37 years of distinguished service to CFA, serving in key operational and leadership roles in Raglan Fire Brigade and Beaufort Group. He provided outstanding leadership as a Sector Commander during the 2009 fires and made significant contributions to community recovery by documenting the experiences of communities affected by major fires, resulting in two published works.

CFA Chief Executive Officer Greg Leach AFSM congratulated the four highly respected recipients for their invaluable service during their many decades of service.

"CFA is incredibly proud of its volunteers and staff, and it is great to see our members recognised with the highest fire service medal in the country," Greg said. "Their achievements reflect the best of our organisation. We are fortunate to have so many incredible people who devote a large part of their life to protecting lives and property in their communities, and I thank them for their dedication."

CFA would also like to recognise and congratulate six current and former CFA members who were awarded the prestigious Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for their service to their communities: Patricia Crosbie, Colin Gerrard, John Greenwood-Smith, Christine Oliver, Barry Sneddon and Darren Wallace.

To read more about the AFSM recipients use this QR code.



Chief Officer's message



As we move into spring, our focus starts to shift into fire preparation for the season ahead. As has been widely reported, El Niño conditions are now underway in the tropical Pacific and may strengthen, while a positive Indian Ocean Dipole could also develop through spring. When these climate drivers occur together, they have historically been associated with some of Victoria's driest years and most significant fire seasons. Our people will continue to monitor conditions very closely as we progress through spring.

The Upper House Inquiry into the 2026 summer bushfires has now released its final report. CFA is reviewing the findings and recommendations and will continue working with our emergency service partners and the Victorian Government as this work progresses. I thank all CFA members who contributed to the inquiry and shared their valuable insights and experiences.

The 2025-26 Post Season Debrief Program report was presented to the CFA Board in July. Drawing on reviews, facilitated sessions and member feedback from across the organisation, the program captured more than 2,500 observations that were distilled into 62 CFA-wide insights. The report highlights both what worked well and where members expect to see meaningful improvement. This work is focused on improving firefighter safety, strengthening operational performance and building confidence in our continuous improvement processes.

The value of the Post Season Debrief Program is that it turns operational experience into organisational learning. Reports alone do not make us better. We improve when we act on lessons, communicate progress and demonstrate that member feedback leads to real change.

As always, CFA is at its best when we work together. Every member has an important role in shaping how we learn and improve. I remain committed to meaningful consultation and engagement, fostering a culture where people feel confident to raise concerns, share ideas and contribute to positive change. We serve our communities best when we listen to one another, respect different

perspectives and work together to strengthen CFA for the future. This Quarterly Operational Update includes:

- the importance of sound grassfire tanker tactics, including dynamic risk assessment, maintaining situational awareness, applying LACES and WATCHOUT principles, and using the proven half forward flank attack to safely and effectively contain fires
- the differences between the Regional Mobile Radio (RMR) network and fireground/simplex channels, highlighting how terrain, vegetation, infrastructure, and radio power can affect communications during incidents
- information about bushfire vehicle entrapment, emphasising that prevention remains the best protection, and that crews should continually assess fire behaviour, weather, terrain, escape routes, and safety zones, while remaining proficient in crew protection system procedures
- a Lessons Management Centre case study that examines a near miss and burnover at the Larralea fire, identifies key lessons around multiple wind changes, reduced visibility, burnover preparedness, unfamiliar vehicles, and the critical importance of dynamic risk assessment and crew communication in rapidly changing conditions.

As we prepare for the season ahead, it is important that we continue to learn from our experiences, strengthen our operational capability, and maintain our focus on firefighter and community safety.

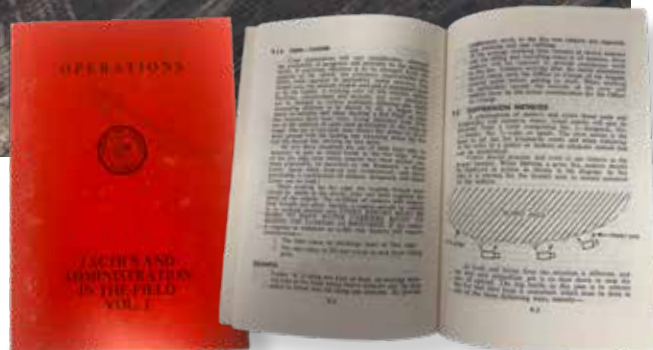
I encourage all members to take the opportunity to review and meet the Chief Officer's Expectations. This includes maintaining currency in Minimum Skills/General Firefighter, completing the annual entrapment drill, and fulfilling hazardous tree awareness training requirements.

Look after yourself, your families and your teams.



PHOTO WAYNE RIGG AFSM

Grassfire tanker tactics



Since the 'Red Book' was first issued to CFA in the 1970s, little has changed regarding tanker tactics in the field. The Red Book has been the foundation of CFA's training materials and teachings since it was first issued and a quick flick through the tanker tactics section reveals that the fundamental principles of firefighting remain the same.

Generally, strategy and tactics focus on pulling up the head of the fire, while trying to anchor and flank the eastern flank before the wind change (if it is safe to do so and time allows prior to the change).

If you didn't see the CFA video 'Grassfire tanker tactics' during your General Firefighter training, you can watch it on CFA's YouTube channel. The trucks, equipment and PPC may have changed since this video was produced, but the principles remain the same.

Many of us employ the Mark Gilmore and Les Vearing 'half forward flank attack principle'. This is a proven technique that serves us well if we are well organised and disciplined with our tanker tactics. Using machinery and aircraft for support will increase the effectiveness of these tactics. If you are not familiar with the half forward flank attack, seek out someone who knows it and ask them to brief you and your brigade on the tactic.

Air Attack Supervisor Wayne 'Riggzy' Rigg AFSM has noticed that on some occasions CFA crews at grassfires have slipped in their fundamentals. It's important during

preseason exercises to reinforce the basics and refocus on the key principles that will keep us safe and effective. Reinforce WATCHOUT and LACES and make sure all crew members are aware of them. Scan the QR code for more information.

Think about where you are attacking the fire from. Riggzy is seeing more tankers in long fuels fighting grassfires. Basic training states having one foot in the black and keep the wind at your back, and situational awareness is essential for the safety of you and your crew.

You do not always have to rush in to put the wet stuff on the red stuff. A quick size-up and strategic thinking may mean giving up some ground to attack the fire from a vantage point such as a road as it runs into lighter fuels or as the fire runs a green crop.

However, there are times when getting into the paddock to attack the fire before it runs into higher fuel loads on roadsides is needed.

Always be thinking 'plan, do, check, adjust'. You should always be adjusting your plan and if you need to take a tactical pause to review your effectiveness, then do so. Every situation will be different which is why your size-up and continuous dynamic risk assessment is so important.



Good tanker tactics and CFA rules of thumb

CFA firefighters use their training, fireground experience and knowledge of fire behaviour, plus CFA rules of thumb to contain a grass and scrub fire to the smallest area possible.

To build knowledge of tanker tactics, use your group and brigade training sessions to focus on:

- size-up and dynamic risk assessment
- the best use of the crew on your tanker
- other brigades and tankers responding or on scene
- branch type and placement (single cab deck operations) or cabin monitor placement (dual cab)
- where to start attacking the fire ie burnt or unburnt ground
- water usage (straight jet, fog and volume) and always use safety first principles.

Due to the dynamic nature of grass and scrub fires because of changes in fuel, weather and topography, crew leaders and members should consider these points.

- When you arrive on scene and begin your initial size-up have a quick look at the flame height, depth of the head and flank fire as your starting point. This will give you a rough understanding of the size of the fire, direction of travel, assets at risk and what the fire is doing. It will also give you an understanding of how your tanker crew can best attack the fire edge.
- A good option of where to begin is where low flame height begins to rise on the flank towards the head (this is the most active area), known as the half forward flank.
- Begin attacking the flank that poses the greatest risk, then the head fire (a low intensity fire may allow direct attack on the head fire first). Always use the State Emergency Management Priorities as your guide and always consider any forecast wind change.
- In Victoria, our wind changes move from north-west to west and then to the south-west. If time and resources allow, ensure the eastern and north-eastern flanks are contained when the change hits your fireground. It's crucial to hold these flanks and stop them from becoming the uncontrolled head fire.
- Discuss tactics and tasking with the crew and where you will attack the fire from (burnt or unburnt ground). At times, a combination of operating on both the unburnt and burnt ground is required. When flame height is more than two metres, the preference is to attack a grassfire edge from the burnt ground because it is usually out of the heavy smoke and the driver can see hazards in front of them.
- Plan, do, check, adjust. Crew leaders must consider a change of tactics when facing a fireground issue that will prevent them from achieving the objective. Be adaptive, look for the best outcome and communicate the new plan to your crew.
- Flame height, flame depth and radiant heat will be a factor in your success. Full PPC must always be worn by all firefighters.
- When fighting fires in unharvested crops where flame heights can be three to four metres, always operate on the burnt ground ensuring branches are extinguishing the base of the burning crop. These fires can be hot, intense and fast moving. Tankers can gather a build-up of crop and grass fuels at any grass and scrub fire. Always check for heat and build-up around the radiator and underneath the tanker.
- With all edge attacks, enter using a wet line (three to five metres long, one metre wide). This will support building security from the fire burning around the extinguished wet edge and restabilising itself.

Single cab tankers: From the rear deck, firefighters should have one branch for main knock down and a second as a mop up. The deck crew will select straight jet (normally first branch) or fog hose streams as required. The driver and deck crews must maintain situational awareness and tanker speed is crucial.

Dual cab tankers: The crew leader and driver must discuss tactics. Set the monitor in the cabin on lowest flow and adjust stream and flow rate as required. Ensure the support crew provide details to the driver and the crew leader of knock down success. Tankers with dual cab front monitors are subjected to the variable ground conditions. The monitor will move and react accordingly which at times does not extinguish all the edge. Be aware of the fire reigniting.

Working with other tankers

When working with other tankers, the plan of operations should be discussed with all crew leaders (over the fireground channel or through the cabin window).

Traditionally, two or more tankers following each other nose to tail has proven successful, with the first tanker knocking down the running edge and the following tankers mopping up. The first tanker moves out either when it is low on water or heat and smoke become challenging. It is replaced by the second tanker, which becomes the new lead tanker. Always communicate this change to all tankers using your fireground communication channel.

Depending on the size of the fire and tanker numbers on the fireground, tankers can start on either flank (half forward flank) fire, working towards the head. Utmost caution must be taken to ensure head on and nose to tail collisions don't occur when working in smoke. If you cannot see, stop until the smoke clears.

With all fires, once the head and main flanks are contained, tanker crews will work to the point of origin and backing fire. Securing the edge is the focus, then concentrating on blacking out and mopping up ensuring wind changes are factored in.

It is not just on extreme or catastrophic Fire Danger Ratings days or long duration campaign fires where firefighters are injured or killed working on or around tankers. A minor change in wind direction, fuel type and topography can see a tanker crew become entrapped. Every grass and scrub fire requires situational awareness and by using good tanker tactics, you will achieve your incident objective and ensure that everyone comes home.

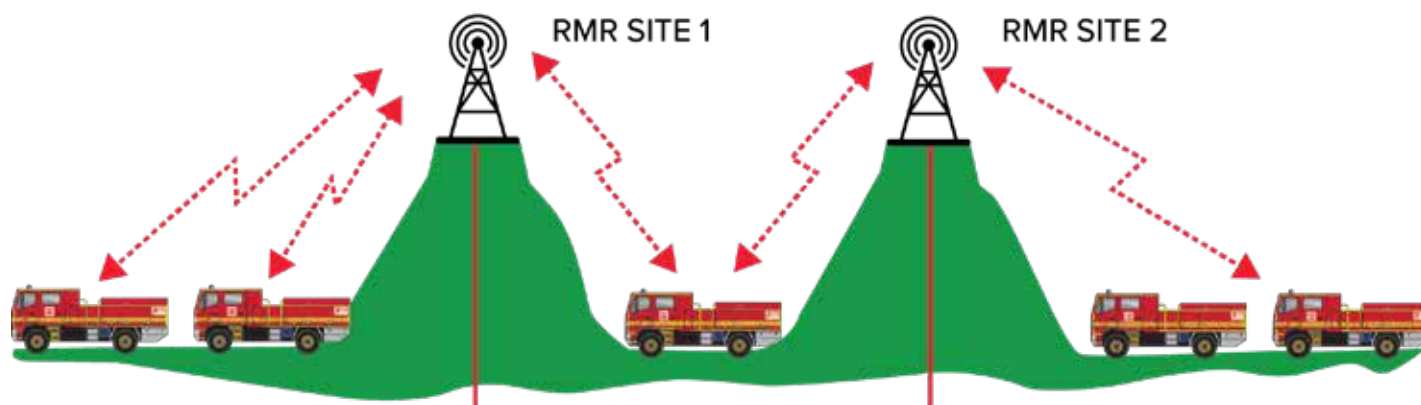


Radio communications

During periods of high operational activity, challenging terrain, or in certain geographical locations, radio communications may be impacted, reducing operational effectiveness.

Factors such as telecommunications disruptions and tower outages can affect the availability and consistency of Regional Mobile Radio (RMR) and fireground (simplex) communications.

Understanding how RMR (trunked) and fireground communications operate can help users recognise the differences between network-based and direct radio-to-radio communications. This information sheet gives a high-level overview of how RMR and simplex radios operate. Detailed information will be shared through future updates.



This scenario illustrates RMR FireCom and command-and-control communications supported by multiple RMR network towers

Radio communication networks

RMR network

The RMR network is Victoria's statewide digital trunked radio network used by emergency services, including CFA, FRV, SES, Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police and partner agencies. The network provides reliable voice and data communications across metropolitan, regional and remote parts of Victoria. The network consists of 262 radio sites across the state to provide wide area coverage based on district boundaries.

The RMR network plays a crucial role in emergency response by supporting incident management, resource coordination, firefighter safety and situational awareness. By providing consistent and reliable communication across broad operational areas, the system enables CFA personnel to share information, coordinate activities, and respond effectively to dynamic and rapidly changing incidents.

The network provides CFA with a wide-area communication capability that extends well beyond the limitations of direct radio-to-radio communication. Using a network of strategically located radio towers, the trunked radio system receives and retransmits communications, allowing personnel to communicate effectively across large geographic areas, including locations that would otherwise be beyond normal line-of-sight radio coverage.

Unlike simplex communications, which rely on a direct path between radios, RMR uses interconnected infrastructure to route transmissions through the network. This enables firefighters, brigade members, incident controllers, and FireCom operators to maintain communications across districts, regions and incident areas, even when separated by significant distances or challenging terrain.

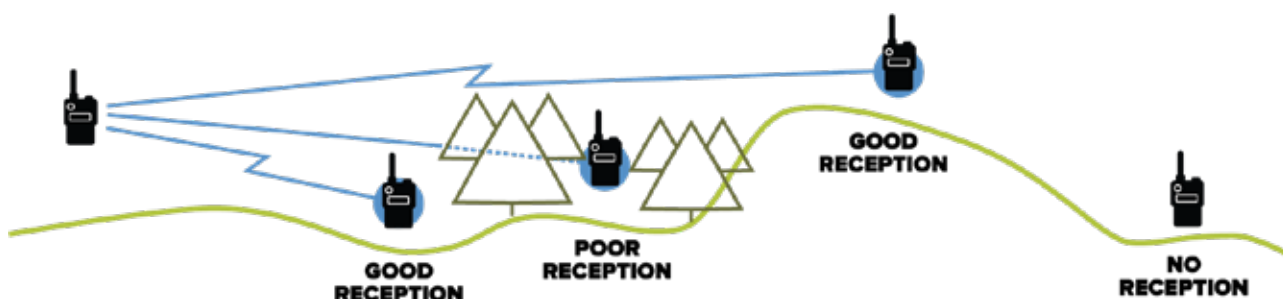
Coverage is provided through multiple radio sites and towers positioned throughout Victoria, creating overlapping service areas that enhance reliability and operational resilience. The network can be configured to support specific operational requirements through designated talkgroups, ensuring communications are tailored to the incident, district, or regional area of operations. This allows members from multiple brigades and agencies to communicate effectively, while maintaining clear command and control structures.

Note: The APX NEXT portable provides additional connectivity by using Telstra 4G and Wi-Fi networks to maintain communications when outside the coverage of the RMR network through a feature known as SmartConnect.

Fireground and simplex

CFA relies on simplex radio communications as a crucial component of its operational communications framework. Used primarily for localised communications on a fireground, simplex channels enable direct radio-to-radio contact without relying on external network infrastructure, such as telecommunication or radio towers.

CFA has several simplex channels assigned to each district. For example, in District 5 they are labelled D05A, D05B and D05C. Care should be taken when operating outside your home district, because using your local district channels in another area can interfere with communications supporting operations in that district.



Fireground/simplex channels

Factors that affect radio performance

A range of environmental, technical and operational factors can affect radio communications across both RMR or simplex channels. These are the key considerations.

Transmit power

Portable radios are an essential communication tool for CFA personnel. However, their performance is more limited than that of vehicle-mounted or fixed radio equipment. **While a portable radio may be able to receive transmissions from distant stations, it may not always have sufficient transmitting capability to be heard in return.** This is primarily due to the lower transmission power output and shorter antenna of portable radios (five watts) compared with mobile radios installed in CFA vehicles (25 watts).

Signal obstruction

Radio communications can be significantly affected by the surrounding environment. Physical obstacles such as dense vegetation, trees, buildings, hills, vehicles and other structures can absorb, block, reflect or weaken radio signals. These effects may result in varying audio quality and unreliable transmissions, particularly in complex terrain or built-up areas.

For CFA personnel, understanding the impact of environmental factors on radio performance is critical to maintaining effective operational communications. When operating at incidents, firefighters should be aware that structures, terrain features and dense forested areas can all influence radio coverage. Selecting an appropriate operating location, maintaining line-of-sight where possible, and using alternative communication channels or repeater resources can help minimise communication difficulties and ensure critical information is transmitted clearly and reliably.



PHOTO CHRIS THOM

Bushfire vehicle entrapment

Crew protection systems are an important part of a broader approach to improving firefighter safety on the fireground. Over many years, CFA has continued to evolve the safety systems and equipment fitted to vehicles to reduce the impact on crews when they become involved in a vehicle entrapment during bushfire operations.

Following the tragic loss of five firefighters at Linton in 1998, CFA developed a purpose-built crew protection system for tankers. Since then, crew protection systems have continued to evolve and are now fitted across CFA's tanker fleet.

One of the most significant evaluations of the tanker protection system involved testing in a simulated bushfire environment with an average fire intensity of approximately 19,000 kW/m² – almost twice the estimated intensity experienced during the Linton fire.

While these systems provide a high level of protection, they rely on crews operating them correctly. Investigations into bushfire entrapment incidents have demonstrated that systems not activated correctly or activated too late, may not provide the level of protection required.

Prevention is the best protection

Although crew protection systems are designed to improve survivability, preventing entrapment in the first place remains the most effective way to protect firefighters. Research by CSIRO as part of Project Vesta in the late 1990s introduced the concept of the 'dead man zone', which describes the distance a fire can travel in about five minutes if a flank fire suddenly becomes a headfire due to a wind change or fire behaviour changes due to terrain influences. This highlights the importance of maintaining situational awareness at all times.

Crews should continually assess fire behaviour through:

- direct observation of fire activity and weather conditions
- monitoring radio traffic for red flag warnings and operational updates
- reviewing weather forecasts within shift plans
- identifying changes in terrain that may influence fire behaviour
- continually reassessing escape routes and safety zones.

Pay particular attention when operating on slopes. Fire behaviour can change rapidly when a fire transitions from backing downhill or moving across level ground to running uphill. Flame heights, rates of spread and fire intensity can increase dramatically in these situations, reducing decision-making time and increasing the risk of entrapment. A sound

understanding of bushfire behaviour, combined with dynamic risk assessment, enables crews to make informed decisions about tactics and positioning.

If entrapment appears likely

If crews think they may become surrounded by fire, they can significantly improve survivability by moving the vehicle to an area with the lowest available fuel load. In an entrapment situation, reducing exposure to both radiant and convective heat is critical.

Radiant heat decreases rapidly as distance from the heat source increases. As a general principle, doubling the distance from the radiant heat source reduces radiant heat exposure by approximately four times. Even relatively small increases in separation from burning fuels can significantly reduce the impact on crews and vehicles.

Convective heat can be equally dangerous and may be increased in several situations, including:

- fuel burning underneath the vehicle, creating a 'burn under' scenario and exposing the underside of the vehicle to direct flame contact
- the vehicle becoming entrapped on mid-slope where fire burning uphill can result in prolonged flame contact
- multiple spot fires developing and joining together, increasing flame heights and overall fire intensity
- parking in areas of heavy fuel where dense vegetation surrounds the vehicle.

Whenever possible crews should avoid locations where fuel beneath or immediately adjacent to the vehicle could contribute to sustained flame contact.

Training and preparedness

The effectiveness of any protection system is dependent on the people operating it. Regular review of *SOP 9.32 – Bushfire Entrapment Procedures for Appliances and Practical Crew Protection System* and drills must form part of both pre-season preparation and ongoing operational readiness. This is particularly important when operating vehicles that crew members do not routinely use.

Crew leaders play a critical role in preventing entrapment by applying the principles of LACES – lookouts, awareness, communication, escape routes, safety zones. Regular discussions about how LACES is being applied on the incident ground help maintain a shared understanding of risk across all crew members.

2025-26 Post Season Debrief Program update

The final report of the 2025-26 Post Season Debrief Program (PSDP) is now available on Members Online.

CFA would like to thank all members who contributed their time, experiences and observations through after action reviews (AARs), surveys, interviews and other review activities. This strong engagement has been crucial in developing a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of the season and identifying opportunities to strengthen future preparedness and response.

The information below is a summary of the key findings and next steps. Members are encouraged to visit Members Online to access the full report and updated PSDP page for more detail.

Program engagement

The 2025-26 PSDP generated significant participation from across the organisation. Almost 500 members participated in externally facilitated fireground AARs, with many more contributing through local reviews, surveys and interviews.

In total, more than 2,500 observations were captured, including over 200 survey responses. Despite the diversity of incidents, locations and experiences, there was strong consistency in the feedback received, allowing CFA to build a clear statewide picture of operational strengths, challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Key findings and insights

Analysis of the feedback identified 62 recurring insights across the organisation, which were grouped into key themes. Across these themes, members consistently highlighted several strengths that contributed to effective operational outcomes throughout the season as well as several recurring opportunities for improvement, particularly during periods of escalation and sustained operations. Detailed findings for each theme are available in the final PSDP report and on Members Online.

Turning feedback into action

A consistent message throughout the PSDP was the importance of turning feedback into action and ensuring everyone can see how their feedback is informing change.

More than 30 actions were identified in response to the program findings, with further actions and supporting improvement initiatives to be considered following completion of the Parliamentary Inquiry and the Coordinated After Action Review of Incident Management Teams being undertaken jointly with Forest Fire Management Victoria.

Some improvements will be delivered before the 2026-27 fire season, while others are longer-term initiatives that require broader organisational change. Here are some of the initiatives currently underway in readiness for next season.

- **Operational communications and technical reviews.** Reviews of communications plans, network performance improvements, communication arrangements and training information to better understand the issues experienced this season and identify improvement activities required.

- **Self-heating meal packs.** Provision of new meal packs that will provide more immediate access to fireground catering solutions.
- **Enhanced Pre-Season Briefing Program.** Development of short-form videos to share key lessons, reinforce good practice and address recurring themes identified throughout the season.
- **ESRI 2.0.** Broadened scope of the Elevated Season Response Initiative to build on last year's program that provided bulk water and fuel on standby, and expanding this to include other capabilities.
- **Integration of lessons learned.** Improved integration of PSDP findings into workshops and briefings conducted around the state and the creation of new exercise scenarios for use statewide.

Further work is also underway to improve fireground communications, connectivity and access to operational information, including technology solutions that support field-based personnel and improve situational awareness. More information about these initiatives will be shared shortly.

Looking ahead

CFA is committed to keeping members informed as this work progresses. As actions progress, updates will be communicated by the relevant business units or through broader CFA communications to ensure members remain informed of outcomes and progress.

Feedback and 2026-27 program

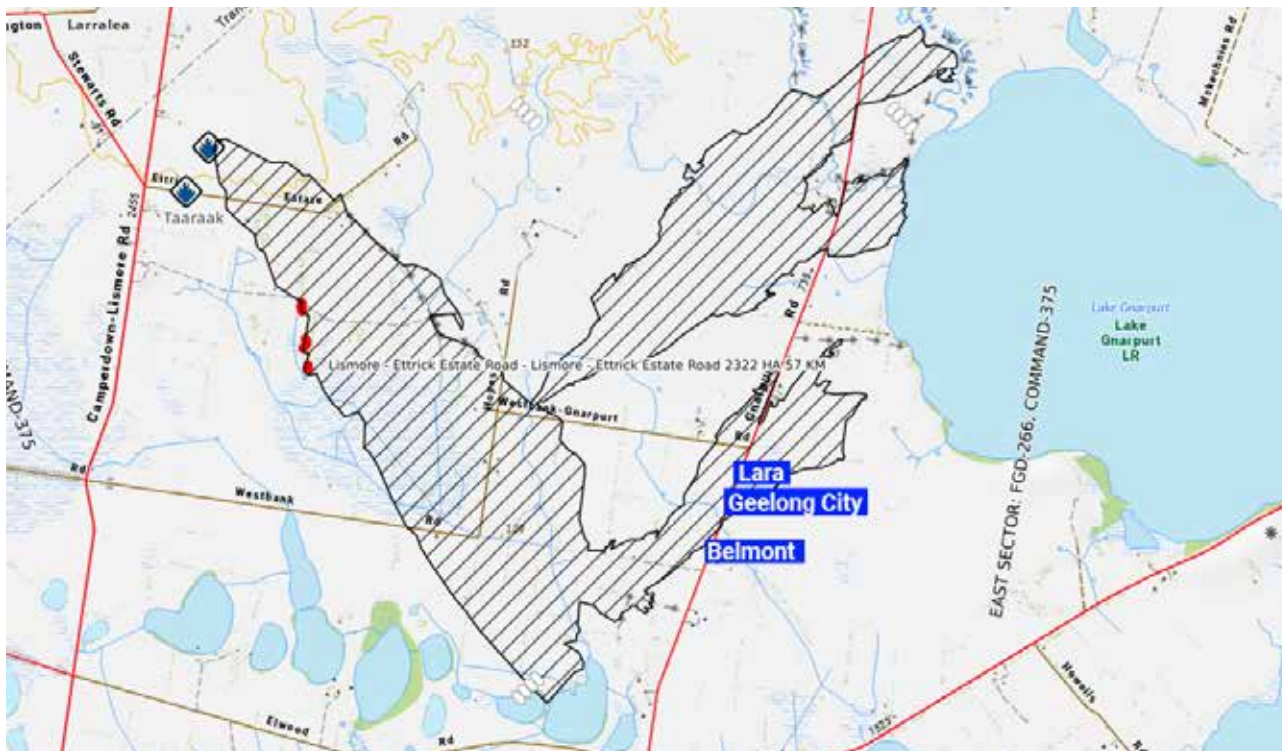
Building on member feedback and lessons identified, the Performance Improvement team will continue to refine the PSDP for 2026-27. Planned improvements include making strike team leader and divisional/sector commander surveys available earlier in the season to better capture post deployment feedback. This will enable earlier analysis of emerging trends and lessons. The Performance Improvement team is exploring additional survey and feedback opportunities to enhance lessons capture and support continuous improvement across CFA. Capturing lessons is a year-round activity. Members, brigades, districts and regions are encouraged to continue submitting AARs and observations to aar@cfa.vic.gov.au.

Acknowledgement

Once again, thank you to everyone who contributed. Your feedback is essential to strengthen CFA and ensure we continue to learn and improve for future fire seasons. Up-to-date information about the program can be found on Members Online using the QR code. If you have any questions, please email lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au



Near miss and burnover



Summary

During the 2025-26 fire season two vehicles from Geelong Group Strike Team 0704, were involved in a near miss and burnover incident at the Camperdown-Lismore Road, Larralea fire.

Overview

On 27 January 2026 at about 1.15pm a column of black smoke was sighted from the fire tower, with further calls stating a machinery fire in a paddock. At about 1.22pm the request was issued from the local command facility (LCF) to make tankers 20 as a grassfire was impacting a plantation and spreading rapidly.

Strike Team 0704 was activated at 1.39pm and redirected directly to form up at Leslie Manor Fire Station at 2.30pm.

Initial tasking for crews was securing portions of the eastern flank and hot spots around Hopes Road and Westbank-Gnarput Road to knock down the fire's edge. Conditions during the first hours were reasonable with good visibility.

Fireground tasking and clear communication was reported as a key challenge by crews throughout the incident. Despite initial consolidation of effort towards the eastern flank, blacking out the whole eastern perimeter ahead of the wind change was difficult. Red Flag Warnings had been issued ahead of the predicted wind change. As the change began to push through, crews identified a deterioration of conditions and visibility.

A series of wind changes then followed, rather than a single event, each varying in strength and direction. At the time of the change, visibility was down to 10 to 20 metres resulting in hazardous driving conditions. At about 5pm several radio messages across the fireground stated there was an active breakout seen towards Gnarput Road. Geelong City and Lara tanker crews were instructed to travel to Gnarput Road, follow the Belmont tanker and attack the breakout.

En route to the reported fire, crews reported visibility had improved to around 100 metres, however there was still limited

information about exactly where the fire was, its direction of travel and forward rate of spread.

About 300 to 500 metres south of Westbank-Gnarput Road along Gnarput Road, visibility quickly reduced again because of a combination of heavy raised dust and smoke. The actual fire front only became visible approximately 50 metres before the roadside.

The Belmont tanker attempted to radio a warning to the Geelong City tanker to either continue through the lowering smoke or stop as they had just passed the fire front. However, the warning was hampered due to excessive fireground radio traffic. By the time this warning was received, Geelong City and Lara tankers were already committed and had between 10 to 30 seconds between sighting the fire front and impact.

The fire front was approaching the road with flame heights of about three metres in the paddock. Heavy grass fuels extended right to the road edge on both sides, which increased flame height and intensity to about five metres at the road edge, leaving no viable escape route.

A difficult decision was made to continue driving through the fire front, based on the assessment that the asphalt road provided a narrow but viable path and that the main front would pass quickly if the vehicles kept moving.

As the fire impacted the Geelong City tanker, it moved from the right side of the road to the far left, but within seconds the left side (which was adjacent to increased fuel load) was also impacted by fire, forcing it back to the road's centre.

The front monitor was briefly activated to push back heat, but it completely blinded the driver and was shut off. Visibility was limited and the driver had to continue at a reduced speed knowing that another vehicle was just ahead of them.

The Geelong City tanker crew of three on the rear deck was forced to shelter below the heat shields as the fire rolled over the vehicle. The crew protection system could not be activated from inside the cabin as the handle failed to move. In some cases, crews should be aware that an obstructed activation

linkage could prevent crew protection system operation. As the fire moved over the vehicle, the pump ceased to operate, but then was subsequently restarted and continued to operate.

Crews thought that this may have been due to oxygen starvation or the accidental activation pump start/stop button while attempting to shift the crew protection handle into the open position. Crews should remain aware of the risk of inadvertent activation of critical controls when operating under high-stress conditions. The deck crew used small town branches to deploy a defensive spray for protection before the pump disengaged.

The Geelong City tanker deck crew then evacuated into the cabin via the rear door as the vehicle proceeded clear of the fire front.

At the same time as the fire front passed through, a Mayday radio message was communicated by the Lara tanker, which was situated behind Geelong City, advising that they were activating burnover procedures.

The Lara tanker stopped in the middle of the road to deploy radiant heat curtains as the heat from the fire front was too intense through the windshield for the driver and crew leader to withstand. The crew on the deck had dropped below the heat shields for protection and aimed their branches towards the sky with a fan/spray pattern to protect themselves.

Crew protection sprays were activated from inside the cabin at this time to protect the vehicle and the crew from damage or injury. This appeared to automatically throttle the pump down to idle, which the deck crew was not expecting. The resultant lower pressure caused their hoses to kink, restricting flow to the branches and reducing the effectiveness of the fan/spray pattern.

Communication between the crew leader and deck crew was challenging because the intercom system was not working efficiently. As a result, the deck crew relied on portable radios to communicate on the fireground channel. During the burnover, the crew leader was unaware of the deck crew's status until the Mayday call was overheard by them. When the deck crew confirmed by radio that they were safe, Belmont and Geelong City tankers proceeded to assist the Lara tanker and confirm crew welfare.

Lessons identified

Crew protection activation linkage: The crew protection system on the Geelong City tanker uses a shared mechanical linkage between the cabin and rear deck. If the handle is fouled at either end, it cannot be operated from the other.

Pump start/stop rocker switches: The pump start/stop switch had no guard to prevent inadvertent activation or deactivation. Crews should maintain situational awareness of pump controls when conducting burnover procedures.

Multiple wind changes: You may experience multiple wind changes across the fireground before the main change arrives. Even where flanks appear stable, changing wind strength and direction can rapidly alter fire behaviour and compromise containment lines.

Elevated grass fuels adjacent to roads: This can significantly increase flame height and radiant heat, reducing the effectiveness of anchor points. Fuel loads, particularly within culverts, can be difficult to estimate and may be substantially greater than they appear from a distance.

Time to respond: Personnel already wearing full PPC had only seconds to respond, reducing exposure to radiant heat and smoke. Minor burns and damaged P2 masks highlighted the importance of being fully prepared and ready to act immediately during rapid fire escalation.

Burnover preparedness: This relies on the readiness of



crew survival systems, including curtains, spray systems, fire blankets and other protective equipment. However, rapidly changing conditions may prevent full deployment. In these situations, rear deck crews have used fan sprays or small town branches to create an immediate protective water curtain around themselves and the vehicle. This highlights the importance of ensuring members are confident to use rear deck short lengths to provide protection from radiant heat when required.

Visibility: Visibility can change in an instant. Drivers and crew leaders will need to make immediate decisions about whether it is safe to drive through prevailing conditions, turn around or even stop. This case study shows that every situation is different, and all three tanker crews had to undertake an instant dynamic risk assessment in different circumstances.

Unfamiliar vehicles: When crews operate unfamiliar vehicles, pre-deployment familiarisation with equipment, safety features and communication systems is essential. Reliable communication between the cabin and rear deck, particularly through portable radios where intercoms are unavailable, is critical for crew coordination and safety.

Conclusion

This incident highlights the significant operational challenges posed by rapidly changing fire behaviour, reduced visibility, and limited situational awareness during bushfire response activities. Despite the severe conditions encountered, the crew remained composed, applied burnover survival principles and safely navigated the fire front, achieving a safe outcome.

If you have any lessons to share email Lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au



Bridging generations in brigades

On a CFA brigade training night it's not unusual to find four generations working side-by-side. A teenager attending their first operational training exercise may be learning alongside someone with 40 or 50 years of firefighting experience. While age differences can sometimes create challenges, many successful brigades demonstrate that generational diversity can become one of their greatest strengths.

One topic that frequently surfaces in CFA's 'Having challenging conversations' training workshop is often described by participants as "the problems with young people". Common comments include:

- they don't listen to us
- they're trying to change things too quickly
- they're not committed
- they're too sensitive
- they want leadership opportunities before they've earned them
- they leave anyway, so why invest in them?

After hearing these concerns repeatedly, the People Excellence and Innovation team wondered whether these were actually the issues or whether there were other factors influencing the participants' perceptions. To find out, we spoke with leaders from brigades known for successfully engaging and retaining members across multiple generations: Captain Harold Jochs from Swan Hill Fire Brigade, Captain Andrew Ludeman from Wyndham Vale Fire Brigade (pictured above) and former Wyndham Vale Captain and current Deputy Chief Officer North West Region Trevor Weston.

When they shared their experiences and insights, it was clear that their messages were remarkably consistent. The challenges often attributed to young people are rarely about age, but more often stem from culture, communication, expectations, leadership and relationships.

Understanding the real sources of conflict

One of the most common sources of tension occurs when experienced members and newer volunteers have different views about change. Long-serving firefighters often place great value

on methods that have been tested through years of operational experience. Newer members may question existing practices and suggest alternative approaches, technologies or training methods.

Neither perspective is inherently right or wrong. Problems arise when one group dismisses the other rather than seeking to understand their viewpoint.

"It's a balancing act," Harold said. "Clear and open communication is the key. Sometimes I have to say 'slow down' to newer members, but it's usually just enthusiasm."

Communication itself can also create misunderstandings. Younger members may prefer messaging apps and digital platforms, while older members may favour phone calls or face-to-face conversations. What one person sees as efficient communication, another may perceive as disrespectful or disengaged.

Harold and Andrew address this by using a variety of communication methods to ensure important information reaches everyone, regardless of age or preference.

Commitment is another area where assumptions frequently emerge. Long-serving members may compare today's volunteers with a time when attendance expectations were different. Younger members, often balancing careers, study, shift work and young families, may feel those realities are not fully understood. Trevor believes clear expectations are the solution.

"When a new member joins, regardless of age, we have a conversation about the minimum expectations of the brigade and what they can realistically commit to. It's made clear from the start," Trevor said.

Harold shares a similar view. "Every minute a volunteer gives is valuable to the brigade. We work hard to ensure that those who turn out all the time and those who can only contribute occasionally are not valued differently."

Respect, recognition and opportunity

Many intergenerational conflicts ultimately come down to people wanting to feel valued. Older members may feel their service and experience are being overlooked. Younger members may feel their ideas, skills and potential are dismissed because of their age or limited service. While both groups want respect, they may simply define it differently.

All three brigade leaders agreed that recognition plays a critical role in creating belonging. While formal service medals are important, meaningful recognition should happen much more frequently.

Whether acknowledging a good idea, celebrating a newly acquired competency or simply thanking someone for a contribution, these moments reinforce that every volunteer matters.

Leadership and promotion can also become sensitive issues if processes are not transparent. Conflict may arise when experienced members believe years of service are being overlooked, while younger members feel opportunities for development are limited.

Harold believes leadership should be based on readiness rather than age or tenure.

"If someone is ready, they'll be given the opportunity. If they're not quite ready but show potential, we'll support and mentor them. It's in our best interests to have a balance of experience and fresh thinking," Harold said.

Both Swan Hill and Wyndham Vale brigades have a mix of ages and backgrounds on their brigade management teams, reflecting a focus on capability and development rather than demographics.

Balancing tradition and change

Brigade culture and tradition are often areas where generational differences become most visible. Members may have differing views about customs, social activities, modernisation or changing

expectations within volunteer organisations. While people may not always agree about what the future should look like, they generally care deeply about the future of their brigade.

All three leaders agreed that sharing brigade history and traditions with newer members was important.

"CFA is a special and unique organisation," Harold said. "We don't want to lose the things that make us great. There are things we can improve and ways we can evolve, but we don't want change for the sake of change."

Importantly, they challenged the assumption that young people want to fundamentally change CFA. In their experience, most younger volunteers join because they value what CFA represents. They are often curious about traditions and keen to understand the culture.

"It's normal and sometimes refreshing when they question things," Harold reflected. "Our young people love some of the traditions like echelon, torchlight ceremonies and wearing formal uniform."

So, what works?

When asked what they do to support young people, all three leaders gave a similar response. They don't do anything specifically for young people, but focus on supporting all new members.

Harold explained that Swan Hill uses a buddy system and takes the time to understand each person's goals, interests and availability.

"We don't do anything specifically targeted at young people. It's more about how we onboard and support new people."

The focus is on understanding the individual rather than making assumptions based on age, which is often the key to engagement and retention. All three leaders also consistently highlighted the importance of asking questions such as, 'why did this person join?', 'what do they hope to gain from volunteering?', 'what skills would they like to develop?', 'what barriers may affect their participation?' and 'do they have leadership aspirations?'

They also stressed the importance of creating opportunities for members of different ages to learn from one another. Experienced members bring operational judgement, local knowledge and decades of practical experience. Newer members often contribute fresh perspectives, digital skills and new ideas. The strongest brigades recognise the value of both.

Mentoring, they believe, should never be a one-way process.

While experienced members pass on lessons from incidents and brigade history, younger members can help others navigate new technologies and systems. When everyone can be both a teacher and a learner, mutual respect grows naturally.

The value young members bring

When asked what they enjoy most about having younger members in their brigades, the responses were overwhelmingly positive.

Young volunteers bring energy, enthusiasm and a willingness to learn. They contribute fresh perspectives, future leadership potential and strong operational participation.

"I'm not going to be captain forever," Harold said. "We all need to hand over the baton eventually. It's our responsibility to ensure CFA continues."

This future focus has shaped how they think about retention.

"I don't have expectations around how long a volunteer should remain," Harold said.

In Swan Hill, many younger members eventually leave the community for university, employment or travel opportunities. Rather than seeing this as a failure, the brigade accepts it as part of life. Some transfer to other brigades, while others leave with valuable knowledge about fire safety and community resilience. The priority is ensuring they have a positive volunteering experience.

Operationally, there is no hierarchy based on turnout numbers. “It’s not a competition,” Andrew said. “We’re a team with a job to do and we share the load as best we can.”

Stronger together

The conversations with Harold, Andrew and Trevor highlighted a clear message: strong and consistent leadership is at the heart of successful multi-generational brigades. The healthiest brigades are not those without conflict, but the ones that create environments where people of all ages feel respected, included and valued.

Successful brigades set clear expectations, communicate openly, address issues early and focus on behaviours rather than assumptions. They value experience and fresh perspectives equally, provide opportunities for learning and development, and create a culture where everyone can contribute regardless of age or length of service.

They understand that generational tensions are usually the result of misunderstandings rather than age itself. By listening before judging, encouraging curiosity and focusing on the shared mission, they build stronger teams and stronger brigades.

The most effective brigades consistently share the same foundations of strong and fair leadership, clear communication, respect across generations, transparent decision-making, equal access to opportunities, accountability and a clear focus on serving the community.

STORY SHERRI MCKERLEY

Scan the QR code for
information about leadership
development opportunities



Summary of lessons learned

The conversations with Harold Jochs, Andrew Ludeman and Trevor Weston highlighted several common principles that help their brigades successfully manage generational diversity and build strong brigade cultures.

The real cause of tension: At the heart of a brigade’s success is the understanding that most generational tensions are not really about age. They are usually the result of misunderstandings, assumptions, unclear expectations, poor communication or a lack of connection between members.

Strong and consistent leadership: This emerged as a key theme. Successful leaders model the behaviours they expect from others, set clear standards, treat people consistently and address issues early before they escalate.

Communication: Communication is equally important. Brigades that communicate openly, use a variety of communication methods and create opportunities for members to be heard are better positioned to build trust and avoid misunderstandings.

Focus on individuals: Focus on individuals rather than generations. Instead of making assumptions about what people want or need based on their age, understand each person’s motivations, goals, availability and aspirations.

Respect and recognition: Volunteers of all ages want to feel valued for their contributions. Brigades that celebrate achievements, acknowledge effort and provide development opportunities create stronger engagement and a greater sense of belonging. When people feel respected, included and connected to a shared purpose, age becomes far less important than attitude, contribution and commitment.

Capability trumps age: Capability should matter more than age or length of service. Leadership opportunities, training and development should be based on readiness, potential and contribution rather than assumptions about someone’s generation and how long they have been a member.

SWAN HILL FIRE BRIGADE MEMBERS



Update: youth and young adults

Cadet Camp 2026

Every year CFA holds a Cadet Camp for 16 and 17-year-olds where they spend a day at a training campus, make new friends, work on leadership and teamwork skills, learn from specialist leaders and instructors and have a whole lot of fun.

This year, 44 cadets from across Victoria stayed at YMCA Lady Northcote campground, which is near Central Highlands training campus. On Friday night CEO Greg Leach AFSM hosted a trivia quiz, and helped the group to create a group values agreement. This was followed by games and snacks by the campfire.

Everyone was excited to get to the PAD areas at the training ground the next day, even with the early start, where they experienced live fire drills, extinguisher training, what it's like to be in a smoke-filled environment, CFA's heat seeking drone technology and a Fire Medical Response display. On Saturday night, the cadets made a bonfire at the camp site and played more games.

On Sunday morning the cadets heard all about the LaTrobe University Aspire program and tried some outdoor activities. They also saw a sim table in action, tried some pumping and draughting with Ballarat City brigade, and watched a demonstration by Rowsley brigade members who ran through asset protection and running grassfire drills.



Emerging Young Leaders Mentoring Program 2026

After a successful pilot program in 2025, the 2026 Emerging Young Leaders Mentoring Program is running again this year. The program focuses on supporting young adult members with leadership aspirations by fostering their professional development, exploring role pathways and encouraging personal growth. Mentees are matched with suitably experienced and trained mentors from across the state.

This year's program is being delivered over six months from April to October and includes a blend of one-on-one mentoring and group sessions that may be online or face to face. The program includes mentoring skills development training (for mentors), weekly sessions, two professional development workshops, regular check-ins and an acknowledgement event at the end.

We have seen participants grow together in their mentoring partnerships at the Fire Services Museum and an FRV station. They have also experienced the first workshop of the program, hearing from CEO Greg Leach AFSM about his CFA journey, learning about styles of thinking, generational value and personal advocacy. A program highlight was hearing about different leadership styles from FRV's Greg Christison.

With the help of their mentors, mentees continue to work on their leadership skills such as communication, mindset and future planning.

Young Adults Advisory Committee 2026

Members of the Young Adults Advisory Committee (YAAC) have been working hard in their districts to promote and support young people in CFA.

Members have discussed and advocated on several issues. The committee had a productive discussion about ensuring child safety doctrine was clear for brigades in order to promote the participation of 16 and 17-year-olds and other young people in operational activities. This led to changes to a child safety training module and the development of new resources for brigades. YAAC members will also work closely with CFA's Child Safety team as part of their remit to review and update child safety doctrine, policies and procedures.

The YAAC has also contributed feedback about the Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model Options Paper, in particular Recommendation 7 – Enhanced Support for Transitioning Juniors and 16 and 17-year-olds into Cadet Memberships. YAAC members provided valuable insight and lived experience from their own journeys in CFA, which will help shape the future experiences of young people joining CFA.

YAAC members have also shared their ideas for events that will bring young people together to learn from their peers in an effort to develop new skills and increase their capability and confidence on the fireground. Other initiatives have focused on ways for young people to connect and communicate, with strong support from CFA to explore ways to achieve this.

STORY ALEX REID AND TIM HUGHES

Volunteer Forum



Since September 2021, CFA has broadcast a live Volunteer Forum each month. These are now viewed through CFA's YouTube channel, where CFA members and community members can learn more about CFA activities and have questions answered live by subject matter experts. Every broadcast covers a range of topics, including an update dedicated to CFA training.

STORY BRADLEY THOMAS

Stawell



Episodes have been at specialised venues including the State Control Centre, State Logistics Centre, Oscar 1 Rescue brigade, DMO locations (Geelong and Seymour), CFA training grounds, district HQs, Hamilton Air Base, State Championships and co-located brigades



Berriwillock

Our broadcasts have between **3,000** and **4,500** viewers – with the current highest viewed being **Berriwillock** in July 2023 with **7,427** views



Werribee



From Werribee we broadcast a live road rescue demonstration by the multiple award winning team

SCC

Our first live international call was from Canada to the State Control Centre in June 2023



OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

"Each month I am able to update members on key training matters, address specific items and highlight improvements and initiatives. These updates are critical to help keep our members informed"

DCO Operational Doctrine and Training
Rohan Luke

CFA's
Volunteer
Forum
broadcast its

**50th
episode** ★
in April 2026

The team
has travelled

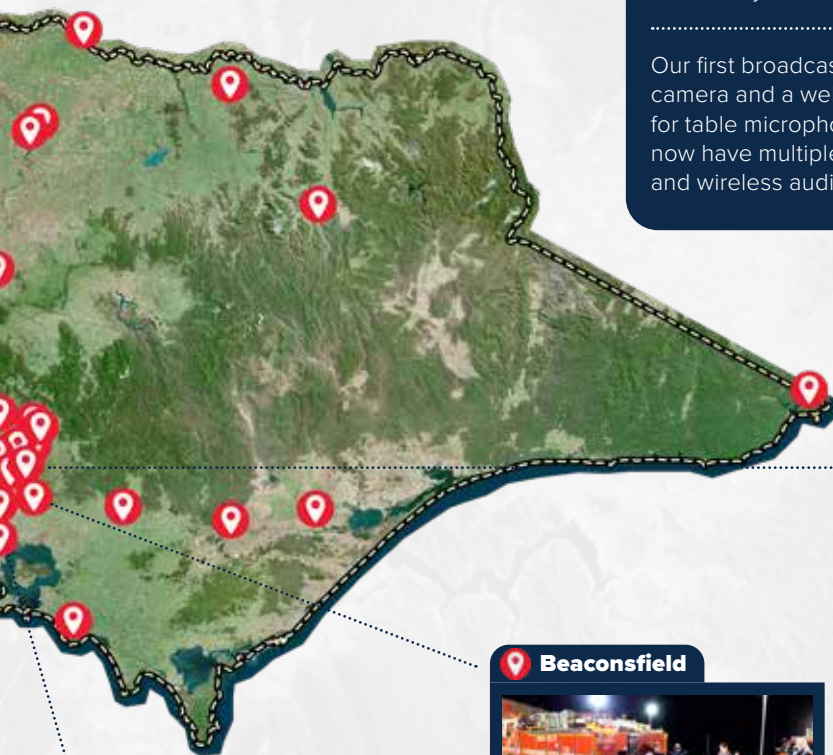
16,376kms

attending CFA
brigades and
locations

We've had
more than

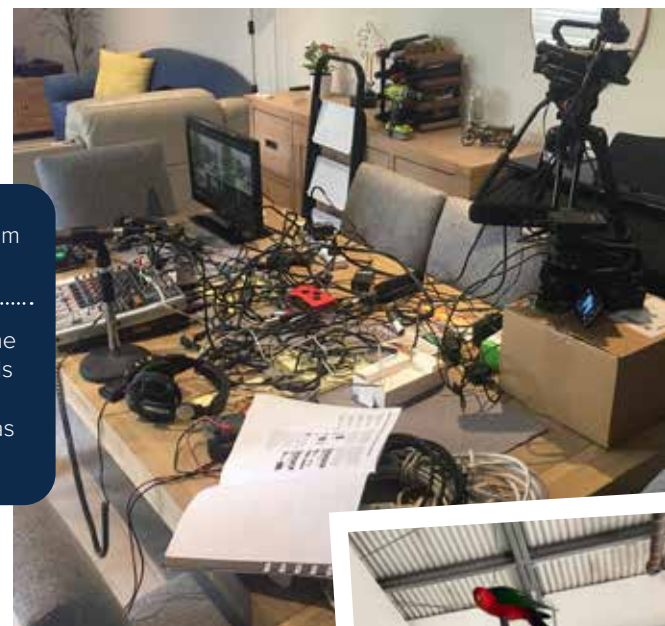
2,500

people support
our broadcasts
as audience
members



CFA has broadcast a Forum
from every CFA district

Our first broadcast had one
camera and a web of cords
for table microphones; we
now have multiple cameras
and wireless audio



Somerville



At Somerville we broadcast a
live feed from a drone above
the station

Beaconsfield



Our Juniors-focused episode
included a hotly contested
hose race pitting Juniors
against senior leaders

Upper Ferntree Gully



We've been interrupted by
live callouts at Hoppers
Crossing, Beaconsfield and
Upper Ferntree Gully

Scan the **QR code**

to catch up on

Volunteer Forums



Faces of CFA

Zoe Munro Irymple Fire Brigade District 18

What is your CFA role?

I am the brigade's second lieutenant and training officer. I am also a VFBV delegate. I enjoy wearing a few different hats because it allows me to support our members in different ways, whether that's developing their skills through training, representing our brigade or helping lead crews on the fireground.

Why did you join?

CFA has always been in my blood. My great-grandfather, pop and dad all dedicated many years to CFA and are well known throughout our local community. Growing up around the brigade, volunteering just felt like a natural path for me. Today, I stay because of the passion I have for helping others, the lifelong friendships I've made and the experiences that CFA has given me. It has challenged me, built my confidence and given me opportunities that I never imagined when I first joined.

What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

Every incident has an impact, regardless of its size or type. Being someone's best thing on the worst day of their life is something that stays with you. If I had to choose, my first major incident as the officer in charge stands out. It involved an eight-brigade response, which is very uncommon in the north-western area of District 18. It was a huge learning experience and reinforced the importance of communication, leadership and teamwork.

More recently, I attended what began as a support role for a fast-moving grass and scrub fire on an extreme fire danger day. The incident escalated quickly, with houses becoming involved. Watching the aerial firefighting bombers extinguish house fires was something you don't see every day. The teamwork between the Sunraysia Group brigades that day was incredible and it's a reminder of how much worse the outcome could have been without everyone working together.

Who have been your mentors in CFA?

My biggest mentor has always been my dad. He has guided me throughout my CFA journey and encouraged me to back myself. I've also learned a great deal from our former captain and now fellow lieutenant, Steven Elms, and my husband Damian Munro, who is also a lieutenant at the brigade. Between the three of them, they've continually encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone, challenged me to grow and supported me through decisions both on and off the fireground. I've been fortunate to learn from people who lead by example and I truly believe I've learned from the best.

What have been the highlights of your time in CFA?

One of the biggest highlights was meeting my husband through CFA. Another highlight has been earning the respect and confidence of fellow brigade members. Knowing that people trust me to help develop their skills and guide them to become better firefighters is something I'm incredibly proud of. Seeing members grow in confidence after training or gaining new qualifications is just as rewarding as responding to incidents.



How do you motivate your brigade members?

I like to keep training interesting by introducing new ideas and practical scenarios that challenge everyone. I also enjoy encouraging our more experienced members to embrace modern technology and new ways of training while still valuing the knowledge and experience they bring.

I believe everyone has something to learn and something to teach, regardless of how long they've been in CFA.

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

Never stop learning and never be afraid to ask questions. Every training night, every incident and every person you work alongside is an opportunity to learn something new. Back yourself but always remember that firefighting is a team effort. Looking after each other, listening to those around you and continuing to build your skills will make you a better firefighter and a better leader.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Outside CFA, I'm a wife, mum to one with another little one on the way, a disability support worker and a Bachelor of Nursing student at La Trobe University. Life is certainly busy but whenever we get the chance, our family loves getting outdoors and spending time down by the river. Making memories together is what it's all about, and it's the perfect way to unwind after the demands of work, study and volunteering.



Tracking exposure to trauma

Fire and emergency services roles inherently involve exposure to potentially traumatic events (PTEs), which can be cumulative and impact mental health and wellbeing. While some agencies have systems for recording incidents, approaches vary widely and evidence on best practice is scarce.

Phoenix Australia, a not-for-profit organisation and experts in trauma-related mental health and wellbeing, reviewed international literature and recently published a new guide that gives first response agencies a shared framework to track trauma exposure and organisational support. This is Australia's first set of good practice principles for how fire and emergency services agencies track their workers' exposure to PTEs and the support they receive.

Phoenix Australia's research addresses a longstanding critical gap: while agencies across Australia have long understood that their people face repeated traumatic experiences, there is no agreed, evidence-based standard for how organisations should track those experiences to ensure a consistent, proactive response. This research could fundamentally change how Australia's emergency agencies understand and protect their first responders from the psychological toll of the job.

The principles were formally endorsed by AFAC's Mental Health and Wellbeing Working Group and approved by the AFAC Council, setting a new benchmark for psychosocial safety across the sector. The endorsement by AFAC means the principles carry sector-wide standing, giving agencies the authority and impetus to review their existing systems and align with the framework.

Why this research matters

Emergency services workers are exposed to PTEs throughout their careers as an unavoidable consequence of the work they do. These exposures range from witnessing death and serious injury to operating in life-threatening conditions, often repeatedly and over many years. The cumulative impact on mental health and wellbeing can be profound, with effects felt not only by individuals but by their families, their colleagues and their organisations.

Until now, approaches to tracking PTE exposure and organisational responses have varied widely across agencies, with limited evidence on the most effective approaches or those most likely to lead to improved worker wellbeing. This research changes that.

The project's final report and good practice principles guide are now available to agencies, and in the future further materials will be developed to support self-assessment and systems improvement.

The new guide outlines principles designed to be flexible and adaptable to each agency's context. They are not prescriptive standards but practical guidance for decision-making, helping agencies design, implement and continuously improve tracking systems that genuinely support their people.

The principles cover tracking workers' exposure to PTEs, as well as tracking the organisational responses that follow. This dual focus recognises that identifying exposure is valuable only if that information is used to connect to meaningful, timely and appropriate support.

Project lead researcher Alexandra Howard from Phoenix Australia said emergency service workers put themselves in harm's way to protect our communities, and they deserve organisations that are equally committed to protecting them.

"This research gives agencies, for the first time, an agreed, evidence-informed foundation for how to track trauma exposure, allowing them to use this information to make better decisions and investments that genuinely support worker wellbeing," she said.

"It has been built with the sector, and it reflects the sector's real experience and real needs."

The principles are designed to evolve, with the project team recommending close monitoring of implementation and a formal review to capture lessons and ensure the framework keeps pace with emerging evidence and practice.

The research, which was presented at the Natural Hazards Research Forum in June 2026, is part of a broader program exploring how research is translating into impact for Australian communities and the workers who protect them.

The guide, called *Good practice principles for tracking potentially traumatic event exposure and organisational responses in emergency services*, can be downloaded at naturalhazards.com.au/tracking-pte

STORY OSCAR PARRY

School's out for Fireman Ken

For more than 50 years, CFA firefighter Ken Stewart has been a familiar face in the classrooms of Mt Dandenong.

Known throughout the community as Fireman Ken, he has taught generations of children the fundamentals of fire safety, from recognising danger to knowing how to respond in an emergency.

At the end of this school year, Ken will step away from his education role at Mt Dandenong Primary School and Mt Dandenong Pre-school, bringing a remarkable chapter to a close.

"It all began when my daughter started at Mt Dandenong Primary School in the mid-1970s," Ken said. "I started off with teaching her class and then went to the other classes bit by bit as time went along.

"I just kept doing it because I enjoyed it. One

classroom became several and the lessons evolved over the decades.

"Eventually Fire Safe Kids came into it, and Brigades in Schools started off," Ken said.

"Up until then, there was nothing that told me what to do or not to do, I was just using my own experience to educate the kids in those early days.

"It was fantastic to see the formal programs introduced."

Over the years, Ken devised creative solutions to hold the children's interest during his lessons.

"I built a two-storey house from clear plastic to demonstrate how smoke travels through a building. I wanted to show the kids how the smoke goes up into the second storey."

He also placed smoke alarms in classrooms and made testing them a special honour.

"Whoever's birthday it was, it was their turn to test a smoke alarm."

At the pre-school, Ken made wooden fire engines, sourced old firefighting hoses and created equipment the children could use during play, including mini firefighter turnout gear, made by his daughter.

"Just all sorts of things that I needed to do to make it all work."

Unsurprisingly though, the fire truck was always the favourite part of Ken's lessons.

"We took the fire truck up there most times and let the kids have a crack at it," Ken said.

"In recent years, the visits focused on showing children through the truck and letting them use the hose, which they love doing."

Some of Ken's former students have since joined CFA and other emergency services, while others have returned to the school as parents, with their own children learning from Fireman Ken.

"When I announced I was finishing up, some of the parents came up

to me and said, 'Ken, you don't know how much of an influence you made on those kids'," Ken said.

"Parents have told me that when something went wrong their kids would say, 'Ken said this is what you've got to do'."

Ken's work eventually took him beyond Mt Dandenong.

For more than 10 years, he worked as a casual CFA educator, driving a mobile education unit around Victoria and visiting hundreds of schools.

At the same time, he continued volunteering with Kalorama-Mt Dandenong Fire Brigade, where he served as captain for many years.

"I've been at it for 56 years now," he said.

But at 78, Ken believes the time has come to finish up.

"Stepping away has not been easy. I'm really fussed that I've had to give it up," Ken said. "But look, I've done half a century and I reckon that's enough.

"I don't own a computer either and everything's got to be done by computer these days," he laughed.

"Every now and then someone will shout 'hey, Fireman Ken' and I still get a kick out of that."



Wyndham Vale's new station

Wyndham Vale Fire Brigade officially celebrated the opening of its new fire station at the beginning of July.

Eager brigade members gathered at the new site on Armstrong Road in Manor Lakes alongside senior leaders including Chief Officer Jason Heffernan AFSM, CEO Greg Leach AFSM and Deputy Chief Officer North West Region Trevor Weston.

A brigade parade, led by ex-Captain Francis Ludeman opened proceedings, and Wyndham Vale's 1st Lieutenant Max Blaik closed out the event by unveiling the naming of the Wyndham Vale tanker after Francis to recognise his service.

The new site replaces the brigade's former station on Ballan Road and provides volunteers with a modern, fit-for-purpose base to support their emergency response now and into the future. Brigade Captain Andrew Ludeman said the new station would significantly benefit the brigade and community after operating from a two-bay station for the past 15 years.

"Having the facilities to train new and current members with areas to clean up when we return from a callout is a great opportunity and a welcome boost for brigade morale," Andrew said.

The new facility includes three motor bays, a four-bay external shed, a communications area and multipurpose room. A four-desk office space has also been included, along with dedicated spaces for equipment maintenance, training and operational readiness.

"It gives us the ability to grow, which is probably the biggest thing for our brigade, as we're only a couple of calls short of 600 callouts in the past financial year," Andrew said.

"We've got 10 new recruits doing our General Firefighter course at the moment which is really promising, and now that we have more space we can start to get more people in and get them out on the truck."

CFA Deputy Chief Officer North West Region Trevor Weston said the new station would help support the brigade's growing operational needs as the local community continues to expand.



Captain Andrew Ludeman, DCO North West Region Trevor Weston, ex-Captain Francis Ludeman. Credit: Uniform Photography

"We have seen considerable residential growth in Wyndham Vale and this new station will help ensure our volunteers have the facilities they need to continue protecting local residents for years to come," Trevor said. "This site is a welcome change for the brigade and will be a terrific asset to allow them to continue doing what they do best – protecting lives and property."

"The new station marks an exciting new chapter for the brigade."

STORY LUCY BISHOP

Scan the QR code to watch a time lapse video of the station build



THE DIGITAL DOWNLOAD

COMPILED BY TIAHN WRIGHT

A round-up of CFA stories across our digital and social networks.



Scan the QR code to see these stories and more

FACEBOOK



Our superstar volunteers from Somerville Fire Brigade show off their skills to help us cheer on our Commonwealth Games athletes.

"This is awesome! Well done team!" – Jess

"Congratulations to all the volunteers and athletes!" – Lenore



CFA volunteer Paul Mason wouldn't be here today without blood donors.

"Thinking of you Paul and Linda. Congratulations on the stem cell donation and a big thank you to the donor." – Janine

YOUTUBE



Quick-thinking residents prevent garage fire from spreading

A Mooroolbark family had a narrow escape after a fire started in their garage.



Eyes on the sky and on the ground

CFA's future air base managers and air observers gather at the CFA training ground in Bangholme to start their training ahead of the summer bushfire season.

MEMBERS ONLINE



Volunteer Forums

Recent forums have highlighted aviation training, the Next Gen pumper, the BA Swap & Go program and plenty more.



FOLLOW US | @CFAVIC on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn | @CFAVIC_UPDATES on X

INTERACTIVE CONTENT

Crop fire research project
Read an interactive story about crop fire research.



PODCAST



Podcast episode: From the Frontline - Koriella Fire Brigade Captain Scott Reeves

Scott shares his experience of the 2026 Longwood fire that impacted his town and the resilience of the local community as they get back on their feet after bushfire.

AVAILABLE ON CFA NEWS & MEDIA, SPOTIFY & APPLE MUSIC





**2025-26
planned burning season**

350+
volunteers participating
40
deployments
across the state

Successful planned burning season

The Planned Burn Taskforce (PBTf) continues to rapidly evolve as a valued statewide resource of CFA volunteer members who support CFA districts and Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) to deliver planned burns.

Established to build capacity, strengthen partnerships and provide volunteers with opportunities to develop skills in fuel management, ignition operations and fireground management, the PBTf has grown from a small initiative into a highly respected capability. Today, hundreds of volunteers contribute annually to planned burn operations across the state, supporting safer communities.

The 2025-26 planned burning season was another significant year for the taskforce, with more than 350 volunteers participating in 40 deployments across the state – double the number of burns carried out three years ago.

One of those volunteers is John Crozier (pictured left in the photo) whose contribution to CFA spans more than 50 years. A former captain of Barwon Heads and Wando Bridge brigades, John has been awarded the 50-year Life Membership Medal, is recognised as an Honorary Life Member and has received the National Medal with Third Clasp in recognition of his outstanding service.

Reflecting on the season, John described it as both busy and rewarding.

"With a short window for planned burning operations following campaign fires, it was a busy season, and reconnecting with taskforce members from across Victoria was a real highlight," John said.

"You can work with people from outside your brigade and immediately fall into step as a crew. You understand how each other operates, which makes a real difference on the fireground.

"That camaraderie grows even stronger during strike team deployments from Tallangatta through to the Grampians where you reconnect with PBTf members and work seamlessly together."

John's experience during the Grampians fires in 2025 highlighted the adaptability of PBTf members. Originally deployed in a PBTf leadership role, he was reassigned to lead a strike team, demonstrating how taskforce members readily adapt to support broader fireground operations wherever they're needed.

Another highlight of the year was the PBTf workshop held at Holmesglen Eildon in May 2026. Facilitated by PBTf Support Officer Kerry Tait and Commander Planned Burning Tim McKern, the two-day workshop brought together volunteers from across Victoria alongside Deputy Chief Officer Alen

Slijepcevic AFMSM and Head of Policy, Planning and Partnerships Geoff Morris.

The workshop began with a series of hands-on activities, including tanker operations for roadside burns. Forest ignition techniques and how to establish a full asset protection unit generated strong interest among participants. These sessions were valuable opportunities for members from different districts to share knowledge, build confidence and strengthen operational networks.

The second day focused on reviewing the season, with members reflecting on deployment statistics, safety reporting, lessons identified and continuous improvement initiatives. The discussions reinforced the important contribution PBTf continues to make to planned burning across Victoria.

Reflecting on the event, John described it as the best PBTf workshop he has attended during his time with the taskforce.

"The professionalism of the workshop was outstanding. Every workshop gets better and better, and it's great to see the continual improvements being made," he said. "It was an excellent opportunity to learn from others, share experiences and strengthen the relationships that make PBTf such a valuable team."

Beyond seasonal deployments, PBTf plays a vital role in developing volunteer capability. Members return to their brigades with enhanced skills, stronger interagency relationships and valuable operational experience that benefits both planned burning and emergency response.

As PBTf continues to grow, so too does its contribution to Victoria's fuel management program. Through committed volunteers, strong partnerships and a focus on continuous improvement, the taskforce is helping deliver safer communities while building the next generation of planned burning capability.

To find out
more about PBTf
scan the QR code

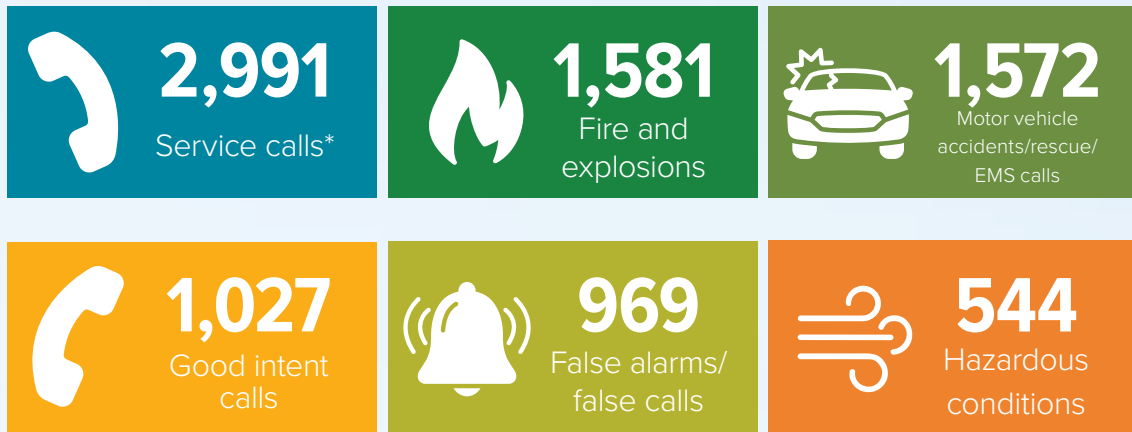


STORY KERRY TAIT

Incident statistics

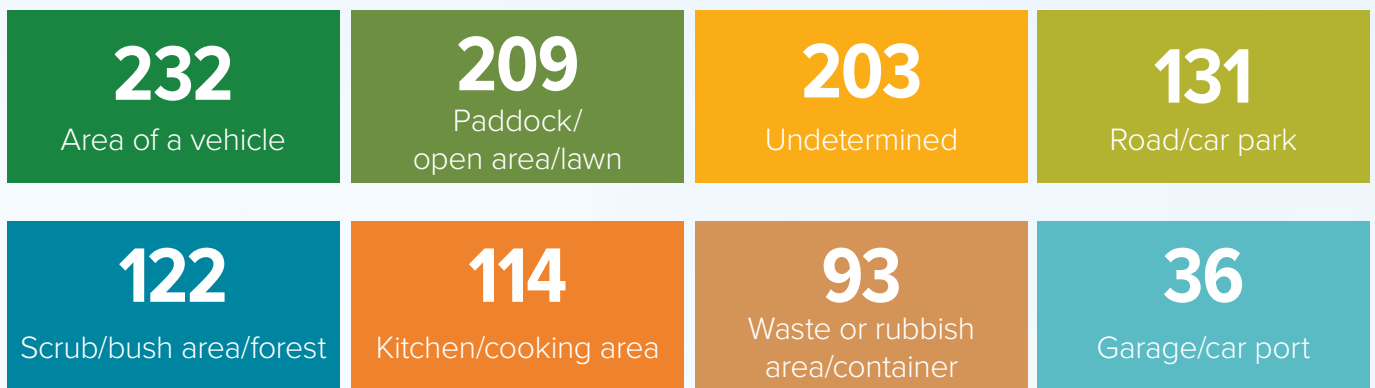
1 April 2026 to 30 June 2026

INCIDENTS BY TYPE



* Includes 2,532 callouts supporting FRV, 9 supporting DEECA, 3 supporting NSW

ORIGIN OF FIRE



INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

SOUTH WEST		WEST		NORTH WEST		NORTH EAST		SOUTH EAST	
District	Incidents	District	Incidents	District	Incidents	District	Incidents	District	Incidents
4	50	15	638	2	442	12	272	8	2,171
5	174	16	188	14	1,580	13	789	9	322
6	163	17	129	18	232	22	363	10	134
7	650			20	209	23	187	11	161
						24	239	27	259

In brief

A round-up of shorter news items

Section 29 inspection improvements

A key change is the improvement of the standardised process for Section 29 inspections, supported by an enhanced training program and updated resources. These are available in one central location on Members Online. Creating greater standardisation of the process across the state means results can now be more easily compared, helping to identify capability gaps and target support where it's needed most.

The Brigade Operating Skills Profile (BOSP) has been reviewed and updated to ensure brigade skill requirements are up to date, relevant and aligned with current operational needs. A new standard approach has also been introduced to give a consistent view of training gaps across the state. It sets capability targets based on CFA standards and risk, and groups brigades by class. The updated approach also captures leadership and specialist skills, providing a clearer, statewide picture of capability.

'Delivering truck time' training module

Are you planning an open day, kinder visit or community event? If so, don't forget that the 'Delivering truck time' eLearning module is available now on the Learning Hub. This 30-minute module ensures members are familiar with important child safety and OH&S requirements. All members participating in children's activities involving fire trucks should complete this short module prior to delivery. 'Delivering truck time' can also be undertaken as a group at a brigade training night. Ensure your members are trained before the upcoming Get Fire Ready campaign or your next community engagement event.

New virtual reality course

The first accredited course in CFA's Virtual Reality (VR) Training Program is coming soon to the Learning Hub (LMS). Members will be able to elect to complete their Wildfire Suppression qualification using VR technology when they nominate for the course. The course will be delivered by CFA instructors as part of formal training programs and the training pathways. Like other accredited training, it will be scheduled through district Learning and Development teams based on local needs.

Child Safety Risk Assessment

CFA has introduced a simplified and more consistent Child Safety Risk Assessment (CSRA) process to support the safe planning and delivery of activities involving children and young people. The new approach helps members identify, assess and manage risks more effectively. Brigades can now access a central library of ready-to-use CSRAs and register activities through a simple online form, removing the need to create assessments from scratch. Supporting resources including factsheets, FAQs and briefing templates are available to help members apply the new process.

New Bushfire Safety for Workers module

CFA has partnered with AFAC agencies across Australia to redevelop the Bushfire Safety for Workers eLearning module. Designed for workers who live, work or travel in high-risk bushfire areas, the nationally aligned module incorporates guidance from the Australian Warning System, AFDRS and AusAlert. Building on CFA's 2018 course, the module now offers a more engaging experience and new refresher pathway. Brigades are encouraged to share this resource with local businesses. Scan the QR code to access the module.

Use ART to record community engagement

As we prepare for Get Fire Ready 2026, we've made several improvements to the Activity Reporting Tool (ART) to make planning, managing and reporting activities easier for CFA members. Key changes include:

- a new Get Fire Ready reason that makes it easier to identify and report on these activities
- an Activity Contact field to help everyone quickly identify the best person to contact about an activity
- a new Attendance field to record the overall number of people who were present at a public event, as well as the number of people directly engaged by CFA members
- improvements to layout and activity information, member search and location details.

Recording your brigade activity helps to show how you are connecting with communities and supporting community safety and ensures the work of your brigade is reflected in CFA's planning and reporting.

Scan this QR code to find out more about all these items.



Winchelsea Fire Brigade



Chevrolet tanker, 1927



Austin Series 1 tanker and trailer pump, 1948

1920s

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s



Brigade competition team, 1950s



Austin tanker, 1966



Children's Christmas party, 1989



Fire demonstration at Winchelsea primary school, 1989



Traffic control training, 2020s



Brigade women members, 2014

1980s

1990s

2000s

2010s

2020s

Today



Brigade station and trucks, 1992



Old radio display in station, 2024



Winchelsea strike team crew, 2003



Current Winchelsea station

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA

PRINT
POST
100010934



Brigade

If undeliverable return to:
D&D Mailing Services
6/400 Princes Hwy
NOBLE PARK NORTH VIC 3174

Emergency Memberlink

The Emergency Memberlink program is our way of recognising your commitment and contribution to emergency services and Victorian communities. As a member, you have access to exclusive discounts and benefits on a wide range of products and services across Victoria and Australia.

Emergency Memberlink can help you save on many of the things you already buy every week. Before you fill up the car, shop for groceries, book a holiday or plan a family day out, check Emergency Memberlink first. You may already have access to an exclusive member offer.



How to redeem your offers

Emergency Memberlink offers can be redeemed in different ways. Look for the icon beside each offer to see how to access your benefits.

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| | Savings Card | Log in and pre-purchase a discounted digital savings card before you shop. |
| | Online | Log in, find the offer and use the access link. |
| | In Store | Present your Memberlink Card or follow the in-store redemption instructions. |
| | By Phone | Log in, find the offer and call the listed number to access your member benefit. |
| | Request Access | Log in, find the offer and complete a short online form to receive details and pricing. |

Not a member yet? Activate your access and start saving at cfa.emergencymemberlink.com.au

EVERYDAY SAVINGS

- Shell:** Pre-purchase discounted digital savings cards and save 3% on fuel.
- Coles, Woolworths & IGA:** Pre-purchase discounted digital savings cards and save up to 4% on groceries.
- 7-Eleven:** Pre-purchase discounted digital savings cards and save 2.5% on fuel.
- Bunnings Savings Cards:** Pre-purchase discounted digital savings cards and save 2.5%.
- Country Road Fashion:** Pre-purchase discounted digital savings cards and save 7%.
- The Good Guys Commercial:** Get access to commercial pricing on appliances and electronics.
- McDonald's Vic:** Receive a free small McCafé hot drink, small soft drink or orange juice with a minimum \$5 spend.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Doctors on Demand:** Receive \$5 off telehealth consultations from home.
- Specsavers:** Access member pricing on eye care and eyewear.
- Fitness First:** Save 15% on 12 and 18-month memberships.
- Goodlife Health Clubs:** Save 15% on 12 and 18-month memberships nationwide.

HOME AND TECHNOLOGY

- JB Hi-Fi Business:** Commercial pricing on technology, appliances and home entertainment.
- Harvey Norman:** Special member pricing across furniture, bedding, appliances and electrical.
- AJH New Car Brokers:** Receive \$250 off brokerage fees and access fleet-style pricing on your next vehicle.

TRAVEL AND MOTORING

- Accor Hotels:** Save up to 10% on accommodation across Australia and internationally.
- Insure&Go:** Save up to 15% on travel insurance.
- SIXT Australia:** Save up to 20% on passenger and commercial vehicle hire.
- Spirit of Tasmania:** 5% off ferry fares.
- mycar Tyre & Auto:** Save 10% on servicing, tyres and repairs.
- Bridgestone:** Receive 15% off tyres.
- Avis:** Access corporate rental rates and reduced excess.

FAMILY TIME

- Village Cinemas:** Discounted movie tickets, Gold Class and combo deals.
- Experience Oz:** Save on attractions, tours and experiences across Australia.
- Luxury Escapes:** Pre-purchase discounted gift cards and save 5%.
- Cotton On Kids:** Pre-purchase discounted digital savings cards and save 5% on children's clothing.
- Endota Spa:** Save 8% on treatments and eGift cards.