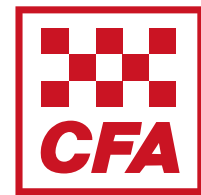


# Brigade

spring 2018

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▼ Saving lives on the road





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#### Saving lives on the road

COVER PHOTO: PAKENHAM ROAD RESCUE UNIT  
BY KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM

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## Chair Greg Smith AM



I am immensely proud of the great strides CFA has taken in 2018. We are becoming more transparent, agile, organised, and risk mature. Under CEO Paul Smith's leadership, we continue to build CFA into a resilient and future-focused organisation. We are enhancing our professionalism so that we will be better equipped to meet our mission. Our Annual Plan outlines our goals for the next 12 months, ensuring we remain focused on our core task of protecting people and property.

Our first-ever Victorian joint career firefighter recruitment campaign with MFB has been immensely successful. The final cohort of new firefighters will graduate in December this year, bringing the total to 350 new firefighters since 2016. However, we still need to attract a greater participation of women to CFA both in the career area and in leadership roles in volunteer brigades.

In line with CFA's broader diversity and inclusion objectives, we partnered with Rugby Victoria to support the increased participation of women in local

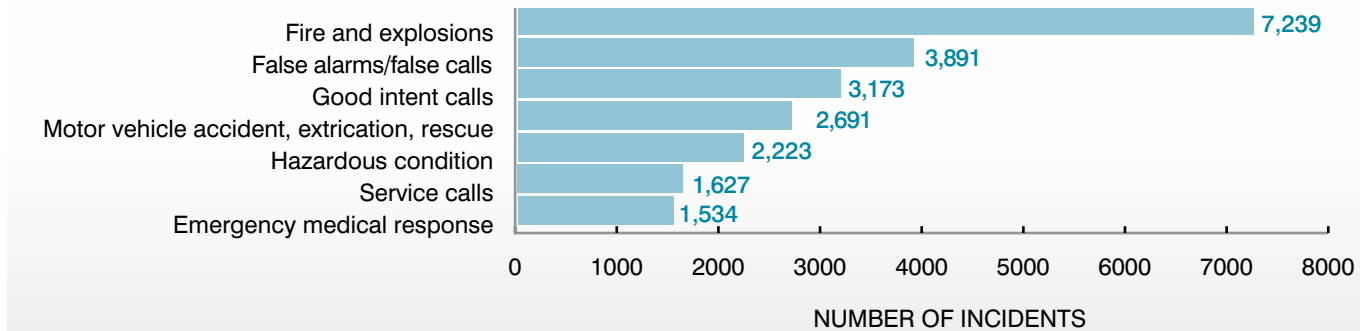
community organisations. We also launched new *Aboriginal Engagement Guidelines*, a key objective of our Koori Inclusion Action Plan. We have refreshed our values and behaviours and put even greater emphasis on the safety and wellbeing of our members and their families.

Through our new Community Engagement Framework, we have put the spotlight on our communities and the vital role they play, not only in brigade sustainability but in supporting us before, during and after an emergency. We opened new stations in high-need areas, staffed by career firefighters, to expand the services we deliver to the community as well as provide enhanced support to our fellow emergency services personnel.

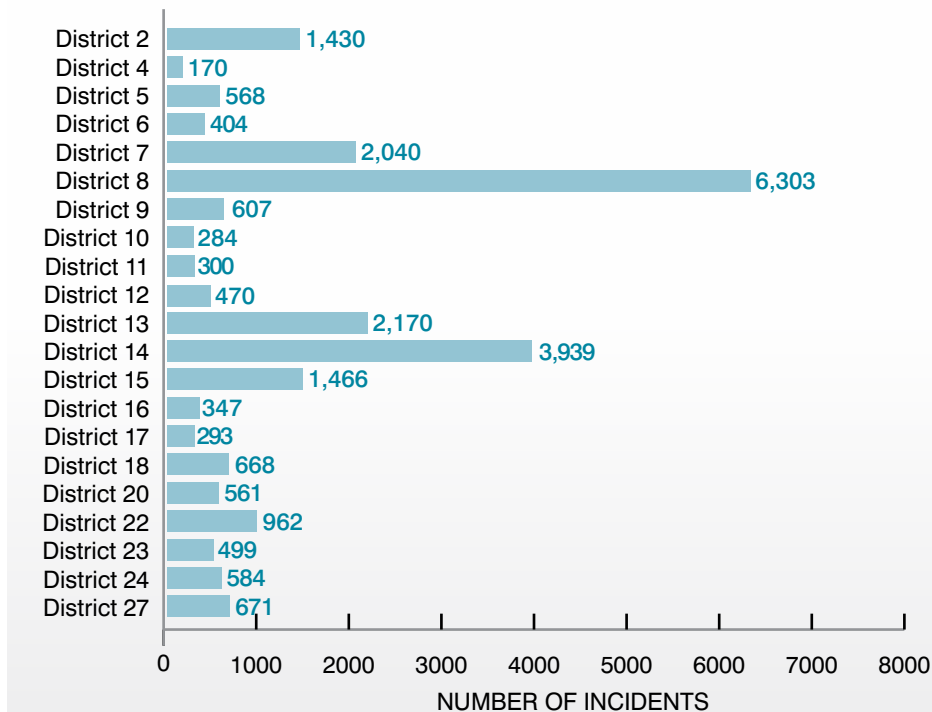
I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your commitment and contribution to CFA and your communities. With forecasts highlighting the potential for a bad fire season, I urge you to think safety first – look out for yourself and your fellow brigade members – as we work to keep Victorians safe.

# Incident summary 1 Jan – 30 Jun 2018

## STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY TYPE

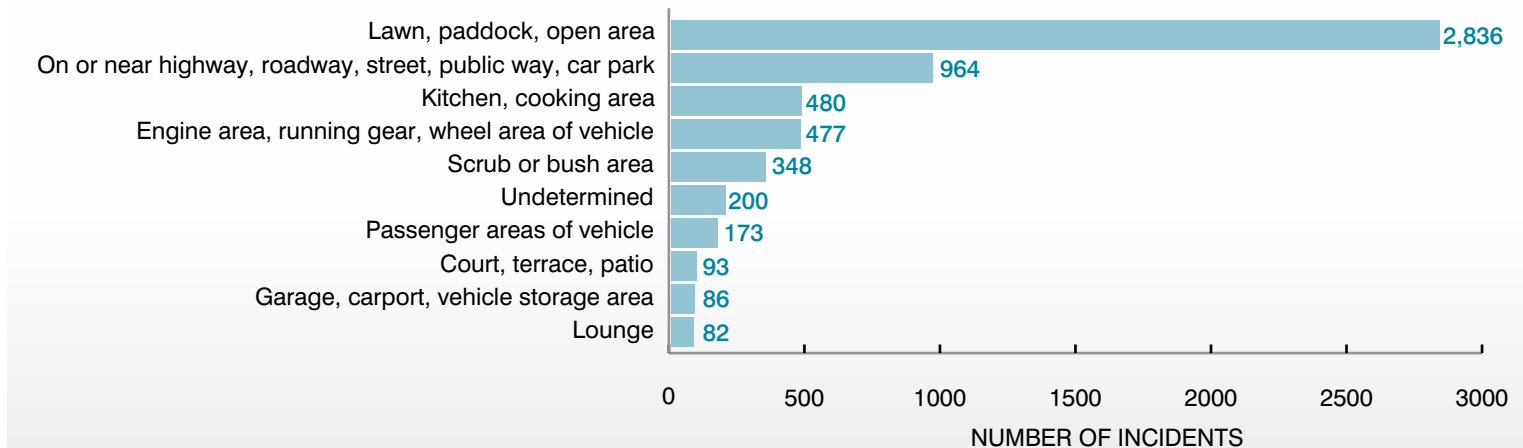


## STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT



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

## ORIGIN OF FIRE



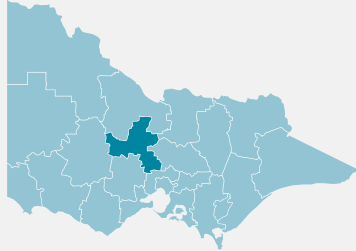
# Historic homestead destroyed

**INCIDENT:** Structure fire

**DISTRICT:** 2

**DATE:** 9 July 2018

**BRIGADES:** Bendigo, Carlsruhe, Coliban, Golden Square, Kyneton, Langley-Barfold, Malmesbury, Spring Hill, Taradale, Tylden and Woodend



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF KYNETON FIRE BRIGADE

Eleven brigades from Kyneton and the surrounding area helped fight a fire that ripped through a Kyneton homestead belonging to television identity Tonia Todman.

Guests staying at Ms Todman's 160-year-old bluestone and timber property reported the fire in the stables, which had been converted into bed and breakfast accommodation. The fire started after guests stoked a fire in the bedroom, which caused the ceiling to catch alight.

The three guests evacuated and alerted the owners, who were asleep in the main house. The fire spread in strong winds from the B&B to the main house.

Rostered Duty Officer Chris Jacobsen said there were working smoke alarms in the building but because they were situated below where the fire started in the flue, they had not activated before guests noticed the fire.

Firefighters attacked the blaze from above using the Bendigo ladder platform. "It was too dangerous underneath," said Chris, "and using an aerial appliance was the only way we could get to the fire initially."

Reported at 6.45am, the fire was brought under control just before 7.30am, though it wasn't declared safe for several hours as firefighters had to painstakingly remove five layers of the roof, one at a time, to reach burning material.

When parts of the roof caved in, a firefighter was struck on the shoulder by debris but, fortunately, wasn't badly injured. He was assessed at the scene and returned to firefighting.

STORY LISELOTTE GEARY

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# Scoresby hose layer helps tackle peat fires



**Over the weekend 17-18 March 2018, Victorian emergency services were faced with some of the worst fire conditions of the season, which sparked a number of grass and bushfires across the state.**

Forecasts predicted a warm weekend, with strong, squally winds up to 100 kilometres per hour in some parts of the state. Emergency crews prepared for a potentially disastrous period.

During the day on Saturday, firefighters were kept busy attending over 160 grass and bushfires. But four significant fires in south-west Victoria broke out in the evening in Terang, Camperdown, Gazette and Garvoc, leading to the loss of, or damage to, 26 homes and the loss of livestock. At the height of the fires, around 425 firefighters worked through the night to contain the blazes.

However, after the bushfires had been brought under control there were ongoing peat fires which presented many challenges as they burned for weeks.

"The key considerations were to provide respite to the community by stopping the smoke and carbon monoxide and extinguishing the fires, while taking into account environmental and cultural heritage considerations," said Deputy Incident Controller Jamie Hansen.

At the start of the peat fires, CFA issued the traditional media messages and electronic warnings to the community but, "pretty quickly, we realised people needed information a lot faster and in different ways," said Acting Operations Manager Mark Gunning.

"Once we had the weather forecast each day, instead of broadcasting messages that would unnecessarily alarm people in the community, we assembled those people most at risk to brief them personally, engaging with people on a need-to-know basis. Importantly, this kept anxiety down.

"It was easily the most rewarding job I've ever done," continued Mark. "I felt so much more connected and engaged with the community, and so better able to address their specific ongoing concerns."



“Peat fires are inherently difficult to extinguish and the smoke from these fires produces a lot of carbon monoxide,” said Jamie. “We needed to suppress the smoke to reduce the particulate matter that impacted residents.

“We tested a number of strategies to apply water. The biggest factor that hampered our efforts was access to the fires.”

The peat swamp around Cobden was declared safe by Good Friday. “We had a high-volume pump installed in Lake Bullen Merri and that pumped water to the swamp through large ground monitors and did a good job to extinguish it.” See photos, left and below.

The second peat fire, near Lake Elingamite, south-west of Cobden, emitted a lot of smoke. “We tried bombing it from the air, delivering water and A Class foam,” continued Jamie. “It helped for the short term to suppress the smoke, but after two hours of application the smoke began again. So we tried compressed air foam.”

The third peat fire, and the largest of the three, was at Lake Cobrico between Terang and Cobden. It was around 60 hectares in size and had 33 million cubic metres of peat.

“Access was exceptionally difficult and bombing from the air had limited success.”



### ROLE OF THE SCORESBY HOSE LAYER

The Scoresby hose layer played an important role in extinguishing one of the peat fires by moving a large quantity of water from one point to another. The best way to move large volumes of water is with large diameter hose – it’s all about the water volume, not the pressure. Too many pump operators concentrate on delivery pressure and forget that water volume is what extinguishes large fires. And the Scoresby crew members are experts at moving water.

The crew used 100mm diameter hose to pump water from Lake Bullen Merri to the fire one kilometre away. The hose layer carries a large selection of collectors, dividers, adaptors, valves and ground monitors which can connect to any truck in the CFA and MFB fleets, and can be configured to just about any setup required.

Moving water from the lake to the peat fire was achieved by using two 1200-metre hose lays. There were two trailer pumps at the lake (which had to be airlifted into position) pumping water to Narre Warren East and Yambuk brigades’ big fills, which fed five ground monitors around the perimeter of the fire.

Once the Scoresby hose layer crew of three had completed the setup, the relays were up and running within minutes. Four DELWP members were then given some quick training in relay pumping and given the task of managing the pump relay and ground monitors over a week.

Around 4,000 litres per minute was delivered to the fire, and there were no faults, hose bursts or down time with the 2.4-kilometre pump relay setup. After a week, the whole set-up was packed away by a crew of three in a day.

The Scoresby hose layer was also used to tackle the Lake Elingamite peat fire, where a total of 2.85 kilometres of 100mm diameter hose was laid from the Fonterra Dairy dams to the fire.

Given the potential for peat fires and fires at rubbish dumps across the state, it’s important that CFA plans for this type of incident where large quantities of water are needed over a long period of time. They need a predetermined response because history shows that these types of incidents can quickly put a large drain on our resources.

# Pets saved from Diamond Creek house fire

**Just before 1pm, Diamond Creek Fire Brigade responded to a reported house fire. Multiple Triple Zero (000) calls reported flames coming through the roof.**

Diamond Creek brigade's pumper turned out at 1pm and arrived on scene two minutes later. A control point was established and a 360 degree size-up was quickly carried out by the Incident Controller and Diamond Creek Captain Peter Clarkson.

Two firefighters wearing breathing apparatus went into the house to do a primary search, while an exposure line was established on the northern side of the property to protect a neighbouring house. A 64mm feed into the primary truck (the Diamond Creek pumper) was quickly established, and a second feed was set up soon after from a hydrant some distance away.

In addition to the Diamond Creek pumper and tanker 2, on scene were Eltham pumper, Wattle Glen tanker 1, Plenty pumper tanker, Eltham BA Support, MFB pumper tanker 16, Ambulance Victoria and police.

The rostered duty officer issued a community advice message about the amount of smoke in the area.

Eltham career firefighters were second on scene and provided fantastic support and mentoring. All agencies worked together flawlessly.

With neighbours and friends of the home owner on scene, the crews were quickly able to determine that there were two dogs and two cats inside the house. With help from bystanders, the first of the two dogs and one of the cats were quickly rescued. The second cat was seen running from the property and was later reunited with the owner.

The second dog, Roxy, was found later by Heather Scale, a member of Plenty Fire Brigade, cowering under a tall boy in a bedroom. After being rescued, Roxy received oxygen therapy from Diamond Creek Fire Brigade Second Lieutenant Noel Farmer (pictured).

A comprehensive overhaul of the property was conducted after it had been extinguished. A thermal imaging camera was used to find and cool any hot spots. Then the crews worked with the home owner to identify where precious items were located in the home and these were successfully retrieved despite the home being largely destroyed by fire or significantly damaged by smoke and water.

While there were lessons learned from this job, the fundamentals of safety first, RECEO (rescue, exposures, confine, extinguish, overhaul), teamwork and respect were foremost in the minds of all those involved and clearly observed. All the crews on scene worked seamlessly together and were very supportive of one another.

A special thanks to Station Officer Michael Doreian from Eltham Fire Brigade, who was especially supportive of all the volunteer and career firefighters on scene.



**INCIDENT:** Structure fire

**DISTRICT:** 14

**DATE:** 3 August 2018

**BRIGADES:** Diamond Creek, Eltham, Plenty, Wattle Glen





## CHIEF OFFICER

Steve Warrington



## Preparing for the season ahead

**We're on the cusp of another bushfire season, one we anticipate will be drier and longer than we've seen for a long time.**

West, South and East Gippsland, east metro and Hume regions have experienced high levels of landscape level dryness throughout winter.

North and north-west Victoria have also experienced below average rainfall, resulting in reduced cropping activity and growth.

There are many weather variables still to play out, with a strong chance that Victoria will experience El Nino conditions in early summer coupled with a positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD). During years with El Nino and a positive IOD, rainfall has been below average and temperature has been above average during the bushfire season.

All indicators are that we will see fires earlier than usual in the back half of 2018.

There have been bushfires in the Northern Hemisphere in places that aren't used to seeing them, in countries such as Greece and Italy. The US and Canada have also been battling some of the biggest bushfires they have seen in recent years, and CFA deployed personnel to assist fighting these fires.

We saw our New South Wales counterparts battling fires in early August. This is a time when we're usually still in beanies and thick coats to curb winter's chilly winds. Queensland and South Australia, too, experienced early fires.

Closer to home, CFA deployed 150 firefighters, three helicopters and two fixed-wing bombers to control a bushfire just north of Cape Conran in mid-August. Cape Conran is located in East Gippsland Shire, an area where there has been below-average rainfall over the past two years. This would generally indicate more flammable forests in the area, with an increase in dead material near the surface and elevated fuels. East Gippsland and Wellington shires began fire restrictions in early September.

But it's not just these areas we have to be wary of. Despite an expectation of a normal fire season in many other communities, uncertainties in the longer term climate outlook mean unpredicted severe bushfire activity is still a real possibility during late summer. We have to be on our game across the state.

Over coming months we'll be continuing to engage with regions, districts and brigades, but it is important we all start to focus now on preparing for the season ahead. We need to be best prepared to safely protect the community and each other.

In short, we all need to be ready for the fire season now. I encourage all our staff and volunteers to start getting prepared, if you haven't already.

Make sure you undertake the burnover drill, as I did earlier this month (see photo).

Make sure that everyone who goes onto the fireground this bushfire season has completed the Minimum Skills, Entrapment Drill and Hazardous Tree Familiarisation programs. Also, I encourage you to read *Seasonal focus - summer* in the middle of this magazine.

Although the pending state election will be filling the pages of newspapers in relation to fire services and CFA, we need our members to be focused on one thing: the fire season. Communities across Victoria rely on us to protect life and property. That's our focus at CFA.



## CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



# Paul Smith

Many of you would know that I have recently completed a number of regional briefings to talk to staff about the results of the 2018 People Matter Survey. More detailed discussions are now progressing across each of the regions about the results and things that can be done to improve our work environments.

The briefings have also been an opportunity for discussion about how important it is that CFA people live the CFA values. All that means is that our behaviour lines up with these values. And if anyone can't do this, or simply won't do this, then they don't deserve to be part of our organisation.

One item I encourage all of you to familiarise yourself with is the Executive Team Charter. Your Executive Team and the Service Delivery Leadership Team have formally agreed to a set of behaviours outlining what we will and won't do to demonstrate CFA's values and meet our obligations as leaders.

We will be held accountable for these behaviours and ask you to provide feedback to us on this. We might not get things right all the time, but we want to know if our approach is working so we can understand what we can do better.

Another point that has come up relates to the diversity across our organisation; how we grow it and what are the challenges. Creating an inclusive environment for all CFA people, regardless of age, gender, sexuality or location is fundamental if we are to succeed.

We are and must continue to be an organisation of many different faces, but we are one team with one mission: protecting life and property. This is what connects us all. And it is the things that bring us together that matter much more than our differences ever will.

Many people have also raised the need to strengthen our connections across the state, and improve the alignment of our efforts all the way from the centre to the grass-roots. What that means is that everything that happens from headquarters must support the success of what people do in regions, districts and brigades. If what we're doing in headquarters isn't supporting our people across CFA to make brigades successful, then why are we doing it? So our discipline needs to be that what we do from the centre, helps to make a difference on ground.

Our 2018-19 CFA Plan will start to drive stronger alignment of effort. It reinforces our promise to put the community at the centre of what we do, to provide a supportive and empowering environment for our people, and to pursue improvements to our service delivery and operations that will transform CFA into a progressive and inclusive emergency service. The executive, now with the inclusion of our most senior regional leaders the ACOs, are focused on making progress to deliver on our priorities.

Over the last few months, I have been the recipient of multiple forms of feedback and it is good to get out and about to discuss what is on people's minds, and what needs to change. So keep your ideas, comments and feedback coming. Knowing the issues will help me make the changes that are needed to improve the experience many of you have at CFA.

## DEPUTY CHIEF OFFICER Urban



# Gavin Freeman

Following a long career with Tasmania Fire Service, I took up the position of Deputy Chief Officer Urban with CFA in 2017. I have over thirty years' experience in the emergency management field, as an operational fire officer, manager, executive, leader and innovator in fire services.

I'm very proud to be leading the urban portfolio in CFA, which delivers urban fire response capability, HAZMAT, technical rescue, road crash rescue, coast guard, emergency medical response (EMR), operational communications, the Wellbeing/Peer Support program and the Health Monitoring teams to all parts of Victoria.

The team has been working very hard over the past few months and is delivering some important initiatives, including:

- CFA's Resource Tracking System, which lets us pinpoint where our vehicles are. This is particularly important to ensure crew safety, especially in the early stages of an incident.
- planning for a Supplementary Alerting Service (SAS) to provide additional functionality and enhancement to CFA's EAS pager service.
- Rollout of an upgraded digital radio network for CFA districts 7, 8, 13 and 14 (outer metro areas) that currently operate on an outdated, legacy analogue network.
- the teleboom replacement project, working with stakeholders on the best options to replace these aerial firefighting vehicles.
- rescue support and pumper rollout which is increasing our capability and capacity across the state.
- research into how we breathe in breathing apparatus (BA) which is resulting in developing some simple lessons to better use BA.
- working hand-in-glove with Learning and Development to deliver training about low-voltage fuse removal and working safely at height.
- publishing the first Field Response Guide in partnership with MFB so that we have a common guide for all Victorian firefighters.
- the Wellbeing team has rolled out more peer training, so that peer numbers continue to increase and they are ready and able to provide continuing support to you all as you go about the business of protecting Victorians.
- our EMR program goes from strength to strength and is making a real difference to people's lives every day.
- our HAZMAT section has developed and delivered state-of-the-art predictive services, including a plume modelling capability used extensively across Victoria by a range of agencies.

It's important to the Urban team that we continue to look forward at emerging risks and ensure our efforts are focused on contemporary equipment, techniques and seamless engagement with Community Safety.

## ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South West Region



## Rohan Luke

**On 17 March a significant number of fires started in a concentrated area between Camperdown in District 6 and Hawkesdale in District 5. Four of them became known as the SW Complex Fires.**

Leading into the St Patrick's Day weekend, all reports predicted that the wind and fire weather conditions would be the most significant of the 2017-18 season. The complexity of strong winds, night-time firefighting and the sheer number of fast-moving fires impacting trees, powerlines and multiple townships, made this one of the most challenging and complex fires in recent memory in the South West Region.

The challenges that were faced by both emergency responders and the community on the night were extreme. Efforts to protect lives placed our crews and the community in the centre of the firestorm. It's a credit to all involved and a testament to the fantastic work we do to prepare our communities through education, that there were no significant injuries or loss of life.

Likewise, our brigades' focus on tanker burnover drills, urban interface firefighting and hazardous trees awareness surely played an important role in safeguarding our crews on the fireground.

In addition to the four main fires, the protracted impact of the subsequent peat fires, telecommunications and energy disruptions, and smoke management impacts on many communities across Districts 5 and 6, required considerable recovery efforts in the weeks following.

The peat fires provided an additional complication with the ongoing drawdown on resources, increasing pressure to extinguish the fires and reduce the overall impact on the community. It was vital for us to remain focused on the six Cs of emergency management - command, control, coordination, consequence, communication and connection - to ensure effective management of the situation. By drawing on these and remaining focused on community impact, our teams were in the right frame of mind to deal with the challenges they faced.

In early April, the Emergency Management Commissioner approved the SW Fires Community and Multi-agency Debriefing Plan, which was managed by EMV. This debrief included feedback from a range of responders across the sector, as well as the community, and will help us all to understand what worked well and what we can improve.

I'd like to thank all our brigades and those who came from other regions to support South West Region in response to the SW Complex Fires. The hard work, dedication and teamwork of our staff and volunteers is invaluable to our mission of protecting lives and property.

The cooperation shown throughout this incident serves as a great example of what can be achieved when we work together to protect our communities.

## OPERATIONS MANAGER District 8



## Glenn Pröbstl

**District 8 is CFA's busiest district. It comprises 76 brigades (includes nine integrated brigades) the headquarters brigade and six coastguard brigades including the newly-formed one at St Kilda. In 2017-18 the district responded to 21,170 incidents – almost a quarter of all CFA's operational responses.**

There have been a number of changes recently at the district/region headquarters in Dandenong South to help members from across the district to access district staff, and to enhance the working relationship of staff within the district office. All district staff are now located in the north-east corner of Level 2 in a dedicated district space, while the regional and embedded staff use the remaining floor area.

As part of the Victorian Government's Digital Radio Upgrade Program, District 8 will be transitioning to the new digital radio network in November 2018. This will significantly increase the ability of members to communicate to both VicFire and each other on the fireground, and will further enhance our brigades' capacity to carry out their duties.

The program, facilitated by Emergency Management Victoria, will bring District 8 in line with the quality of dispatch communications enjoyed by CFA districts regionally, Victoria Police, MFB, and Ambulance Victoria in metropolitan Melbourne. This is an important step to overcome some of the challenges District 8 has seen with communications in the past few years.

The upgrades will see an additional 10 communications towers built across the district, bringing the total number to 13, as well as the introduction of 25 VicFire-allocated fireground channels shared across the outer metropolitan districts.

These new channels will use the new tower network to improve communications, providing better audio quality for dispatch communications between CFA and VicFire. When implemented, brigades will be advised of their allocated fireground channel on their pager and by VicFire when they turn out.

To allow time for members to get used to the transition to digital, both the digital and analogue dispatch channels will be patched together at VicFire for a period of time after transition.

Train the Trainer sessions are scheduled to start this month with facilitators providing one-hour information sessions about the changes to each brigade. District 8 has nominated Operations Officer Andrew Turner as the district liaison to work with groups and station officers in charge, to plan the timing of these sessions.

Brigades in District 8 will still have access to their current simplex (radio to radio) fireground channels as an operational redundancy and for use as part of regular training and exercises.



PHOTOS: DUNCAN RUSSELL

**For many years, brigades and groups wanting a new field command vehicle (FCV) have had to project manage its build, which is a very time-consuming task.**

The 2017-18 Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) gave brigades and groups interested in upgrading or acquiring an FCV the opportunity to participate in the first FCV standard-build program.

The standard-build concept was developed to streamline the build process, and create a standard for this category of vehicle similar to the way CFA develops its firefighting trucks. The purpose-built body also means it's easy to change between cab chassis.

In the 2017-18 VESEP program, 28 brigades/groups were awarded FCVs statewide, and 16 of these chose to participate in the standard-build program. Production of the 16 FCVs started in July and is expected to be completed by mid-December. Following these, it's expected that more brigades and groups will choose the standard-build package through the 2018-19 VESEP program and other available grants programs.

The initial FCV prototypes were built for Nillumbik Group, Torquay brigade and Geelong West brigade. Although these vehicles' exteriors are virtually identical, the brigades could specify different internal body layouts.

The new FCV has:

- a Ford Ranger cab chassis, 4x4, turbo diesel
- a six-speed automatic transmission, all terrain tyres, snorkel, side steps
- driving lights, dual batteries, heavy-duty canvas seat covers, CFA standard livery
- nudge bar, reverse camera/alarm, LED emergency lighting and a 100-watt siren
- a fully fabricated aluminium body with central locking and interior lighting
- LED exterior work lights, under tray drawer, whiteboard and UHF radio
- stowage – first-aid kit, blankets, Engel fridge, two Tait radios, Motorola radio, portable Tait radio and charger.

The benefits of this standard-build program are:

- a standard cabin layout for radios, microphones, etc
- standard light bars, livery, and emergency warning devices
- GVM compliant – the maximum weight it can carry
- CFA manages the quality of the build process
- CFA buys all cab chassis in bulk through existing contracts
- Registration is included.



As a result of CFA buying the cab chassis for this program under an existing purchasing contract, the brigade can't trade in their existing cab chassis. This means brigades will have to dispose of their cab chassis by selling it privately.

Loch Fire Brigade is the first to receive this standard FCV (shown in the photos), and there will be a few minor changes to future models, including a lower light bar and the addition of more emergency lighting at the rear of the vehicle.

For more information about this program, contact Di Frost for VESEP-related queries ([d.frost@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:d.frost@cfa.vic.gov.au)) and Steven Hill for production and technical queries ([s.hill@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:s.hill@cfa.vic.gov.au)).

# Queen's Birthday honours 2018

## NEIL BEER, YEA FIRE BRIGADE

**Neil Beer receives the AFSM after 40 years of selfless and exceptional service to CFA. He has been dedicated to improving the safety of communities in the Murrindindi Shire and across the state.**

"I'd been on the back of a truck a few times and the Limestone captain said 'you better join', so I did," Neil said about his decision to join CFA in 1978.

Since then, he has been recognised by CFA's Chief Officer as an exceptional operational commander through his endorsement as a Level 3 incident controller.

Locally, he's held in the highest regard by his peers. He inspires the confidence and trust in those he leads to achieve outstanding results, even during the darkest times.

"I'd like to pay tribute to the support I've had from CFA members – you've always got people backing you up – and the support from family," Neil said. "When you go away for the night, or to Sydney for a course, they're the ones who have to pick everything else up.

"CFA is a magnificent body of people from all walks of life who work so well together, and together with the communities we're in."

That was particularly noticeable during one of Neil's most challenging times, the 2009 fires, when he was divisional commander for the Yea/Flowerdale area.

"In Yea, 4,500 people were evacuated to a township of 1,200 people. I went home for a shower and a rest at 2.30am, and when I drove back into town at 5.45am the whole main street and football ground were occupied. It stayed like that for weeks, but everyone pitched in."



## MARK GILMORE, RHEOLA FIRE BRIGADE

**Mark Gilmore has more than 40 years of service with CFA and Forest Fire Management Victoria. He has brought significant knowledge of bush firefighting and forest management to CFA, and has introduced important changes to training modules and assessment formats.**

During the 2008 California fires, he was divisional supervisor during a 40-day operational tour.

He drew on his significant experience during the 2009 fires, when many homes were lost in Bendigo and one person died.

"I had a discussion with the incident controller and told him I thought I should go out in the field," he said. There, he was able to direct people to various tasks.

"For three or four hours I was getting around Bendigo asking people to do what they could. People were picking up garden hoses from properties they didn't know and just getting on with it. It was a collaboration of community effort and fire service.

"I was fortunate because I'd seen the behaviours of so many fires over the years, so had a chance to pre-load some strategies. I'd spent half a lifetime running through these scenarios and then it happened."

Mark has distinguished himself locally by developing strong relationships with partner agencies and improving interoperability, particularly in the field of fire investigation.

In July 2018, Mark left his role as a CFA operations manager to devote more time on his family winery business, though he will still be a volunteer with Rheola brigade, an incident controller and fire investigator.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM

## RUTH RYAN, BALLARAT FOREST INDUSTRY BRIGADE

**Ruth Ryan has served as captain of three forest industry brigades and is currently captain of the HVP Ballarat Plantations Forest Industry Brigade in District 15.**

Ruth was nominated for an AFSM for providing outstanding leadership to CFA's forest industry brigades and to the plantation industry.

As corporate fire manager, Ruth oversees the activities of seven forest industry brigades and manages more than 160,000 hectares of softwood and hardwood plantations. She has earned the respect of her peers and has established herself as a role model for other women firefighters.

"It was an unusual career choice for a female when I left school. But as I grew up in rural Victoria, I was keen to work in regional and rural Victoria. I'd always enjoyed the sciences, so I studied forest science at university," Ruth said.

"I guess I was something of a pioneer, but I haven't thought much about that. I just love working in the



natural environment and all the challenges that it brings, and I've had some very good mentors through the years."

Her first fire season included Ash Wednesday, and she's been involved in a command role in many campaign fires, including the 2009 fires.

Ruth was instrumental in bringing together 12 competing forest grower companies, through the Green Triangle Fire Cooperative Project, so that they worked cooperatively and adopted common operating procedures.

The initiative sought to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of fire suppression, detection and prevention activities within the Green Triangle in south-west Victoria and south-eastern South Australia.

Communities in Victoria and South Australia benefit from enhanced cross-border and inter-company fire management arrangements through improvements to their overall fire safety.

In June, five CFA members received the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) for making a significant difference to their communities through their work in emergency services. Stories by Liselotte Geary.



### ALAN HODGKIN, BAYSWATER FIRE BRIGADE

Alan Hodgkin joined Boronia Fire Brigade half a century ago and was also a founding captain of Bayswater Fire Brigade. Last year, Bayswater brigade honoured his legacy by putting his name on the side of its pumper.

"It was a different area when I joined Boronia. Just housing estates, orchards, no industry," he said. "It was pretty quiet really, mostly grassfires.

"Then we started the Bayswater station in a tin shed behind a service station and all calls came in via the garage. Our first warning device was an air siren – it sounded like war had broken out."

These days, Boronia and Bayswater are bustling suburbs with pockets of medium to high-density housing as well as industry and other large workplaces.

Alan worked in fire brigades across Melbourne's and Victoria's east, before returning to his beloved Bayswater brigade. Retiring at 55, he has remained a CFA member into his 80s.

"We're all the same. One day I would be getting paid as a professional, the next I would show up as a volunteer and I'm still a professional. Forget the 'just' a volunteer or 'only' a volunteer, we're one team."

Alan is recognised for distinguished achievements through his remarkable contributions to the training and development of members, particularly in the fields of leadership and driver training. His efforts have helped shape CFA.



His commitment to embrace and encourage volunteers epitomises the model approach all CFA career staff aim to provide. He has approached every task, for both his local brigade and the community, with dedication and determination.

### DAMIEN O'CONNOR, WONTHAGGI FIRE BRIGADE

Damien O'Connor has dedicated 33 years to CFA and the Shire of Bass Coast community, though CFA was in his blood before then.

"It's a family thing really," he said. "Both my parents were members. It's something you're born into."

And while he has fond childhood memories of growing up in Wonthaggi Fire Station, there were also sacrifices that came with being a CFA family.

"We never went anywhere for school holidays – it would be the fire season. Dad would be fighting fires and mum would be stuck by the radio 24 hours a day," he said.

"I remember the old man heading off during the Ash Wednesday fires and the stories that came back, and dad being gone all night when the Union Theatre in Wonthaggi was destroyed by fire."

It's been a similar experience for his own family. "It is a sacrifice, so the medal really belongs to the family – and to my brigades. I couldn't have done it without either of them."

Damien is currently the Bass Coast group officer, and believes he has "the best brigades in the whole state. Some really great, down-to-earth people."

While jumping on the back of a truck used to be part of the excitement, "to be able to deliver a fire truck to a brigade is what keeps me going these days," he said.

Damien has a reputation for driving continuous improvement and positive change. His dedication and in-depth knowledge have encouraged the Bass Coast brigades to be proactive and innovative, with initiatives including the acquisition of an all-terrain vehicle to provide transport for crew and equipment to otherwise inaccessible areas.



PHOTO: SCOTT HAMILTON

# Cushions for older tanker seats

As part of the 2017-18 VESEP program, CFA had funding to make 811 rollover protection structure (ROPS) seat cushions. Any truck built before 2006 with a ROPS will have one of these cushions fitted to the seat on the back of the truck to improve comfort when travelling.

The cushions are manufactured from marine-grade vinyl and are attached to the fibreglass seat using Velcro. This means they can be removed for cleaning. District mechanical officers will fit the cushions when carrying out maintenance on trucks over next few months.

The original concept and design was developed by Arcadia Fire Brigade in District 22. Three prototype cushions were manufactured and trialled for 12 months across Victoria, followed by an evaluation and tendering process.

STORY STEVEN HILL



# Keeping track of our trucks

**In any emergency incident, it's crucial for brigades to know the whereabouts of their firefighters.**

In July 2018, this became significantly easier because CFA started to use a resource tracking system (RTS) to collect GPS location data on vehicles in brigades across the state.

The data is generated by a receiver that's attached to the vehicle's mobile radio. This means that whenever the radio is switched on and operating on a digital dispatch channel, digital fireground channel or incident management channel, CFA receives the location of that vehicle.

While there's always risk in responding to emergency incidents, technology such as this helps to increase the safety of all CFA staff and volunteers.

Knowing the whereabouts of vehicles gives staff and volunteers added information when it comes to an operational response. This gives CFA the best opportunity to observe and manage responses to incidents.

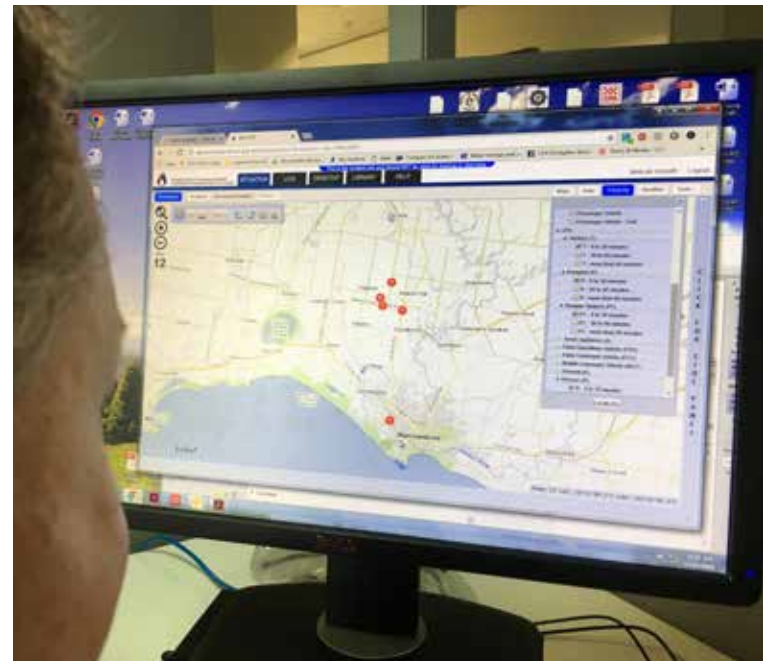
"It will be of particular use in the initial stages of an incident when we have large numbers of resources responding and we don't know where they're positioned around the fire," said Deputy Chief Officer Gavin Freeman. "It's a great safety initiative."

"The introduction of a vehicle tracking system will prove to be an invaluable tool, particularly in what is shaping as a challenging summer fire season," said Operations Manager for Operational Communications Jason Lawrence.

"By providing this functionality and giving near real-time visibility of the location of CFA's firefighting vehicles to our personnel – which can be used in incident control centres and other locations from which incidents are being managed – we'll be able to provide a more effective and efficient operational response."

Any CFA staff member or volunteer can register with Emergency Management Victoria to see a real-time map of active vehicles. Go to <https://cop.em.vic.gov.au/sadisplay/main.seam>.

For more information about RTS go to [cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelD=resourceTracking](http://cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelD=resourceTracking)





# Review of the Champs

**Championships have a long tradition at CFA, with the first Urban State Championships held in 1873. They've been held annually ever since, except during war time, and are an opportunity for brigades from across the state to compete in simulated firefighting activities in a competitive environment.**

In early 2018, CFA started a review of CFA competitions and Championships to understand the barriers to participation and explore ways to improve them to ensure their continued success. The review's recommendations include options about how to contemporise the format to increase participation and ensure a sustainable model.

The review began with a consultation process to understand the experiences of volunteers who currently participate, or have previously participated, in the events. The process included direct consultation with participants, officials and supporters at the three State Championships in 2018 – Urban Juniors, Urban Seniors and Rural. This included one-on-one interviews, face-to-face discussions at each of the Championships, and two separate surveys.

The surveys gathered information from current participants and non-participants both online

and at the State Championships. The first survey was completed by 368 participants (the majority of whom were men) aged between 18 and 74 years old, who had been involved in CFA Competitions and Championships for more than 10 years.

Four key priority areas emerged from the survey:

- The need to increase participation levels
- The need to introduce events that reflect current firefighting practices
- Improving safety
- Introduction of innovative competition formats.

Around two-thirds of respondents said they were faced with barriers to participation.

The top three barriers were a lack of support from organisations such as CFA, the brigade management team or local brigade; physical limitations (illness, injury, fitness and age); and competing demands such as family, other commitments or lack of time.

When asked to suggest ways to improve the Championships, the following eight themes emerged:

- Location
- Broader structure, timing and duration of Championships

- Organisational support
- Review of rules and regulations
- Program/agenda organisation and other logistics
- Review events
- Marketing and promotion
- Culture.

The second survey, targeted at non-participants, was completed by 114 people (again, the majority being men) generally aged between 25 and 55 years old. Almost 45 per cent of respondents had never participated in Championships and competitions.

The most common reason given for not participating (stated by 40 per cent of respondents) was they had no interest. The next most common response (11 per cent) was a lack of time.

The priority focus areas highlighted by the non-participants mostly reflected those of the participants: the need to introduce more modern events; safety; introduction of innovative competition formats; and financial sustainability.

When asked to provide thoughts on what changes would most improve the Championships, the respondents echoed the results of the first survey with the addition of 'modernise the events' and 'discontinue the Championships'.

Although members expressed a broad range of opinions about the future of the Championships, the overwhelming message was that the economic, community, social and individual benefits of the Championships far outweighed the drawbacks. Most importantly, the surveys have given the Volunteer Sustainability team some excellent opportunities and strategies to improve the participation levels and the sustainability of the competitions and Championships. Changing the current model will help the long-term viability of this important tradition.

The next step is to develop an options paper that considers safety, governance, financial impacts and long-term sustainability. This will inform broader consultation and decision-making.

There has also been further engagement with key stakeholders through targeted focus groups and established Championships committees, to consider the implementation of any agreed changes.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF VFVB

# Spotlight on the Volunteer Sustainability Team

The Volunteer Sustainability Team has one main goal – to enhance and grow volunteerism in CFA.

By Shaunnagh O’loughlin

## As Victoria’s largest community-based volunteer organisation, the sustainability of CFA’s volunteer base faces broad challenges.

Declining rural communities, increasing demand in growth corridors, changing community expectations and demographics, and economic pressures are just some of the factors that impact CFA’s volunteer capacity. This is at a time when services have diversified well beyond bush firefighting.

CFA’s ability to attract and develop volunteers who want to deliver these broader services is essential to its ongoing success.

That’s where the Volunteer Sustainability Team (VST) comes in. The team has representation in our five regions, as well as a team of 12 based at CFA headquarters in Burwood East. They work together with district and region staff to develop policies and initiatives that support CFA’s more than 1200 brigades to grow and manage their volunteer base.

The retention of volunteers is critically important to CFA’s sustainability. The state VST coordinates CFA’s participation in recognition events such as National Volunteer Week, the Australian Open Tennis, Australia Day March and the Spirit of CFA Awards to honour the extraordinary commitment of volunteers. In addition, the team coordinates remembrance events and provides leadership development opportunities for volunteers, working closely with the Emergency Services Foundation and the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience.

Volunteer Sustainability Manager Ali Martin said VST’s objective was to strengthen and modernise CFA’s volunteer model to ensure long-term sustainability.

“Our focus is on developing resources and programs that acknowledge the individual needs of volunteers and brigades, as well as the important connection between brigades and the communities in which they operate,” Ali said.

“Over the next 12 months, we’ll be revamping the Brigade Management Manual, launching

an improved online enquiry process, enhancing our recruitment, retention and recognition resources, exploring the potential of a cadets program, and managing a new recruitment and retention project.

“We’re also excited to be launching the Flexible Volunteering Pilot in North East Region. This is a joint pilot between District 24 brigades and VST to explore the opportunity to provide time-poor volunteers with flexible or one-off opportunities to participate in CFA, as well as to build capacity of brigades to service their communities.”

## KEY ACTIVITIES IN 2017-18

- Statewide volunteer recognition events including Australia Day March, Australian Open Tennis event and Pride March.
- The Junior Brigade Operating Review encouraged participation from 96 per cent of Junior brigades, helping to identify trends in youth volunteerism.
- Volunteer Leadership Development supported 35 volunteers from around the state to attend the Emergency Services Foundation Volunteer Leaders Forum.
- Training with HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development, including a one-day course in engaging youth and young adults.
- National Volunteer Week saw 90 successful events held in recognition of volunteers.
- The Enhancing Volunteerism Forum in June was an invaluable opportunity for more than 160 frontline support staff to gain practical and innovative ideas to improve volunteer/brigade management and sustainability.
- At the Junior Volunteer Leaders Forum Junior leaders from every region gathered for personal development and networking. In total, 53 Junior brigades participated, representing around 25 per cent of CFA’s Junior brigades.
- Consultation forums for women held in West Region and a youth forum held in North East Region aimed to diversify brigade membership, a factor critical to brigade sustainability.
- The Australian Fire Cadet Championship were an opportunity for Juniors to compete in eight practical firefighting events and create lifelong friendships with cadets from across Australia.



# Firefighters remembered

**CFA's new memorial site will be part of a newly-established emergency services memorial in Melbourne's CBD, which was officially announced by the State Government in February.**

The memorial at Treasury Gardens will include members from CFA, MFB, VICSES, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Ambulance Victoria and Life Saving Victoria. The original plaques from the CFA Firefighter Memorial at Fiskville, built after the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires, will be included in a crypt in the new memorial site. The fallen firefighters' names will be listed on the new memorial.

CFA Chief Officer Steve Warrington said CFA worked with the families and brigades of those on the memorial to get their views about what the new memorial should look like and where it should be placed.

The design (pictured below) was approved by City of Melbourne and submitted to Heritage Victoria.

"We want to continue to honour, respect and remember those who lost their lives in the line of duty, so it was important for us to connect with those families and brigades to help us find the best possible location," Steve said.

"The feedback we received pointed to a central location, accessible by public transport in a quiet and peaceful setting. We feel Treasury Gardens is the perfect place and it reflects the wishes from those involved."

When completed, the new memorial site will host some of CFA's annual memorial services, including those on St Florian's Day – the patron saint of firefighters.

"This service is dedicated to remembering the 78 firefighters who gave their lives through service to the community," Steve said.

The design for the new memorial is underway and CFA hopes the memorial will be complete by mid-2019.

The memorial committee is currently considering the possibility of building smaller, complementary memorials in central regional locations.



## ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR FIREFIGHTERS

On 6 May, about 350 people attended the Annual Memorial Service to honour CFA firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Held in the South Barwon Civic Centre at Belmont, near Geelong, the service began with a Welcome to Country by representatives from the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation. There was then an official welcome by CFA Board member Lynda Hamilton.

This year is the 20th anniversary of the Linton fire where five firefighters from Geelong West Fire Brigade lost their lives. It is also the 35th anniversary of Ash Wednesday which took the lives of 14 firefighters. Both events were commemorated by showing two videos. To watch the videos go to <https://youtu.be/RnSy8oZ674c> and <https://youtu.be/1vzPPQRdpkl>

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER AND DUNCAN RUSSELL



**Above:** Chief Officer Steve Warrington at the memorial service

PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

**Left:** Artist's impression of the proposed Emergency Services Memorial in Treasury Gardens

PHOTO: COURTESY OF RUSHWRIGHT ASSOCIATES

# Spirit of CFA award winners

This year we introduced the Spirit of CFA Awards to celebrate the inspirational work of our volunteers and staff. Here's the first crop of winners

## SENIORS AWARD: **Raymond Beaton**

While he was the captain of Hazelwood North brigade for 16 years, Raymond Beaton's every move was about ensuring the future viability of the brigade. "We've got a great succession plan," Raymond said. "All lieutenants and captains are now under 50. Young people are important – there was no point old people holding onto power.

"Fighting the fires is one part of the job, but what you do before and after also counts," said Raymond. "We run education sessions and get out to the schools. We also help clean up; after the 2009 fires the brigade got together and helped the farmers rebuild their fences."



## EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (INDIVIDUAL) AWARD: **Fiona Macken**

Fiona Macken is an integral part of the Diamond Creek Fire Brigade and the broader Diamond Creek community. She is a community safety coordinator and operational firefighter and works with local high schools, health centres and organisations to craft innovative programs that address the specific needs of her community.

"Around the time of Black Saturday, I could see the importance of community safety and saw it was important for people to be resilient, have their own plans and not necessarily be completely reliant on fire services," said Fiona. "I became really interested in community education. I'm truly inspired by the work that goes on around the state."

## EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION

### AWARD: **Robert Mace**

When one of his colleagues was seriously injured while testing hoses five years ago, Wodonga Leading Firefighter Robert Mace knew he had to do something to make the task safer. Since then he's developed a new hose testing machine and there hasn't been a single near miss or injury.

"Without Robert's determination to make safe a relatively hazardous task this would not have been possible," said Wodonga colleague Lachlan Nicholson. "He has been a passionate believer in making any task as safe as possible.

"He designed and commissioned a hose testing machine for our station and later a hose testing trailer that is based at District 24 headquarters."



## INCLUSION AND FAIRNESS CHAMPION (INDIVIDUAL) AWARD:

### **Tony Stephens**

Since becoming captain of Malmsbury brigade, Tony Stephens has been a force to be reckoned with in his support and commitment to diversity and inclusion. He has transformed the brigade's membership: 60 per cent of its operational members are now under 54 years old and 36 per cent are female.

Tony's commitment to diversity comes from his strong belief that to appropriately service the community, the brigade must reflect the community.

"By breaking down the barriers, truly engaging with our community and identifying their needs and requirements, we build a healthier and more resilient community and also open the door to a more diverse and inclusive brigade membership," said Tony.

## INCLUSION AND FAIRNESS CHAMPION (TEAM) AWARD:

### **Ballan Junior leaders**

The Ballan Junior leaders are committed to creating programs that challenge the Juniors, yet nurture them to achieve a satisfactory level that's appropriate to each youngster's ability. The leaders also encourage the Juniors to help each other in a non-threatening, blame-free environment.

"The kids thrive in the Junior Program. They love it and make us proud," said Junior Leader Samantha Searle.

"The skills they are learning in Juniors gives them a great opening if they want to continue. And when they've been in the brigade for a while they can explore career firefighting. We've had the privilege of people doing that," said Third Lieutenant Ian Ireland.



**LIVING THE VALUES AWARD:****Susan Little**

Susan Little has been an active member of CFA for more than 20 years in various roles including a firefighter, welfare officer and Junior brigade team leader. She is committed to protecting her community and encourages effective communication and good work ethic throughout the entire Hamilton Fire Brigade and between other agencies. She personifies the CFA values.

"CFA has been a huge part of my life and I've made such great friends," Susan said. "Hamilton is a strong brigade with a really strong Junior brigade. We're hoping they'll step up into the senior ranks. There's a big, bright future out there for us."

**EXCELLENCE IN INTERAGENCY OR GROUP COOPERATION (INDIVIDUAL) AWARD: Nicole Harvey**

Tasked with analysing the burnt remnants of an incident, fire investigators often painstakingly comb through the charred remains of rooms, buildings and wide open spaces.

State Fire Investigation Coordinator Nicole Harvey carries out this work in collaboration with many agencies including the Coroners Court of Victoria, Victoria Police, Emergency Management Victoria, WorkSafe, and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Nicole also passes her skills onto new fire investigators. "Teaching our next generation the traditional and emerging diagnostic methods, techniques and technologies to become fire investigators is crucial in making sure our communities remain safe," Nicole said.

**YOUTH AWARD: Bailey Rhodes**

Twenty-year-old Bailey Rhodes is an inspirational member of Melton Fire Brigade. As well as coaching the Junior brigade – creating a nurturing environment to encourage them to continue their participation – Bailey is an active firefighter who regularly attends complex incidents and maintains the high standard of training expected of firefighters. He also organised the Pink Stumps Day charity cricket match between Melton and Werribee brigades.

"I've been around CFA ever since I was young," said Bailey. "I was always wanting to play on the fire trucks and help out around the station."

See page 65 for more about Bailey.

**EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING (INDIVIDUAL) AWARD:****Steve Lewis**

Steve Lewis became Dundas Group Officer in 2015 and received his 40-year service medal in 2016. Steve was concerned about the lack of succession planning in many of the 18 brigades in his group, the sustainability of the brigades, and the vast distances between them which led to volunteers feeling a lack of support.

In 2016 Steve improved how the group set its strategic direction by introducing regular meetings between the five deputy group officers. During the fire season the DGOs attend fires and support captains in their decisions.

"We now have seven new captains and they know they have support," said Steve. "Communication is what it's all about. I make sure brigade members know they are wanted and needed."

**EXCELLENCE IN INTERAGENCY OR GROUP COOPERATION (TEAM) AWARD: Omeo Group**

In the High Country, Omeo Group has a strong and close relationship with Forest Fire Management (FFM) at Swifts Creek, and they have worked closely for a long time. CFA management often praises Omeo Group for its high level of cooperation.

Living in small communities means Omeo Group brigade members and FFM Swifts Creek are aware of each other's limitations.

"It's a necessity for us to get on with DELWP," said Omeo Group Officer and Swifts Creek brigade member Peter Sandy. "We're out on the end of a limb, with access only from the south. We've always got on well, living and working together."

**EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING (TEAM) AWARD: Rockbank Fire Brigade and Support Team**

In 2014 Rockbank Fire Brigade was finding it difficult to protect its community, and as a consequence the brigade's long-term viability was threatened. To help rebuild the brigade, a support team was set up comprising CFA staff and volunteers. Thanks to this team's innovative thinking (trailing new approaches and resources), persistence, creativity, effective communication and collaborative focus, the brigade is well on its way to independence.

"Rockbank brigade has experienced significant challenges to maintain their viability, but over the past four years they've worked really hard, with few members, to build their capacity," said team member and BASO Chanel Forbes.

See page 59 for more about Rockbank brigade.

# Women in CFA training session

**More than 30 women took part in the Women in CFA West Region training day at VEMTC Longerenong campus in early September.**

For the past four years, the training day has increased confidence among participants, who learn from other women with a wealth of experience to share. Importantly, the day is also an opportunity for participants to meet members from other locations in West Region, to develop and strengthen networks.

The volunteers and staff completed a range of activities including forced entry, extinguishing a car fire, LPG bullet, entrapment drill, a bin fire and hazardous trees awareness. The newest training prop at Longerenong campus, photovoltaic arrays (solar energy), was also used and was a well-liked part of the training.

“For me as a BASO, I wish I’d participated in the day two years ago,” said District 16 Brigade Administrative Support Officer Elizabeth Jones. “It was a really positive experience; everyone is so welcoming and accepting. The PAD staff members were very helpful and informative. I will definitely be attending another day and encouraging other members to get involved.”



The day was filled with laughter, learning, networking and, above all, confidence building. We hope that all who attended enjoyed themselves.

Anyone interested in attending the Women in CFA training should contact their local district headquarters training team.

STORY CARA MCINTYRE AND EMMA HERSHELL



# When the bush is ready to burn

**Fire and land managers are set to benefit from a new online vegetation condition and flammability mapping tool – the first of its kind in Australia.**

Developed by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, the Australian Flammability Monitoring System (AFMS) uses satellite data to collect information on moisture content in highly-flammable vegetation.

Providing a clearer picture of immediate fire risks on an interactive map, lead researcher Dr Marta Yebra from Australian National University hopes the system will help fire managers carry out planned burns, and with the pre-positioning of firefighting resources.

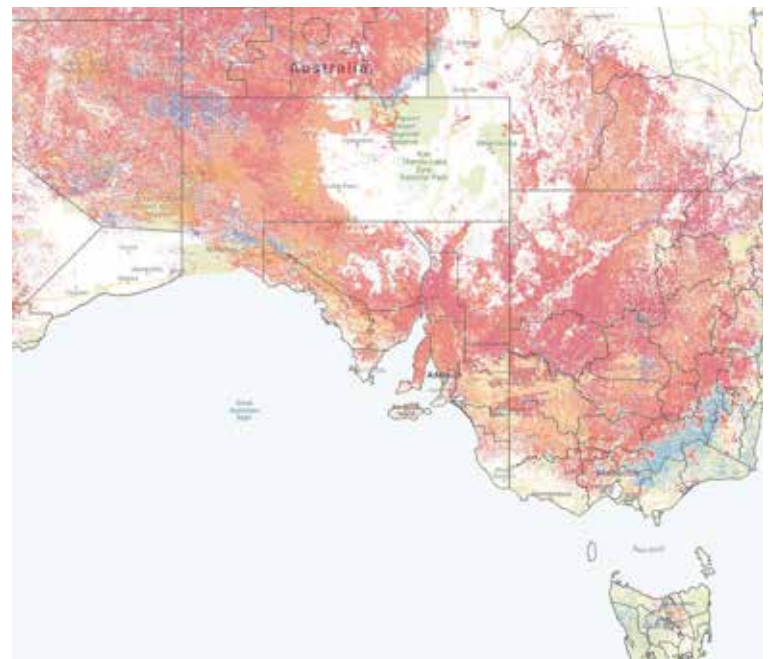
“The first step is to make people aware that this tool exists and then to give them some ideas on how they can use it,” said Dr Yebra.

Emergency services organisations can use the map to compare different years. “Users can compare the current year with previous years to get an idea of how severe the bushfire season may be, and therefore they can be better prepared for a given location,” Dr Yebra explained.

Dr Yebra is now looking at ways fire and land management agencies can use the tool during bushfire seasons.

To use the AFMS, go to <http://wenfo.org/afms/>.

STORY COSTA HARITOS, BUSHFIRE & NATURAL HAZARDS CRC



# Health matters

HEALTH SAFETY ENVIRONMENT WELLBEING



## Q & A with two peers

**Lesley Read, a 12-year veteran of the Peer Support Program from District 12, and recently-graduated Gregory Dale from District 24, share their experiences about the Peer Support Program.**

### Why did you decide to become a CFA peer?

**Gregory:** I felt I had more to offer CFA and I looked for something different to keep me occupied in future when I can't be an active firefighter. I like the idea of trained peers helping members find a solution and access help.

**Lesley:** I was approached originally by the operations manager at the time and asked if I had considered becoming a peer. I've always been interested in supporting CFA, its members and their families, so for me this was a natural path to go down.

### How long did the training take?

**G:** I completed the training in one year. It was thorough and included theory and practical parts. There were two full weekends which helped us all get through it. I thought it was an excellent preparation for the range of situations I would be responding to.

**L:** It took about 18 months to become fully qualified. The training has certainly come a long way. When I started it was 12 months of work books before you could even start the role. Over the past couple of years, that has been cut down a little to ensure that volunteers are not overwhelmed by the training, while still making sure the same level of competency is being obtained.

### What are the most common types of peer support you do?

**G:** I have helped members with welfare debriefs after a critical incident to assist them with psychological first-aid. I'm also involved in actively promoting the peer program in our districts.

**L:** I don't think there's a 'common' type of peer job. A call-out for a peer can involve supporting a brigade or members after a particularly nasty incident or event. It can also be to support an individual with something that is affecting them. Often, I'm a shoulder for someone to lean on when things are tough.

### What has been the highlight so far?

**G:** The friendships I have formed with other peers during and after the training period. I've also got to see CFA on many different levels across our area. When responding to fire and other events, I'm proud of how supportive CFA members can be to one another in challenging circumstances.

**L:** This is difficult to answer because peers don't often see the highlights – we normally support someone when they are not in a good place. The biggest highlight is certainly being able to offer support to those who need it most. The friendships I've made in the peer team



PHOTO: IRINA TCHERNITSKAIA

are certainly a highlight as well. I've been lucky enough to have some amazing role models in Pat Bigam and Norm Bowen who I saw as, and continue to see as, the guiding lights in the peer program.

### What have been the most challenging parts of being a CFA peer?

**G:** It was very challenging to take on the peer role immediately following a fire that impacted me personally. I considered giving up on becoming a peer but I'm glad I continued with the training because I made some good friendships with other members. Being in fire recovery gave me a unique understanding of how individuals and communities recover.

**L:** The constant change in CFA is certainly a challenge and the fact that even today the subject of mental health can still be a bit taboo. Although a lot of positive changes have occurred over the years, there's still a long way to go.

### Given the many challenges of being a peer, what do you do to look after yourself?

**G:** I have a farm and I plan small projects which relax me in a natural setting. I take care to monitor my capacity to do peer work and I access help if I need it.

**L:** I have an amazing, supportive family and a great team.

### What would you say to a CFA member considering joining the Peer Program?

**G:** It's a wonderful long-term opportunity to help CFA members. You see a whole different side of CFA, meet new friends and make a difference to CFA members and the broader community.

**L:** Do it. You won't regret it.

If you're interested in becoming a CFA peer, email [peer.program@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:peer.program@cfa.vic.gov.au) or phone **03 9262 8560**.

# Inspecting your brigade

**We must be proactive in identifying safety risks. An effective inspection and review program is an important preventative measure to ensure a safe and healthy workplace. As a minimum, we recommend that every site be inspected at least once a year.**

Brigades can use Section 29 inspections to achieve this task, but we recommend using a safety inspection checklist from the intranet to ensure you consider a wide variety of potential issues. Inspection records must be kept as per local arrangements.

If a hazard is found, it must be recorded online on CFASafe (or in Hazard Report books at volunteer stations). Volunteer brigade reports

must be sent to the catchment officer. Maintenance issues should be logged using the Building Maintenance Request system on Brigades Online.

The outcome of an inspection must be communicated to all people at the site through an email or discussion at a meeting, for example, to ensure everyone is aware of any changes.

For health, safety and environment information, go to the Health & Wellbeing section on Brigades Online, or email your health and safety adviser at [safety.advisors@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:safety.advisors@cfa.vic.gov.au).

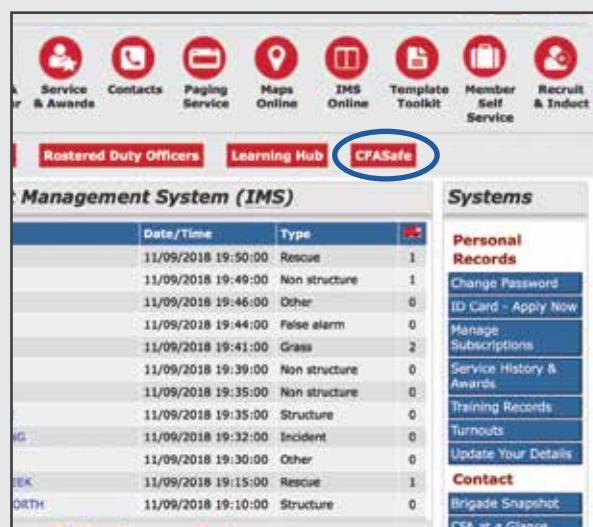
## Volunteers can now access CFASafe

**Timely reporting of incidents and hazards is an important way to reduce risks. When reports are made, managers may notify regulatory bodies such as WorkSafe, and find solutions to remove the risk to personnel.**

CFA uses a digital reporting program called CFASafe that allows staff with access to directly enter an incident or hazard report into the system and assign it to a responsible person for actions to be developed. Until recently, this system could only be accessed by CFA staff. Volunteers had to complete their report on paper, and then a member of staff entered the report into CFASafe. This was cumbersome and open to errors.

At many CFA forums, volunteers asked for access to the CFASafe system to directly enter reports in order to speed up reporting and resolutions. The message was heard loud and clear and CFA has given volunteers this access.

To register to use CFASafe, go to CFA Online ([cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au)) to request a CFA login. For more information about using CFASafe, go to Health & Wellbeing > Health & Safety > General Health & Safety Information on CFA Online.



## Seat belt safety

**There have been a number of serious injuries and near misses involving vehicles this year that could have been prevented by wearing seat belts.**

CFA has found that many people don't wear seat belts while on the fireground, because people believe there are no risks at low speeds.

If a vehicle travelling at just 25 kilometres per hour stops suddenly, the impact is the same as jumping off a 2.5-metre-high single-storey building. Most people wouldn't jump off a building, so it makes sense to wear your seat belt.

Make sure all your crew members wear their seatbelts, and be safe.

**Would you leap off a single storey building?**

**From 2.5m high, you will hit the ground at over 25kph**

**Would you drive your car without a seat belt at 25kph?**





# Meet your member wellbeing advisers

**Member wellbeing advisers (MWAs) can deliver a range of targeted educational packages to CFA members, provide support to individuals and teams, and promote mental health and wellbeing in CFA.**

Our team consists of six experienced advisers who work directly with all CFA members, leaders and teams. The service is available statewide, with an MWA based at Burwood HQ and in all five regions.

MWAs can give training to brigades, groups, districts, teams or at forums on a range of topics including mental health, resilience, building team relationships, equal opportunity, dealing with conflict, coping with change, and how to have conversations that may be difficult or challenging.

"No one day is ever the same as the next. Some are more challenging than others, but at the end of the day there's nothing better than ensuring all our members are well supported whether that be through the MAP, chaplaincy program, peers, or training and education," West Region Adviser Michelle Taylor said.

"Being an MWA gives me a humbling opportunity to support so many different people in so many different roles. It's a true community organisation," North West Region Adviser Chris Bull said.

You can contact your regional advisers direct:

- Trudy Deller (South West Region) **0447 513 186**
- Michelle Taylor (West) **0400 082 088**
- Chris Bull (North West) **0429 072 413**
- Simone Boyd (North East) **0429 078 404**
- Anne Duff (South East) **0447 331 457**
- Nick Valentine (Burwood HQ) **0437 731 363**



**Left:** (left to right, top to bottom) Michelle Taylor, Nick Valentine, Trudy Deller, Simone Boyd, Chris Bull, Anne Duff



## New ACO for health and safety

**In August 2018, CFA welcomed Chris Stephenson to the newly-created role of Assistant Chief Officer Health, Safety, Environment and Wellbeing.**

Chris comes to CFA with more than 30 years of experience in fire and emergency management. In his most recent role in the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning he led bushfire preparedness, prevention, response and recovery across Gippsland.

Executive Director of People and Culture Liz Radcliffe said Chris had extensive experience



leading teams during emergency and recovery efforts, as well as community risk reduction initiatives including Safer Together.

"Chris is a strong, authentic leader with a track record of working well with people to deliver on improved health and safety culture in operational environments," Liz said.

"As ACO of Health, Safety, Environment and Wellbeing, he will ensure a strong focus on the operational risks faced by CFA members as well as providing operational input and support to system and policy development."

# BA carbon dioxide build-up

Firefighting is a demanding task that places a large amount of physical and physiological strain on the body. Health monitoring by CFA during incidents and training has shown that most firefighters wearing breathing apparatus (BA) have decreased oxygen levels in their blood stream, which increases their breathing and heart rates.

Although BA protects our firefighters, it also puts strain on the body and increases work load. This in turn increases the metabolic processes in the body, resulting in an increase of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) as a by-product.

New technology has now allowed CFA to carry out in-field trials to measure the physiological responses to wearing BA. In particular, we looked at heart rate, oxygen saturation, and the amount of expired carbon dioxide.

In the latest CFA study, carried out by the Operational Health Monitoring and Rehabilitation team, 67 CFA volunteer firefighters wearing full personal protective clothing and BA ran out one line of two lengths of 38mm hose, charged the hose and advanced to a kitchen fire prop. They then performed a simulated search and rescue task in a two-storey shed and rescued two dummies from the second floor.

The test results showed that only 16 of the 67 participants breathed at or close to a normal respiration rate, and of those 16 only seven reached the minimum level to ensure the balance of CO<sub>2</sub> and oxygen was maintained. In other words, 60 of the 67 participants did not expire enough CO<sub>2</sub> during the tasks.

The body removes excess carbon dioxide through the lungs. For ventilation to be productive, the body needs time for the exchange of gases in the lungs. However, in our trial, most firefighters breathed at an increased rate and didn't allow the four to six seconds required to exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide across the lung wall. This resulted in an increased heart rate and, in turn, increased the breathing rate.

Rapid, shallow breathing will lead to reduced gas exchange at the lung wall which will result in retention of CO<sub>2</sub> in the blood stream – a condition called academia. If prolonged it causes acidosis, which affects the heart's function and can lead to low blood pressure and cardiac arrhythmia.



The natural way most people breathe is to expand the chest to inhale. With the natural stretching of the intercostal muscles, the chest quickly returns to a relaxed state during the breathing-out phase. The workload, tight-fitting clothing and BA straps may reduce a firefighter's ability to fully expand their chest, and so increase the risk of shallow breathing.

The next step is for the Operational Health Monitoring and Rehabilitation team to develop a training package to be included in all BA training, that gives advice on breathing techniques including diaphragm breathing. This technique is currently being taught in CFA's Healthy for Life program.

STORY PETER LANGRIDGE

## CFA WELLBEING SUPPORT LINE **1800 959 232**

One number provides CFA members and their immediate family access to 24-hour support, seven days a week



# Important core exercises to prevent injuries

**There are steps that all firefighters can take to reduce their risk of injury while training or responding to a call. Regular exercise will ensure that a firefighter can move their body with control into the positions required to complete their task.**

Before addressing large movements, it's important to ensure that smaller movement can be completed with control. At the most basic level, correct breathing is needed to ensure that all following movements are optimal. The main muscle involved in breathing is the diaphragm, at the bottom of the rib cage. However, in many adults the diaphragm is underused because reliance on the muscles in the ribs and shoulders results in poor posture, and weakens the deep abdominal muscles.

## 1 BREATHING DRILL

Lying on your back, place your feet flat on the floor with your knees bent. Place one hand on your stomach and the other across the front of your chest. Take a slow deep breath in while pushing your stomach outwards. You should initiate the first two-thirds of the movement with your stomach, and complete the last third of the movement by raising your chest outwards.

Inhale slowly for five seconds, hold for three seconds then exhale for five seconds. Complete for three minutes.

When your breathing pattern has been addressed, you can do exercises to strengthen the muscles that control the hips and trunk. This will create a strong base from which other large movements can be completed.

## 2 HIP EXERCISE

Begin lying on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Use your glutes to lift your hips up. Hold at the top for one second before returning to the start position. Complete two sets of 15 bridges.

## 3 TRUNK EXERCISE

Begin lying on your back with neutral spine and legs in the air with knees bent at 90 degrees. Engage your core muscles by drawing up and in. Slowly lower one foot to touch the floor, hold for one second, then return to the start position while maintaining a neutral spine. Repeat on the opposite side. Complete two sets of 12 repetitions each side.

1



2



3



# CFA land and building – a matter of safety

**Lack of space can be an issue in offices and around fire stations. But although that handy space in a mezzanine floor or above an office may look useful, you need to consider several things before using it:**

- What is the certified load rating? You don't want the floor to collapse under the weight.
- Is there safe access and egress? Climbing a ladder while carrying a box of files, for example, isn't acceptable.
- Are there kickboards to prevent items from falling on people?
- Is there a mid rail and top rail to help prevent someone falling from height?
- How much dust is around? Dust can be slippery under foot and contribute to a fall.

CFA's Land and Building team is happy to work with you to offer advice. In the first instance, contact your local asset project officer. As with any changes to

CFA buildings, the Land and Building team must pre-approve alterations and extensions. The team will ensure you get the appropriate approvals, such as local planning or building approval, or final certification for restricted trade work such as electrical or plumbing.

A recent safety issue was brought to our attention. An access hatch in the ceiling (see photo, right) leads to a mezzanine storage space. There isn't any secured fall protection on the inside, and there's limited access to the hatch making it difficult to use ladders or stairs. With the current set-up, it's possible that people will move objects in and out of the mezzanine space while standing on a ladder that's too short, which will significantly increase the likelihood of a fall or being hit by the object being moved.

Please don't put yourself or others at risk – Land and Building will work with you for the best and safest outcome.



## Fit for Duty pilot activities

**The Chief Officer's Fit for Duty initiative is about putting safety first, which is why it's so important. The aim of the pilot is to ensure our firefighters can safely perform their duties so that everyone gets home safe and well.**

The physical component of the pilot consists of tanker-based activities aimed at bushfire firefighting. These were developed by CFA in partnership with Deakin University, with the activity benchmarks (that is, the time in which activities need to be completed) determined by CFA operational volunteers. Each member has the opportunity to practise the tasks before completing the timed activity. During the pilot, if a member is unable to complete an activity within the benchmark time, it will not impact their operational status.

The initiative is currently being piloted with Class 4 and 5 operational volunteers in South West Region, with the feedback from members informing further improvements in the activities and the program.

The tanker-based activities include the following.

### HOSE DRAG ACTIVITY

While carrying a charged 38mm hose, the individual advances forward 25 metres to marker one, then the individual reorients and walks seven metres diagonally to marker two. The individual will then reorient again

and proceed another seven metres to marker three. Finally, the individual walks 25 metres to the start position. This hose drag must be completed in less than 65 seconds.

### ARM CRANK ACTIVITY

Beginning with one 30m length of dry 38mm hose attached to a spindle, the individual uses one arm to turn the crank handle until the hose is completely wound up. The individual removes the wound hose from the spindle, attaches a second hose and repeats the process. The arm crank must be completed in less than two minutes and 20 seconds.

### RAKE-HOE ACTIVITY

Using a rake-hoe, the individual moves 360 litres of pine bark mulch from one 1.5 metre by 1.5 metre box to a neighbouring box. At least 1.8 lots of mulch must be moved as safely possible within the two minute and 30 seconds time period.

### REVISED ACTIVITIES

During the pilot, we're taking on feedback and adjusting as we go. It has been identified that some of the activities are not practical and the program team is reviewing these. Also new activities may be introduced that our members think are required for operational duties.

## Mt Cottrell – Dohertys Road grassfire

### Summary

Firefighters battled a large grass and scrub fire in Mt Cottrell, the first large incident of the summer for CFA's Mt Cottrell Group.

The weather conditions during this incident led to abnormal fire behaviour, and affected the shape and front of the fire. The incident controller and her team were able to adapt to the changes and reduce the impact of the fire on the community.

Following this significant incident, the group openly discussed what happened, and the lessons learned were used by crews to improve throughout the fire season.

### Incident overview

On 29 November 2017, Triple Zero (000) received calls at 5.30pm reporting of an out-of-control large grassfire about 34 kilometres west of Melbourne's CBD.

The fire started as a result of roadside dumping that may have ignited on Shanahan's Road, and a north-easterly wind pushed the fire towards Dohertys Road. CFA issued an early 'Watch and Act' alert for surrounding areas including health warnings because there was a significant amount of smoke in the area.

The terrain affected by fire was open grassland, and relatively flat with some rocky areas.

Standard preparedness arrangements were in place at district, group and brigade level for the Fire Danger Rating on the day, even though the Fire Danger Period hadn't begun.

Twenty minutes into the incident, a wind change occurred which was peculiar as winds normally change from north to south-westerly. In this case, it turned to a south-easterly.

Forty-five vehicles from western Victoria brigades were on scene including: command vehicles (FCVs and Group FOV), 20 tankers (including three ultralights), three pumper tankers, a strike team from MFB, a bulk water carrier and the Mernda rehab unit.

CFA and MFB firefighters worked together, with help from aircraft dispatched from Bacchus Marsh and Essendon airfields – including an air attack supervisor.

By the time the fire was declared under control at around 9pm, it had burned 128 hectares.

### What worked well

- Mt Cottrell Group, District 14 and the group field operational vehicle recognised the seriousness and potential of the incident, and quickly requested additional resources to support the incident controller.
- Crews operated in a safe and effective way while combating the fire, resulting in minimal injuries and minimal damage to vehicles.
- Interoperability and having a multi-agency approach to the incident was crucial. MFB and CFA crews worked well together. MFB crews left with a positive experience and were very complimentary about the CFA crews they worked alongside.

- The incident controller quickly assessed the fire and requested appropriate resources, and adapted well to the abnormal weather conditions and unusual fire shape.
- The Mernda rehab unit gave excellent support to firefighters.

### Lessons identified

**Self tasking** It's important to ensure crews check in at the operations point. Self-tasking at this incident led to confusion about who was performing what role.

**Water refilling** Some crews left the fireground to fill up vehicles at hydrants rather than draughting from available dams. This was raised at the after action review session and the group's crews have improved and continue to access the most appropriate water source to reduce turnaround times.

**Communications** The radio towers at the incident unexpectedly impacted the ability of personnel on the fireground to communicate. In turn, this affected the appropriate tasking of crews. Given the grassfire risk, consideration is now being given to fuel reduction burning in and around the towers. Also, radio testing is now occurring at a group level to establish the exact area where communications become impacted.

**Control points** Due to the communication difficulties, the control point struggled to receive key intelligence from the field. In the future, it might be worth tasking someone to provide intelligence to the control point. The use of ground observers is also an option.

### Conclusion

The impact of this fire was dramatically reduced as a result of the interoperability, and the initiative and quick thinking of those involved.





## Conditions are benign – what could possibly go wrong?

On three occasions, each in different circumstances, three CFA members conducting planned burns were caught out by fire behaviour that surprised and unnerved them.

There's a common pattern to these events: the outcome was surprising, unexpected and shocking for all three experienced firefighters, and their perception of benign conditions was inaccurate.

The three members selflessly agreed to tell their stories so that fellow firefighters could learn from their experiences. The aim of these stories is to allow others to learn from what happened, and not to allocate blame. To preserve their anonymity, we've used fictitious names.

### John's story

John was planning to carry out a roadside burn in native tussock grassland. He and the local group officer inspected the site on a mild day in late October. The temperature was 19°C, relative humidity was 45 per cent, and there was a light breeze of up to 5 kilometres/hour.

The grasses were only about 50 per cent cured and around 300mm tall. During a discussion on site, the group officer said the grass wouldn't burn. John suspected that it would, so he bent down and lit one of the tussocks.

The grass flared immediately and quickly ignited two more tussocks. The men attempted to stamp out the fire, but it had little effect in the tall grass. More and more tussocks ignited while John raced for suppression equipment in his vehicle. It took a desperate effort to halt the fire, and the burnt area was just over two square metres.

John called out the local fire brigade to make absolutely sure the burnt tussocks were totally out.

### John's key advice:

"No matter how benign conditions appear to be, fire can always surprise.

"Always expect the worst case, and have resources on hand to deal with that worst case. I will never ever do that again without having those resources."



### Jim's story

Jim also wanted to conduct a planned burn, but this one was in a patch of long, unburned stringy bark forest in April. The weather was even milder, at 13°C, relative humidity of 75 per cent, and little to no wind. There had been a few millimetres of rain earlier in the week.

Jim sampled fuel moisture in the surface leaf litter on the site at six places, and found readings of 21 to 26 per cent. Based on these readings, fire would not have taken hold.

Driving to the site on his own to take more readings, he planned to pick up an ultralight tanker in readiness for conducting the burn. But he abandoned the plan because of light drizzle which required him to switch on the windscreen wipers.

Curious about whether a burn would sustain at all in these conditions, Jim lit a triangle of about four square metres in vegetation 1.5 metres tall, at an internal intersection bounded by vehicle tracks. Jim said the fire "trickled around" in the small patch with a flame height of about 300mm.

The fire climbed one of the stringybark trees within the small patch and a piece of burning bark from high up the tree detached and floated, still burning, across the track and into some wiregrass. Even with his rake-hoe, Jim couldn't catch the resulting fire which quickly spread to other trees and began climbing them. He called the local fire brigades, who stopped the fire when it was around 50 square metres.

Jim noticed that the fire didn't spread in the leaf litter but was carried by the tall fuel above the surface – a mix of tall dead bracken, sedges and low shrubs. It was this near-surface fuel that had the most influence on the spread of the fire, even though fuel moisture readings indicated this was 16 to 19 per cent.

#### Jim's key advice:

"Don't just rely on the meter reading or the text book science.

"If you're going to test for fire behaviour with an ignition, always have a fire truck with you."

### Joe's story

Joe has many years' experience in roadside burning. It was a hot day in early summer, but the Fire Danger Period had not yet been declared. Joe was leading a discussion on the feasibility of a planned burn in a township bushland reserve with a number of complexities such as an environmental weed, a riparian area, and history of various community uses.

There was no plan to ignite a fire that day – it was purely a review of the issues involved in conducting a planned burn at a future date.

The focus became whether the thin, dead grass would actually carry fire sufficiently to remove the weed plants. Joe was sure it wouldn't and, noting that conditions were dead calm, on the spur of the moment he lit a tuft of grass beside the bare earth track where they were standing to illustrate the point.

The fire quietly trickled outwards with a flame of about 150mm.

After burning an area a little over a square metre, it was apparent that the grass was carrying fire steadily, so those present began to extinguish the low flames by stamping on them. But each stamp seemed only to spread the fire further, so some people grabbed branches and used them to try to beat the flames out.

When a gust of wind carried the fire under some dead branches and low shrubs, it became impossible to put out the fire by beating.

The fire ignited shrubs and ran up trees. With no firefighting equipment on hand, an emergency call was made to VicFire. Several brigades took a couple of hours to suppress the bushfire.

Joe was shocked and embarrassed. None of those present was aware that the nearest automatic weather station was recording a temperature of 37°C and a relative humidity of only 7 per cent. The fine fuels on site were estimated to have a fuel moisture of only 4 to 5 per cent. At this extremely low fuel moisture level, any burning ember would ignite any piece of fine fuel it touched.

#### Joe's key advice:

"I would never ever do anything like this again.

"I would alert others around me about what I planned to do before doing it."

### Lessons identified

- It is not OK to use fire for demonstration or learning purposes without permits and resources on scene.
- Always have firefighting equipment on hand.
- Stringybark is notorious for being able to contribute to fire spread through trunk to trunk (or even treetop to treetop) ignition, especially at higher drought indices.
- It's virtually impossible for people to accurately assess humidity at the low end of the scale. A weather meter must be used in these circumstances.
- CFA research shows that, contrary to conventional wisdom, grassland can carry fire when it's less than 50 per cent cured.

For more information refer to CFA SOP 9.39, *Procedures for planning a prescribed burn or burn off*.

## Moriac mulch fire, District 7

### Incident overview

On Friday 19 January 2018 at 2.42pm, Modewarre Fire Brigade responded to a grass and scrub fire off Cape Otway Rd, 3 kilometres north-west of Moriac township and about 10 kilometres north of the Otway National Park. The temperature was 39.5 degrees, wind speed of 16 kph gusting to 29 kph, the Fire Danger Rating was Severe, and it was a day of Total Fire Ban.

The first tankers on scene found three large mulch piles (with a combined size of around 10,000m<sup>3</sup>) on fire at the rear of a demolition business.

The magnitude of the fire, the difficult weather conditions and risk potential was immediately apparent. Additional brigades arrived on scene, with air support soon after. At the height of the fire there were 15 brigade trucks and CFA support vehicles including a district bulk tanker, together with water-bombing helicopters dropped water onto the main mulch pile every three to five minutes for four hours.

Brigade tankers attended to several spot fires, and firebreaks were made to help contain the fire to this and adjacent properties.

Crews worked all day on Friday to contain the fire and control the large mulch pile. Brigade members monitored the fire overnight. The concern was the fire could continue for many days and could be an ongoing risk to the general area as well as a significant load on local resources.

On Saturday, crews burned out around the site tying in the black area from the previous day's spot fires, to reduce the risk of another escape into the surrounding grasslands from the still-burning mulch pile.

CFA officers, in consultation with the landowner, decided to extinguish the fire by creating a moat two metres wide and one metre deep, filling it with water, and then dragging the burning material into the water using heavy machinery, with CFA tankers providing cooling for the equipment and protection for the operators.

The wet mulch was then removed from the moat and placed on areas within the firebreak where it was spread, rolled and watered by brigade members.

The local brigade, Modewarre, remained on scene during this process, hosing down any hot spots that remained. This phase of the operation continued until 9pm Tuesday, when the fire was declared out. The site was monitored using Winchelsea Group's thermal imaging camera and with the landowner's heat probes.

The brigades fighting this fire were: Barrabool, Belmont, Deans Marsh, Freshwater Creek, Gnarwarre, Inverleigh, Modewarre, Winchelsea, Winchelsea Group, Wingeel, Wurdale, District 7 ground observers, District 7 bulk water tanker.

### What worked well

- The local brigade quickly identified the risk of the fire escaping into the local township, surrounding farmland, and into the national park. Nearby grass paddocks were burned out to prevent this.
- The brigade identified the option of digging a moat as part of the suppression strategy and tactics. The owner of the site then went to work on making a six-metre-wide scraper to be connected to the long-reach excavator. The district supported the brigade in exploring this option, which proved to be successful.
- The brigade was grateful to the operators of Digga Demolitions for their support to the volunteers. The company committed a considerable amount of resources and manpower towards extinguishing the fire. They also supplied food and water to the crews.
- The use of a thermal imaging camera helped identify any remaining hotspots in the piles of mulch which were then spread and watered.

### Conclusion

The successful control and monitoring of the fire and the ongoing commitment by all those involved led to a successful outcome.





# Tanker turnover

## Incident overview

In February 2018, brigade members carried out a roadside vegetation fuel reduction burn, with appropriate approvals, about 30km from a Victorian regional city. When they started the burn at 3pm, the temperature was 32°C, the relative humidity was 21 per cent and there was a 15 kilometres/hour south-easterly wind. This weather was in accordance with the permit.

At 4.30pm, the fire escaped containment and rapidly escalated in size to a level 2 grass and scrub fire. As a result, an additional 20 tankers and air support responded.

The following description focuses on what happened to tanker 9 (T9). The tanker had three members on the rear, a crew leader and driver.

A radio message from the incident controller (IC) was received by the T9 crew to make its way into the fire and “put it out”. T9 went to the east flank of the fire and started to attack the flank fire. The fast-moving fire was around 1 metre high standing Phalaris grass interspersed with grazed paddocks and some trees. The fire was driven by a continually-changing wind, and visibility was poor.

While the T9 crew was still using its first tank of water, the fire suddenly changed direction. It flared up fanned by wind and fuelled by the standing grass. T9 was caught as it traversed the unburnt fuel. The crew on the rear deck became very hot as the fire came over the top of the tanker heat shields. The crew immediately enacted the standard turnover procedure by crouching down behind the heat shields and using a fog pattern to protect themselves. However, the crew protection system was not activated.

The driver drove onto the burnt area and, as soon as it was safe to do so, the crew stood up, T9 turned around, and they resumed their fire attack. The crew members on the rear of the tanker received superficial burns to their faces which healed over following days.

The safety of CFA members is given priority over all other considerations and activities. If we apply the CFA safety principles to this scenario, there are some valuable lessons for all operational CFA members. This case study is intended to encourage brigade members to have valuable conversations around the understanding of CFA safety principles.

## Lessons identified

By adopting the Safe Persons Approach (SPA) and using the Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA) process, you can minimise the risk of injury to yourself and others.

The crew met some of the SPA requirements by wearing PPC and PPE. However, there could have been additional consideration before tasking the T9 crew.

A greater understanding of the likelihood of this event occurring, and the consequence of attacking the fire in the given conditions, may have convinced the T9 crew to adjust its tactics to better protect crew members on the tanker. Also, a better understanding of the overall fire behaviour would have helped the crew to assess whether the benefit of attacking the fire in these conditions outweighed the risks.

It was identified that LACES was not applied:

- **Lookouts** Poor visibility restricted the crew’s ability to look out for fuel and ground conditions, fire behaviour and location.
- **Awareness** Crews would have benefited from an increased awareness of the risk the grass conditions posed to firefighters.

- **Communications** Inadequate briefing from fireground commanders and poor internal crew communications are both concerns.
- **Escape routes** No escape plan was identified by the crew in this incident.
- **Safety zones** The safety zone used in this incident was the burnt ground. This was effective but not clearly identified as a safety zone during risk assessment or size-up by the crew.

It was also identified that WATCHOUT (Weather, Action, Try out, Communicate, Hazards, Observe, Understand and Think) was not applied. There are 18 situations when firefighters should WATCHOUT, nine of which are relevant to this case study:

1. The wind changes speed or direction.
2. There is unburnt fuel between you and the fire.
3. Terrain or vegetation impedes travel or visibility.
4. You can’t see the main fire or communicate with anyone who can.
5. Unclear instructions or tasks are given.
6. Attacking a fire, or constructing a fire control line, without a safe anchor point.
7. Not being fully informed about strategy, tactics and hazards.
8. Safety zones and escape routes have not been identified.
9. Water levels are getting low.

## Conclusion

This case study has many valuable lessons to remind all CFA members that what we do can be dangerous. It’s easy to become complacent and assume everything will work out. This simple scenario where a truck responded with the right people, doing the right things, on a day suitable for fuel reduction shows that sometimes things go wrong.

It’s imperative that all members maintain situational awareness and don’t get caught up in the moment of responding to protect the community. Safety must be at the forefront of everyone’s mind at all times.

These simple prompts, SPADRA, LACES and WATCHOUT, are very helpful and applicable to all situations. It’s easy to underestimate the value and importance of these safety messages, because we say and see them every summer. Please take the time to ensure your brigade members are fully aware of them and how to use them. Contact your district for further help or training on this life-saving topic.



## Timbarra – Sunny Point bushfire

### Summary

The Timbarra-Sunny Point bushfire started on 23 September 2017 and burned more than 8,000 hectares north of Buchan over 20 days. Multiple agencies collaborated with each other and the community to fight this fire, and the outcome highlighted the benefits of having a resilient community.

### Incident overview

The bushfire burned in a steep, heavily-forested area, fuelled by strong northerly winds. The Buchan township is spread across a number of settlements including landholders and extensive farming country, so managing the fire was a challenge.

There was significant community interest in the fire from the beginning. The collaboration between agencies and community throughout this event was the result of many years of engagement and efforts to build resilience. There have been many fires in this area in the past.

A Safer Together workshop, an initiative led by Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) in collaboration with CFA, was held in Buchan before this fire. Incident management plans were discussed and updated. Past fires, the workshop and pre-summer briefings resulted in the community being able to provide local knowledge to support agency response. Actions performed by agencies to mitigate the risk posed by the fire were well understood and supported by residents.

### What worked well

**Traffic management** Roads that had to be closed were reopened to the community as soon as possible to give people access to homes and properties to assess stock and damage. This was appreciated by the community and led to a strong relationship between Victoria Police and the community.

**Staging area** The incident management team (IMT) made the decision to stage firefighters and equipment at the division command centre located at Buchan Fire Station/SES unit. This was done with the community in mind, as it meant residents could see the staging taking place with firefighters, dozers, and equipment coming through the town to be briefed before attending the fireground.

**Community liaison** The staging area also became a hub where people could see maps, road closure information and ask community liaison officers (CLOs) questions. The CLOs also visited key locations within the settlements to give information and encourage community connectedness.

**Aircraft** A helibase, situated on the outskirts of town, was visible to the community and residents were aware that aircraft would be responding to the fire.

**Community meeting** The IMT quickly acknowledged that a community meeting was necessary. The IMT waited 24 hours to complete the control strategy before conducting the meeting, so that the incident controller could give reliable, up-to-date information about the fire management actions taken. It was also an opportunity for residents to have questions and concerns addressed immediately. This approach worked well and round 65 residents attended the meeting. Community members were engaged during the meeting and understood the risks and challenges the fire presented.

**Bush nursing** This community-based health service provides a broad range of healthcare services to rural communities. It was particularly critical during this fire because it's a trusted network in the community. Bush nurses have a good understanding of a community's demographics and vulnerability, and they helped the incident controller to disseminate key information and newsletters.

### Lessons identified

**Phone trees** The phone tree process took a few days to establish, and this delayed the community's ability to disseminate information effectively. Then, during the fire's first run, it burned one of the key phone boxes which removed a section of the community who didn't have landlines. Once the phone tree was working, it greatly helped communication efforts.

**Communication** At times there was some confusion in the community about the number of fires in the area.

**Resourcing** This event was a no-notice event, close to community, outside the summer emergency management season, and during AFL Grand Final weekend. These combined factors created a significant strain on resourcing. It was particularly problematic as there were no rosters in place.

### Conclusion

This incident was a great example of the importance of planning and implementing control strategies, transparency and collaboration between the community and agencies. As a result, the fire was under control within the predicted three-week time period. Local emergency management personnel have used this incident as a case study during pre-summer emergency briefings to quickly embed lessons learned.



# CFA passes on crucial safety messages at Sikh festival

**CFA proudly supported the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi at Federation Square in Melbourne in late April.**

This festival is a celebration of Sikh tradition, heritage and culture, and includes shabad kirtan (spiritual music), langar (food), turban tying, folk music, stage plays, martial arts and children's activities.

CFA and MFB were invited to attend, which gave us an invaluable opportunity to interact with the Sikh community and pass on important home fire safety information.

The festival started with the sound of bagpipes and a procession through Federation Square.

A large proportion of the Sikh community in Melbourne was born overseas, so didn't grow up around fire services and home fire safety messaging. So the day was a perfect opportunity to explain CFA and MFB's role, and how community members can help protect themselves and their families.



CFA's April Himmelreich, Captain Koala, Eltham brigade Firefighter Mandeep Singh and MFB members were invited onto the main stage to entertain the crowd and deliver home fire safety messaging. Mandeep, a member of the Sikh community, translated the home fire safety messaging into Punjabi.

"As a member of the Sikh community, I know there's still a long way to go in educating culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] communities, especially older generations, about fire safety in Australia," said Mandeep.

"Australian kids are taught from a young age how to behave around fire – everyone can remember how to 'stop, drop and roll'. But for many migrants from CALD communities, learning about being safe around fire can be especially challenging when they move to a new country."

STORY GEORGINA HILL



# CFA celebrates NAIDOC Week

**NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia in July each year to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.**

Through our Koori Inclusion Action Plan (KIAP), CFA is committed to improving inclusion and engagement with Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal community across Victoria to better protect our communities and better care for country.

Brigades across the state celebrated NAIDOC Week through community events, small gatherings and participation in cultural awareness programs.

Dandenong Fire Brigade joined NAIDOC Children's Day where firefighters talked about fire safety with the local community.

Celebrations continued at Royal Botanic Gardens in Cranbourne with a high turnout at the Family and Friends Day. Guests were taught about the traditional plants used in a smoking ceremony and treated to a special performance by the Balee Koolin Bubup Bush Playgroup.

Crews also had a strong presence at community events in Bendigo, Barmah and Morwell.

## USING ARCHAEOLOGY AND ART TO LEARN ABOUT ABORIGINAL CULTURE

District 8 staff, career firefighters and volunteer firefighters visited the Casey Aboriginal Gathering Place as part of an Aboriginal cultural awareness session.

The highlight was a much-anticipated session by Adam Maginnis, a local Bunarong man. Adam owns his own business running education sessions about Aboriginal culture and heritage. He has an archaeology background, so gave a good presentation about what lies beneath our feet.

"There are tens of thousands of years of human history literally just below the surface or, in some instances, on and above the surface," Adam said.

Adam spoke about Aboriginal middens and stone artefacts and showed maps of the local area where cultural heritage sites are marked.

The second part of Adam's presentation was more hands-on. He's a renowned local Aboriginal artist, and his work is displayed at several sites across the Mornington Peninsula. After seeing some photos of his colourful artwork, CFA participants had the opportunity to create their own artwork on small wooden tiles.



## LAKE TYERS TRUST FIRE BRIGADE

CFA's NAIDOC Week celebrations culminated in the release of a short film celebrating the inspirational Lake Tyers satellite brigade – CFA's only Indigenous brigade founded and led by women.

Reflecting the theme of NAIDOC Week, 'because of her, we can', the Lake Tyers film is an amazing example of strong, wise and inspirational Aboriginal women working together on something they believe in.

The Lake Tyers Trust Fire Brigade formed in the late 1990s as a satellite of Toorloo Arm Brigade, following requests from the local community.

Through their commitment and passion, the women of Lake Tyers Trust brigade became leaders in the brigade and the wider community. The crew protects more than 40 homes across 4,000 acres of beautiful Australian bush. Their small fire station continues to take pride of place on the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust.

To watch the short film, see 'Lake Tyers Trust Brigade' on CFA's YouTube channel. To learn more about Aboriginal history and culture go to CFA's KIAP website [kiap.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://kiap.cfa.vic.gov.au).

CFA is committed to Aboriginal inclusion and will continue to support NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week. Think about how your brigade or district can get more involved next year.

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN AND ANGELA COOK



# CFA at Diversity in Disaster Conference

**CFA members from across the state converged on the MCG over two days not for a footy or cricket game, but to attend the first Diversity in Disaster Conference.**

Over 300 people from a variety of sectors including the emergency services, local council, health, community services and government attended the event in mid-April.

CFA's Inclusion and Fairness team from South East Region was represented by six members (pictured). Also, several brigade members and district staff travelled from North West Region, and CFA members from other locations across the state also attended.

CFA speakers Beth Taylor (District 2), Charmaine Sellings (Lake Tyers Trust brigade, District 11), Andrew Wilson-Annon (Woodend brigade, District 2), Tim Rogers (CFA Peer Support), Helen Wood (captain of Barwon Heads brigade, District 7) and Leroy Maronian (District 7) did a fantastic job sharing their stories.

CFA is part of an emergency services sector that's striving to become more inclusive and far more aware of diversity in our community. But it's more than that. To allow change to occur, we also need to be more aware of our own stereotypes and gendered culture in CFA.

"Our core business is to harness the strength and diversity in our community," said Iznaya Kennedy, a member of the Inclusion and Fairness Council in South East Region. This theme continued throughout the conference, and was reinforced by panel member Toby Kent from Resilient Melbourne, who said, "It's about people, it's about all people, and we need to draw on the strength of the diversity in the community to improve resilience".

The keynote speaker on the second day, Dr JC Gaillard from the University of Auckland, explained that we need to focus on enhancing capacity and not focus on vulnerabilities. He talked about the need to start conversations between those with the power and those without the power, and we mustn't underestimate the importance of building trust and dialogue between these groups.

Some aspects of the conference were challenging. For example, there's clear evidence that violence against women increases three-fold after a disaster, though



PHOTO: ANGELA COOK

it was heartening to hear that emergency services can take actions in the aftermath of a disaster to address this.

It was also confronting to hear about the issue of masculinity in the emergency services. Conference speaker Professor Bob Pease highlighted that when we talk about gender, it's not just about women. It is actually also about men and masculinity, and we need to start to bring a masculinity lens to disaster and broaden our conversations about gender.

There was a panel discussion at the end of the event with a number of emergency management leaders from around Australia, including former Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley and CFA Deputy Chief Officer Stephanie Rotarangi.

There are many aspects of diversity that a brigade, district or CFA member can focus on to make improvements, and this can seem daunting. Should the focus be gender, multiculturalism, LGBTI, age or disability?

Overall, the conference was enlightening and informative. "There was so much to take in and it can be a bit overwhelming, although at the same time inspiring," said Michele Abbott from Truganina Fire Brigade.

The conference reinforced the view that we should all be inclusive and welcoming. It is about people, all people, and we can all learn to be more open, less judgemental and show far greater respect for our fellow members of the community.

STORY ANGELA COOK

# Springvale fire safety film



**In a typical family home in a Melbourne suburb, an extraordinary fire safety film was created at the end of July after three months of planning with a local multicultural group in Springvale.**

The Women's Cultural Friendship Group put up their hands to be the first to make a home fire safety film after CFA delivered a presentation to the Springvale Neighbourhood House earlier in the year about the film project.

The film, called 'We speak your language' aims to engage multicultural groups around the Springvale area. The group members came up with a theme of someone being distracted and leaving cooking unattended, as they felt it was a common occurrence in their homes.

They were really concerned about a fire starting in the kitchen and what to do if they couldn't put it out. They also wanted to understand more about smoke alarms and what they are for.

Most members of the Cultural Friendship Group speak Thai, and some speak Vietnamese, Khmer and Lao, so the group decided to make the film in Thai. The Thai community is growing in Victoria and across Australia.

The fire safety film called for some action by the local brigade to support the story line, and Springvale Fire Brigade career firefighters and

volunteers were happy to help. They donned breathing apparatus to enter the house to put out the 'fire' and calm the resident.

The main actor in the film is from the community group and not a professional, and she did a marvellous job sticking to her eccentric character and playing the role.

The crew of six with two fire trucks was happy to adapt to the director's requests, and didn't get flustered despite several takes of the same scene. True to form, CFA firefighters stuck it out until the job was done properly.

The film, which will be launched in October, demonstrates to other multicultural groups what's possible and what can be done to promote fire safety.

Although the film has English subtitles, it will be used to target the Thai community through culturally relevant and meaningful props and story lines. The film will also be on CFA's Facebook page.

A huge thank you to the Springvale firefighters who took part and made this film possible.

If you'd like to develop a fire safety film with a multicultural group in your local area, contact [angela.cook@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:angela.cook@cfa.vic.gov.au).

STORY ANGELA COOK



# Matt Partridge

## Browns Plains Fire Brigade, District 24

faces of  
CFA



### What are your CFA roles?

Captain.

### When and why did you join?

I grew up in the Blue Mountains and joined my local brigade when I was 15. Since then, I've remained a member of the local fire service wherever I have lived including six years as a CFS member in SA, and now 10 years and counting in CFA.

Originally, I joined to help out in such a fire-prone area, but once we moved it has become a great way of being part of our local rural communities.

### What was the first incident you attended?

It was a bushfire in the Blue Mountains in 1995. I worked a night shift in really steep and rocky terrain, which made me realise the importance of teamwork.

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

There are two. On Boxing Day 2001, the combination of drought, heat, high winds and difficult terrain was just incredible and resulted in a day where we saw houses explode, trucks burnt over (including ours) and moments where you cut your hoses and ran for your own safety. It was a day when you realised having a good team, good training and excellent leadership cannot be replaced.

The second incident was the first road accident I attended with a fatality, and the simple realisation of how precious life is and how quickly it can be taken from you.

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

Safety is not an area we can compromise on, so if you feel unsafe say so!

If you are unsure, then stop and don't do it, ask someone, and then ask again just to be sure.

Having good people and good training is essential in this job.

We need to remember that the jobs we go to are not safe and put us in the line of fire (pun intended) so we need to be careful every moment we're out there. One of my mentors once said to me, "The day you are not scared going to a fire is the day you do not go". I also like to remind everyone at Browns Plains that we all go out together and we all come home together.

Finally, remember most of us are volunteers and although we do what we can, family always comes first, work second and CFA third.

### Who have been your mentors in CFA?

When I first started as a volunteer, I was lucky enough to have three officers in my local RFS brigade who mentored me. They taught me different things, not only firefighting but also what it took to be a leader. Each had their unique ways and provided me with skills that I use today.

Since becoming captain, I've also been lucky that the leadership group of group officers, neighbouring captains and district staff from Wodonga have always been available to give me help and advice when needed.

### What has been the highlight of your time in CFA?

Without doubt my highlight has been the people I have been privileged to meet and work with while at CFA. It's really enjoyable being able to involve yourself with such great small communities like Browns Plains. As captain, I'm exceptionally proud to be the leader of a little brigade that I think punches well above its weight.

### What do you do outside CFA?

I work for Rutherglen Estates as the viticulturist, which means I grow grapes for wine (and also like to drink wine!)

INTERVIEW BY DUNCAN RUSSELL

# Chief's initiatives press ahead

Chief Officer Steve Warrington has been working with the regions on five projects that will improve critical aspects of our service delivery.



## COMMUNITY INCIDENT ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

CFA has traditionally relied on a response-centred approach to service delivery, where resources are used primarily to respond to fires and other emergencies. Our current service delivery model doesn't embed the community safety role alongside our response role, and this must change if we want to be an effective and community-minded service.

In the Community Incident Engagement Program (CIEP) pilot trialled in the Knox Group of District 13, CFA volunteers spoke with bystanders at house fires and residents of surrounding houses either during the operational response or shortly after the incident.

The CIEP team members, who are local volunteers, were given personal protective clothing, high-visibility vests, home fire safety brochures and evaluation forms. The volunteers were alerted to a house fire via a pager and when on-scene they reported to the incident controller.

The community messaging used by the CIEP team members was simple and tailored to suit the audience. It focused on home fire safety issues such as smoke alarms and safe meeting points.

Most of the community members approached in this pilot supported CFA providing direct home advice in a neighbourhood where a recent fire had occurred. They acknowledged it gave them a timely reminder to think about their home fire safety plans and precautions.

The program is being refined based on feedback from the pilot and will now be trialled more widely across District 13 as well as in some rural townships in North East Region.

## FIT FOR DUTY

The Fit for Duty initiative acknowledges the physical and psychological demands and risks of firefighting. CFA wants to better support operational volunteers so they can carry out their roles as safely as possible.

A pilot involving Class 4 and 5 brigades in South West Region began on 1 July. The main elements are:

- a medical declaration form similar to the existing new member medical declaration form. If a CFA member needs to visit a medical professional, CFA will pay for the cost of the appointment.
- a health check based on the current Health Watch program offered to all brigades.
- a tanker-based physical assessment of volunteers based around three tasks: dragging and manoeuvring a charged 38mm hose; winding two lengths of 30m hose; and using a rake-hoe to move mulch. Deakin University created the assessment and CFA operational volunteers determined the benchmarks for each activity. For more details, see page 34.
- mental health awareness, including mental health first-aid training for a number of brigade members.

Torquay Fire Brigade in District 7 is one of the brigades taking part in the program.

"It has been a really good process," said Captain Phil Campbell. "We have already been a part of the Health Watch program in the past, and our members saw the benefit of the medical declaration. It's great to see that CFA is looking at better safety for their volunteers. Our brigade enjoyed the camaraderie when we did the tanker-based assessment and we all encouraged each other."

During the pilot, the team is also engaging with Class 1 to 3 brigades to discuss the best way CFA can support them with a Fit for Duty model that meets their needs.

Following the pilot, an evaluation will be carried out before the program is rolled out statewide over a four-year period.





## PREREQUISITES FOR BRIGADE OFFICERS

North West Region has been looking at how CFA can ensure brigades are supported with effective leadership. Through consultation with key stakeholders, the team developed the Volunteer Officer Qualification Framework (VOQF). This outlines the proposed development pathway for volunteer officers in leadership roles. It describes the skills, competencies and qualifications needed to enable effective leadership in Class 4 and 5 brigades.

It will build on the numerous training and development programs currently offered by CFA and incorporate new programs being developed. The pathway outlines development opportunities at brigade level to improve brigade culture, aims to reduce people-related issues, and encourages the nomination and election of suitable candidates into volunteer officer positions.

A VOQF report was submitted to the Chief Officer in April 2018. Further consultation is underway with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria to ensure support for the framework, as well as with the Deputy Chief Officer Training and Executive Director People and Culture.

## BRIGADE CAPABILITY

West Region worked with six Class 4 and 5 volunteer brigades to define the capability needed to manage the risks in each brigade area. The West Region Brigade Capability pilot ran from November 2017 to April 2018.

Initially the focus of the work with brigades was to determine the challenges associated with aligning operational member capability with brigade activity to ensure sustainable service delivery.

Successfully matching capability to risk at brigade level needs an evidence-based understanding of local risks, recent activity levels and a reasonably accurate forecast of future trends. The Brigade Capability Profile Application (BCPA) was developed for the pilot to meet this need, with the aim of achieving a sustainable volunteer workforce and sustainable activity levels. It takes into account brigade activity levels including support calls, total and active operational volunteer member numbers, individual contributions, and skills profiles.

The pilot was an opportunity for catchment teams to talk with brigades about their activity levels, capability needs and to mutually agree an

operational membership range to ensure sustainable service delivery into the future.

The pilot found that most brigades' operational membership was close to the suggested membership range. The pilot also helped brigades identify activity trends and opportunities to more effectively use capability resources by reviewing support arrangements, and reducing false alarm and good intent calls.

One of the pilot's key recommendations was to incorporate the BCPA into the suite of tools available to operations managers and their teams across all regions to help them develop tailored support for brigades.

The BCPA has been rolled out to a number of districts, and by the end of 2018 all districts will be given access to it. The Brigade Capability project will be extended to select locations during 2018-19.

## ANNUAL BRIGADE REVIEW

The Annual Brigade Review (ABR) is a diagnostic process to enhance our brigade inspections and give the whole organisation a more holistic view of brigade health. The process will give us real evidence for developing business plans and tailored solutions to improve service delivery.

Like the traditional Section 29 visits, the ABR involves discussions between catchment teams and brigades. ABR conversations generate indicators across the seven areas of brigade viability: infrastructure and equipment; leadership; community; training; people; capacity; and finances and administration.

The ABR was successfully tested with all 44 brigades in District 9 during the 2017-18 financial year (Mirboo North brigade members pictured, below). More than 250 volunteers and employees participated, 3,000 data sets were collected, and more than 100 reports generated.

The data can be aggregated from brigade through to state level, and allows us to look at specific areas such as leadership or infrastructure, as well as drill down to strengths or limitations at all levels.

Catchment teams in District 9 thought the ABR process was a valuable addition to CFA's risk analysis processes. Key strengths and challenges were identified across the district, and the next phase involves comprehensive, evidence-based planning using the ABR data.

The ABR will be piloted in select locations during 2018-19.



# Saving lives on the road

As we all know, there's much more to CFA than fighting fires. Members from four road rescue teams tell their stories.

By Duncan Russell

## LAKES ENTRANCE RESCUE TEAM

"We cover a fair area," said Lakes Entrance Captain Geof Bassett. "Over the past few years some of the surrounding rescue units have struggled to get crews out the door. So, essentially, we're responding as primary rescue into areas such as Buchan and beyond, and up the Great Alpine Road."

The Lakes Entrance rescue team has 18 dedicated members who turn out to about 15 to 20 vehicle accidents a year, often supported by eight trained members from Bairnsdale brigade.

"It's not uncommon for us to have more than an hour's drive to an incident," continued Geof, "and we come across all the typical hazards of rural roads – winding roads, steep embankments, wildlife."

When the need for a local road rescue team was identified in 1995, the decision to set up a team wasn't taken lightly by the brigade. "We wanted to make sure CFA would support us to do the role.

"We have a really good peer support network which includes rescue operators, so they know what we go through.

"And when we train a new member to become a rescue operator, we make them aware that 95 per cent of the time they will have a direct impact on a human being. Also, when they turn out to a job in a small community, there's a high chance they will know the person or family involved in the accident, and they have to be prepared for that."

As a matter of course, the team has a debrief after an incident and makes sure members know what support is available.

"We'll touch base with each other in the following days, especially if it's been a difficult job. Even when the outcome isn't ideal, I think the measure of success is how well we've worked together.

"We recently attended a motorbike accident and one of the riders may not walk again. But their family were really appreciative about the work we did. It's really important to get that sort of feedback and relay it back to the team."



A local business lends the brigade an area of land for training where they set up various types of vehicles in different crash configurations.

"We train for jobs we're likely to attend and also replicate some of the more unusual incidents that have occurred around the state. That way, our members not only reinforce their existing skills but also learn new ways of doing things.

"Recently we did a road rescue training workshop with neighbouring SES units. It was the first time we've formally trained with them and it went really well."

But training isn't just about learning new skills and how to use specialist tools. "Our members have to understand that we can't change what has happened. We are there to help and make a difference. Our role is to keep the patient in the same or better condition than before we arrived on scene. If we do that we've done our job."

Always looking to provide a better service to the local community, the Lakes Entrance rescue team is enhancing its skill set.

"We've been relying on crews from Morwell and



Traralgon for steep angle rescues," continued Geof. "We're in the process of getting members to do steep angle training jointly with SES to give us extra capability.

"It will mean we can at least make a start at some rescues instead of waiting, and know that we have additional expertise following up if we need it."

## PAKENHAM ROAD RESCUE UNIT

With steep country and Bunyip State Park north of Princes Highway, flat swamp land to the south with its deep spoon drains and river embankments, and the ever-increasing flow of traffic on three major highways, the Pakenham Road Rescue Unit is faced with a wide range of challenges.

Unusually for CFA, back in 1995 Nar Nar Goon Fire Brigade joined forces with Pakenham SES to work and train as a single unit – the Pakenham Road Rescue Unit – comprising around 25 trained members from Nar Nar Goon and around 25 from Pakenham SES.

“The unit members wear two uniforms but we are one team,” said Second Lieutenant Justin Seddon, who’s one of the unit’s rescue training officers. “Our relationship with SES over the past five years is the best it’s ever been.”

“We train together once a month, led by myself and SES training officer Chris Rogers. We

identify any issues we have had at incidents and then home in on those at training. One of the reasons we have really good training sessions is that CFA members are exposed to any new issues that SES members identify and vice versa.

Another advantage of having a joint team is the availability of equipment.

“We have three sets of hydraulic rescue equipment, so if there are multiple cars involved in an accident we can split up and attend to several casualties at once.”

Justin is also a member of a CFA training group that trains rescue brigades around Victoria.

“We discuss techniques and take them to brigades to make sure every rescue unit is doing the same thing. We want brigades to have consistent training.

“And our Pakenham unit benefits from my wider training role because I’m exposed to a lot more incidents.”



Left to right: Matthew Egan, Justin Seddon, Geoff Bramley, Kerri-Ann Simpson, Nicole Giles-Ackaoui

PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFMS



## WERRIBEE RESCUE TEAM

Victoria’s busiest volunteer-only road rescue brigade has 25 rescue-trained members and is called out to around 130 vehicle rescues a year. Brigade Captain Michael Wells works as an intensive care flight paramedic with Ambulance Victoria (AV) during the day.

“It gives me a greater understanding of injuries and is a useful skillset to have,” he said. “The knowledge I’ve gained from trauma care helps me make decisions when extricating an occupant from a car.

“At an incident my main role is a leadership one, though I can get on the tools when required.”

Michael also spends a lot of time passing on his rescue skills. He not only trains his own brigade members, but also takes the heavy rescue course at VEMTC Craigieburn to teach MFB recruit firefighters about road rescue and AV considerations on scene. He also trains SES units. But for Michael it’s not all a one-way process – the emergency services are keen to share knowledge.

“We work as a team, irrespective of the colour of the overalls,” Michael said. “We enhance our knowledge by sharing it. Other agencies learn from us and we learn from them.”

Werribee brigade also has a six-member rescue competition team. In addition to their regular

duties as operational firefighters, competition team members take on a lot of extra training.

“We had a strong, committed team for many years that retired a couple of years ago when they were still at the top of their game.”

This team came second in the World Rescue Challenge in the first year it took part, won the Australasian Road Rescue Challenge twice, and placed many times. Over the years, team members also won many individual awards.

“Members of the previous team now train and critique the current team, which hasn’t yet competed. They are assessed by the best of the best and will compete against the best of the best.”



## APOLLO BAY RESCUE

In 2016 Apollo Bay Fire Brigade was struggling with its membership, with only five members turning out. Later that year they carried out a huge recruitment drive in the local community.

"This resulted in eight new members and we all busted a gut to train them in time for the fire season," said brigade Captain Dave Howell. "They finished their training on 23 December and got their gear the next day. Then on Christmas Day half of them were paged to their first fire at Wye River. We spent almost two weeks there."

Apollo Bay Rescue, the only rescue brigade in District 6, turns out to vehicle accidents at Princetown in the west, Lorne in the east, and Barramunga or further to the north. That means the current 15 brigade members trained for rescue are responsible for 120 kilometres of the Great Ocean Road and surrounding area.

The rescue team attends around 50 road and high-angle rope rescues a year.

"About 70 per cent of the brigade's call-outs are for rescues; far more than fire call-outs," said Dave. This is because of the amount of traffic on the roads because of the number of tourists. Most accidents around here are not due to high speed, but lack of knowledge of road conditions and rules.

"When the pager goes off we know it's likely to be a real job, not because of a false alarm."

The brigade knows the paramedics and police officers in Apollo Bay and surrounding areas. "Both the ambos and police know what we can do, and as a team we get the job done. It helps when you personally know the other emergency services. We all have each other's backs.

"Road rescue isn't for everyone though," continued Dave. "We've had a couple of members over the years go to jobs and never come back. But I think those who join a rescue brigade can make a real difference; you're dealing with people's lives. The decisions we make have a big impact for those being rescued and the rescuers."

Dave has made a conscientious effort to ensure every member of the brigade is trained and maintain their skills. "All our team is qualified in the majority of areas – Minimum Skills, BA, advanced pumping, advanced first-aid, rescue (both road and rope), to name a few.

"To maintain road rescue skills, we need cars to practise on, but it's difficult to find them. Like most brigades, we aren't flush with cash so buying them isn't an option. We rely on the generosity of the community, which is great but usually doesn't allow us to work on late model cars with the latest technology."

Dave sets up training scenarios for the team. "For one exercise, I pushed a car off the road into a creek, and the team had to remove the patient dummy from it. I also used a waterfall, where members had to use a rope system to reach the car."

Dave may be the most experienced member in the rescue team but he's quick to point out he values all his members' thoughts.

"I wear the red hat but it doesn't mean anything when we're at a job. I ask everyone for their opinion because they may have a better idea than me.

"Sometimes I walk away from a job to look at it from a distance. When you're up close you can get tunnel vision. You need to stand back sometimes and have a think."

Apollo Bay was the first rescue brigade to get battery-operated tools for road rescue. This portable equipment is simple to use: "You pick it up and take it down a cliff with you without needing a portable pump. I would love to see every rescue brigade have them as standard stowage." Still on the brigade's wish list is a replacement for the 25-year-old rescue truck. "Hopefully, in the near future, this will happen."



# Filipino brigade boost for Pyramid Hill



PHOTOS: BLAIR DELLENJIN

**Already credited with saving a Catholic primary school and providing a much-needed boost to the area's workforce, members of Pyramid Hill's Filipino community have now joined the local CFA brigade.**

Six members of the town's Filipino community recently completed their Minimum Skills and bushfire training and are now able to jump on the back of a truck to attend fires and other emergencies this summer.

Nine years ago Richard Fernandez followed his wife Marilyn to Australia with three of their children before the community fundraised to bring the remaining three children to their new home. He said joining the brigade was the Filipino community's way of saying thanks.

"We want to be part of the community as much as possible and give back," Richard said.

"Most of these new members have actually bought a house here in Pyramid Hill, so now they want to join the community and join the CFA."

The group did their Minimum Skills course during winter and carried out a fire drill during September.

"Pyramid Hill brigade has been really welcoming – all the members and the captain. The instructor is really nice and you can really understand everything when he's teaching us," continued Richard.

"We're looking forward to being able to help with fires during the summer season."

Pyramid Hill firefighter Mark Lacey said the

Filipino community made up about a fifth of the town's population of around 500.

"We've been blessed," Mark said. "They've saved our small Catholic school – of the 15 students, 13 are Filipino. They've saved a lot of our jobs, too."

Mark said the local shire council had been supporting the group's integration in the town with a yearly Filipino Fiesta, which is now a recurring event.

"It's totally different for them here but they are thankful to our community and want to get involved," continued Mark.

"They've been very keen at the first few training sessions. Now that they've finished the training they are all ready to roll."

STORY LISELOTTE GEARY



# 2018 Champs

The State Urban Junior Champs were held in Warrnambool 24-25 February, the State Urban Senior Champs were held in Bendigo 10-12 March, and the Rural Champs took place 7-8 April in Warrnambool



**URBAN SENIOR RESULTS**

## Dry aggregate

1 Maryvale	18 points
1 Kangaroo Flat	18 points
3 Dandenong	17 points

## Wet aggregate

1 Maryvale	74 points
2 Harvey B	62 points
2 Kangaroo Flat	54 points

## A Section

1 Maryvale	92 points
2 Kangaroo Flat	72 points
3 Dandenong	34 points
3 Drouin/Bunyip	34 points

## B Section

1 Sale	58 points
2 Patterson River	39 points
3 Geelong West	32 points

## C Section

1 Harvey B	83 points
2 Warrnambool	49 points
2 Werribee B	49 points

**URBAN JUNIOR RESULTS**

## Dry aggregate

1 Tatura A	31 points
2 Melton A	21 points
3 Swan Hill A	18 points

## Wet aggregate

1 Tatura A	24 points
1 Euroa A	24 points
3 Melton A	23 points

## Under 14 years aggregate

1 Melton A	33 points
2 Euroa A	24 points
3 Swan Hill A	18 points

## Under 17 years aggregate

1 Tatura A	44 points
2 Benalla	16 points
2 Melton B	16 points

## Grand aggregate

1 Tatura A	55 points
2 Melton A	44 points
3 Euroa A	36 points

**RURAL SENIOR RESULTS**

## Division 1 aggregate

1 Greta A	74 points
2 Eldorado A	52 points
3 Greta B	26 points

## Division 2 aggregate

1 Dunrobin/Nangeela	54 points
2 Willaura	38 points
3 Connewarre	36 points

## Division 3 aggregate

1 Millbrook	68 points
2 Huntly	32 points
2 Stuart Mill	30 points

**RURAL JUNIOR RESULTS**

## 11-13 years aggregate

1 Springhurst A	36 points
2 Mandurang A	32 points
3 Stuart Mill A	26 points

## 11-15 years aggregate

1 Greta A	62 points
2 Millbrook B	28 points
3 Eldorado A	22 points

## Champion team

1 Greta A	62 points
2 Springhurst A	54 points
3 Mandurang A	32 points



# Vols with supportive employers

Combining a day job with being a volunteer needs great flexibility from both the volunteer and their employer. Three volunteers told us how they juggle work with keeping communities safe.

By Tim McGlone



## Ray Glendenning, Everton Fire Brigade

**It's fair to say the team at Wangaratta Motor Group is doing its bit to keep the local community safe. No fewer than nine CFA volunteers are on the books at the family-owned business.**

You'd be forgiven for thinking the car dealership would have to close their doors for a while whenever there is a callout, but they've been able to devise a system that allows for maximum flexibility when it comes to covering each other's roles.

If Ray Glendenning (second from left, above) is called out to an incident during work, for example, there are a number of others who can fulfil his duties as operations manager of the business.

By ensuring there's enough cover for the business when there's a callout, Wangaratta Motor Group is making a significant contribution to the safety of the local community. But, as Ray explained, the contribution also has benefits for the business.

"Like anything, it's a two-way street," Ray said. "Training people who can cross over roles when we go out to an incident gives them experience and opportunities they might not otherwise have had.

"Also we are each backing up what the other is doing, which is a good thing as well."

Ray is a deputy group officer in District 23, and has been a CFA volunteer in the area for almost 40 years. He's been with Wangaratta Motor Group for 17 years, and said his employers are more than accommodating when it comes to staff attending incidents.

"The alpine fires in 2003 and 2006 were a busy time for us, and Wangaratta Motors was particularly supportive then. They helped ensure emergency vehicles were maintained and kept in the field. We had members from CFA,

Parks Victoria, and other agencies coming in with vehicles that needed maintenance or repair.

"Our technician team did the service and repairs overnight and had the vehicles ready to go the next morning."

When *Brigade* magazine visited Wangaratta Motor Group on a random Wednesday afternoon there were seven volunteers at work and it was clear there was a level of banter and camaraderie between the members on site. Ray revealed that one of the staff, Matt Thomas, even found love in the CFA ranks.

"A few years ago Matt, a great worker and super enthusiastic, approached me to join CFA and do his Minimum Skills – which he completed promptly. Years later, when participating in the CFA Challenge leadership program, he found his future wife.

"You could tell they were committed CFA people as they had a fire truck as their wedding vehicle."

Like many others in CFA, it's a family affair for Ray. His son Josh also works at the dealership and is a volunteer, as is daughter Kim, while wife Jennie has been a CFA member for 35 years.

It seems the Wangaratta Motor Group is also a family of sorts and like family does, Ray said they are always willing to help out to support the community.

"Andrew Gormly, the Dealer Principal, has always been great. I could be on the strike team at six in the morning, or at any time, and say 'I'm going to be here a while', and he'll just say, 'do what you have to do'.

"Wangaratta Motors is incredibly supportive and I think it's important for the community that they are like this."





## Colin Newell, Warracknabeal Fire Brigade

**Colin Newell has been a volunteer at Warracknabeal Fire Brigade in District 17 for over 50 years, and has worked at Warracknabeal Home Timber and Hardware for 25 years.**

Fortunately the fire station and shop are across the road from each other, which makes it easy when there's a call-out.

"When there was a call-out I used to sprint across," Colin said with a laugh. "But I'm not as quick now; it's more like a brisk walk."

Colin is also the group officer for Warracknabeal Group, which comprises 13 brigades. He's proud of the camaraderie between brigades in his area, noting that anyone from any brigade can jump on the back of any truck in his group of brigades, and respond to an incident.

He says there have been plenty of changes in his time as a volunteer.

"Previously there were a few more fires. Now there are less because the population is becoming better educated.

"But the fires are faster and more furious than before, and farmers don't have the bare paddocks in between that used to slow them down."

Colin notes that his work will always accommodate him when he's needed by the community. In 2011 Warracknabeal experienced significant flooding, and an 8.6-kilometre wall of earth was built to protect the town. Colin's employers led the charge during the town's time of need.

"They were massive during the floods, absolutely. They essentially rallied everyone together and built the levee, which helped protect the town."

Although this incident stands out for Colin, he said Warracknabeal Home Timber and Hardware and its staff have always been supportive.

"I've had three bosses during the time I've worked here and they've all been exactly the same – absolutely fantastic.

"If there's an incident, they just say 'go mate'.

"I usually open the store but if I have to go out they always get cover for me. So it's not just the boss, but the other guys who work in the store are always happy to cover for me."

"They know that the community needs this. It's important for all businesses to be like this and, to their credit, Home Timber and Hardware has always been fantastic."

## Jamie Atkins, Tesbury Fire Brigade

**Although his employers are based in another state, Jamie Atkins said they know and understand when duty calls. And for the Captain of Tesbury Fire Brigade, five minutes out of Camperdown in District 6, this was certainly the case in March this year.**

"The St Patrick's Day fires were very close to home," said Jamie. "I was gone for seven days. There was obviously a lot to do. When I got back I offered to take leave for my time, but my boss wouldn't hear of it."

For the past 30 years Jamie has worked on a farm in Tesbury as a manager/carpenter for Emanuel Brothers, a company based in Condingup, Western Australia.

"My employer Jonathon Emanuel, and before that his father Tim, has always been supportive of me in carrying out my duties with CFA, both in terms of time and resources.

"They are farmers in small communities and they understand I need to help. I have a company ute fitted with three radios and all the other things I use on a fireground."

He's been captain of Tesbury brigade for 25 years so has seen plenty in his area and elsewhere.

"During the Sydney 2001 fires I was on holidays and I ended up being deployed there. When I got home, my boss gave me back the leave I'd used up fighting fires."

Jamie speaks humbly about his own impressive service to CFA, preferring to heap praise on his employer, and makes a point to credit those who are self-employed as well.

"I thank my guys after every turnout as most of these guys are self-employed dairy farmers. They can't just drop tools and pick them up days later. Their cows need milking twice a day, so they need to employ relief milkers at their own expense.

"They do this without hesitation, knowing that when we have something in our patch the favour will be returned by fellow Victorians or interstate firefighters.

"This is what makes CFA a very special organisation."

# Developing the community safety coordinator role

**The results of the Brigade Community Safety Coordinator (BCSC) Survey are out, and efforts are underway to ensure the results are used to bring about useful change.**

As an immediate response, a working group comprising staff and volunteers was established to implement the survey's recommendations, and some initiatives are already being piloted.

Manager Community Engagement Karen Enbom believed the release of the survey was timely.

"It's important to seek feedback from our frontline people to make sure that the intent of the BCSC role is being met," Karen said.

"If we want this role to be effective we need to know that the volunteers who have taken it on feel encouraged and supported, and that the role has been satisfactorily implemented.

"Our perception of the success of the role may not be the same as that of those who are actually carrying it out. As part of our continuous improvement process, we need to understand exactly how we can assist in a meaningful way," she said.

The BCSC role became a mandatory position for all brigades in 2014, with a requirement to have this role in place by the end of the 2016 election cycle. CFA made the BCSC a member of the brigade management team (BMT) to demonstrate that fire prevention and community

preparedness sit alongside fire suppression as CFA's core business.

The survey, aimed at both BCSCs and Group BCSCs, was met with a response that exceeded expectations with 500 responses from 2,219 targeted members.

A second survey aimed at captains and group officers sought their views on the role and how it had been received.

The survey was developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders, including community safety teams, catchment teams, the Volunteer Sustainability team, the Community Safety Advisory Committee, and some members of the Volunteer Reference Group.

It was structured around five key areas:

- About you and the brigade area
- Community safety coordinator role
- Community connections
- Brigade management/community safety committees
- Training, support and resources.

The key findings were encouraging with three-quarters of respondents saying the BCSC role was accepted or very accepted within brigades and groups. Interestingly, just over a quarter of respondents reported that the role had already been established in their brigade before its formal introduction in 2014.

However, two key areas stood out as needing refinement, and these will occupy most of the working group's time.



A lack of clarity and understanding of the BCSC role cropped up in all parts of the survey. This confusion was reported as existing in BMTs, groups and within brigades. In some cases, even the BCSCs were confused about the position.

The second key area was training. There was a clear and consistent call for additional training for BCSCs, most notably for those new to the role. The top three additional formal training requirements were: basic community engagement skills; risk management; and community development. Captains and group officers identified fuel and vegetation management as their third priority.

The Build Capacity project took on board these requests for more training by setting up training pilots in August this year.

Elissa Jans, Dandenong Ranges Group Community Safety Team Leader and member of the working group, said the survey was an important opportunity for community safety coordinators to have a voice and be heard.

"It's great to be a part of CFA following up on feedback and actively addressing the issues," Elissa said.

"The organisation has taken the feedback on board and changes are being made."

According to Karen Enbom, there won't be any quick temporary fixes.

"We anticipate some of the recommendations will be long term and some will be short term. We also know that every brigade is different," she said.

"The most important part is that we listen to the suggestions of our BCSCs to bring about real and lasting change that actually makes a difference to the safety of our communities."



# The many benefits of Carrum Downs' new fire station



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM AFISM

**After operating from its former station for more than 40 years, and in need of a significant upgrade, Carrum Downs Fire Brigade now has a new \$2.5 million station to help its volunteers protect the busiest industrial area within the City of Frankston.**

Officially opened in March 2018, the new station is much larger than the old one. It has a three engine bay motor room, a full-sized kitchen, large meeting room, large office and somewhere to change.

"The whole footprint of the old station fits into the motor room of the new station," said Carrum Downs Brigade Captain Stephen Rhodes. "We couldn't all fit in the old meeting room so we had to move the trucks out and hold the meeting in the motor room."

The old station was cold in winter, and so hot in summer that the doors had to be opened, which meant there was a lot of traffic noise.

"To change into turnout gear, we had to move the trucks outside and change in the motor room."

The new meeting room is large enough for brigade members and can also hold district training sessions. Members also now have a dedicated washing area for breathing apparatus instead of having to use a sink in a shed. Having a proper kitchen means they can cater for larger groups, so now the brigade can comfortably hold functions and group meetings at the station.

"We hold kindergarten visits at the station and there's now more room for community groups," said Stephen.

The new station has some significant operational benefits too. The hose tower means hoses can be dried quickly. With the old hose rack, hoses could take several days to dry. Also, the new station is not on a busy main road anymore and there's a light to control traffic, so the trucks can get onto the road quicker. The station's location is also handy for many brigade members and they can now get to the station more quickly, which benefits the community through faster turnouts.

"The field command vehicle no longer has to be parked in a shed, so we can get it on the road more quickly as well," said Stephen.



South East Region Assistant Chief Officer Trevor Owen said the new station was needed to ensure the brigade could maintain its service to the booming local community.

"Carrum Downs is one of the busiest volunteer brigades in the state. The brigade responds up to 500 incidents each year," Trevor said.

"Although the process of finding a new home for the brigade has been exhausting, the new station in the centre of Carrum Downs will ensure the brigade can continue to provide excellent service to Carrum Downs and the surrounding peri-urban areas of Frankston, Patterson River, Skye and Hampton Park."

The brigade has a proud 74-year history and this new station will ensure the brigade meets the needs of the community and caters for the growing demand for CFA services now and in the future.

"The new station has generated a new level of pride and enthusiasm within the brigade," said Stephen.

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

# Community first: a fresh approach

**A simple new framework that outlines how CFA will meaningfully engage with communities sets out a powerful promise to put them first in everything we do.**

The Community Engagement Framework, launched recently at the CFA/SES August Engagement Forum in Creswick, is based on four simple ideas that everyone in CFA should aspire to when working with our communities to keep them safe. They centre on our promise to be open and honest in our approach, and to meaningfully connect with local people when and where they need it.

There are four key priority areas that will help CFA deliver on this promise, including a strong commitment to our people to develop their skills and go forward with the right tools and capabilities to engage effectively.

Chief Officer Steve Warrington said that having a clear set of promises to the community helps CFA better focus on our mission.

“We know that the more connected we are with our communities, the better we manage risks together,” Steve said. “And because every one of us has a connection to our local community, delivering our promise to them relies on all our CFA people embracing it and taking ownership.

“This is why we’re making sure we provide the right support through tools and training.”

CFA members are encouraged to familiarise themselves with our community promise by displaying the Community Engagement Framework poster in their local brigade. You can download it from the Community and Risk section of Brigades Online, or ask your district office for a copy.



## We will know it's working if...



Our communities understand what we do and trust that we will work with them. We see a greater sense of shared responsibility within the community to take the right steps to help prepare for fire and emergencies and manage risk.



Our people are seen as credible, feel confident in their ability to connect with local communities, and understand the benefit of building those relationships. And the community actively seeks our expertise.



Our people understand community risk, how we engage to help build resilience, and that every interaction, both formal and informal, strengthens our community.



Our data shows a consistent increase in the amount of community interaction, conversation and feedback. Ultimately, we will see the consequences of fires and emergencies reduced in our targeted areas.

## Our promise



### Include

**Include** our communities, and tailor our activities to be meaningful and relevant, recognising that community needs and expectations vary across the state.



### Be honest

**Be honest** about our intentions and priorities, about why decisions have been made and what we can and can't do.



### Be open

**Be open** to alternate views and opinions, creating opportunities for communities to be involved in the decisions impacting them, whilst being clear about what drives our decision-making.



### Listen and respond

**Listen and respond** early and often, seeking feedback and ideas on how we can improve, while learning from our experiences and those of others.

## How we will deliver



### Put community first

and take action that responds to the needs and expectations of our diverse communities.

- Deepen our understanding of our unique and diverse communities
- Have honest conversations where and when the community wants them
- Encourage input and participation into the design and delivery of our programs and services
- Work with our emergency sector partners and locally connected groups to broaden our reach



### Build our skills

and knowledge to engage meaningfully with our communities.

- Provide the support, skills and training our people need, to listen, talk with, and respond to their communities
- Develop tools and resources to support them in their engagement activities
- Create opportunities for our people and communities to share knowledge and learn from experiences



### Apply the promise

across all that we do at CFA.

- Ensure all our people understand their role in strengthening our connections to the community
- Make community engagement a strategic priority and include in our regional and district service delivery plans
- Create tools and systems that enable meaningful dialogue and knowledge sharing



### Plan, measure and adjust

our engagement and decision-making based on evidence.

- Have a clear picture of the risk profile for each of our communities, and adapt and scale our approach
- Monitor and evaluate our activity against clear measures, indicators and outcomes
- Actively seek stakeholder and community feedback about our approach
- Create opportunities to share our lessons, seeking out best practice and integrating these into CFA activities

# When in Rome... CFA member springs into action

Sandy Creek and Charleroi Fire Brigade volunteers Vin and Karen O'Neill were enjoying dinner at a restaurant in Rome during their recent holiday, when they could smell smoke.

"It was a beautiful sunny afternoon of 30 degrees so we were sitting just outside the restaurant. Everyone smokes over there, so I didn't think too much of the smell at first," said Vin.

"But then they were starting to usher people out and we could hear the fire brigade's siren and I realised it was heading towards us."

After 40 years as a volunteer firefighter, instinct kicked in.

"Because you've been to fires before, you just go to see if there's anything that needs doing," Vin said.

"The table staff looked a little unsure of what to do with people, so I just went in and had a look to see if I could help with anything. There was a strong electrical smell but no flames, so

I went to check the restrooms and some areas behind the kitchen to make sure no one was left behind."

When it was clear that no customers remained in the restaurant, which was on the ground floor of an eight-storey building, Vin had the opportunity to get a closer look at the local fire truck and speak to some of the firefighters.

"There was a bit of a language barrier but I managed to explain that I was a volunteer firefighter from Australia. They brought their chief over and he spoke a bit more English.

"The truck was fairly modern. They had BA [breathing apparatus] gear and a lot of hand-held gear which I guess was well suited to these multi-storey buildings."

After posing for a photo with their new-found friends, it was time to pay for their meal – by cash as the power was still off, forcing the waiting staff to revert to pen and paper – and enjoy the remainder of their Italian holiday.



Karen wasn't fazed by the interruption to their holiday.

"I guess she's used to it. When you go away [as a CFA volunteer], they pick up the pieces and support you behind the scenes, making sandwiches and supporting you in any way they can. That's just what we do in the country."

STORY LISELOTTE GEARY

## Bartlett, helping your brigade protect life and property

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# CFA HQ can help you recruit

Wonthaggi Fire Brigade recently carried out a recruitment campaign to help solve its problem of not meeting the service delivery standard for daytime turnouts. But brigade members took the humble letterbox drop to the next level by enlisting the help of CFA's Business Intelligence team.

Brigade Administrative Support Officer Peter Walters said that since moving into their new station a few years ago, after outgrowing their former location in the heart of town, brigade members have struggled to make it on the truck at times.

"I reached out to Business Intelligence with the specific request of mapping homes and businesses within a two-minute distance from the station," said Peter.

Business Intelligence used the Road Modelling System to produce a map of the homes within two minutes of the station, which the brigade then used to target homes and businesses with a letterbox drop.

"The letterbox drop was a great success because we could really target our efforts," said Peter.



"Following the recruitment campaign, which incorporated the letterbox drop, social media and information boards, we've had seven people sign up as volunteers and six of those are within the two-minute catchment area." The photos show some of the new members training.

"I would definitely suggest other brigades get in touch with Business Intelligence. It's good for targeting those communities around your station to improve response to incidents."

Spatial Modelling and Analysis Team Leader Jess Ngo said she was extremely pleased to hear the data was able to produce such a positive outcome for the brigade.

"This is a simple task for our team to do," Jess said. "We're currently providing the same service to other brigades across the state, and look forward to hearing what results are achieved."

"If this is something your brigade is interested in, we encourage you to contact your BASO, who will be able to raise the request with us."

STORY NICOLE RUSSO



## New training campus at Ballan

**In May 2017, CFA announced the purchase of land at 128 Ingliston Road, Ballan, to build a new training campus so that local firefighters and emergency services personnel have better access to practical training.**

A planning application has now been lodged with Moorabool Shire Council for a state-of-the-art training facility. The campus will provide an 'all hazards' approach, giving trainees the skills and practical experience needed to further enhance their role in protecting lives and property.

The 35-hectare site will have live fire simulations powered by LPG, life-size operational firefighting props, specialist

training capabilities, breathing apparatus facilities, a change room, on-site parking and infrastructure to support day-to-day operations.

Training programs will use clean fuels and fire retardants, and the site is designed to be compliant with standards for environmental impact, emission control and water management. Water treatment and management systems will treat and recycle training water on site.

CFA held two community information sessions at Ballan Council Office in mid-June to display plans, talk through the use of the site and answer questions about the new facility and its place in the local community.

### Register now for Open Day

CFA brigades are encouraged to open their doors to the community before summer. Register your open day at [cfa.vic.gov.au/whatson](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/whatson).

The day is a great opportunity for brigades to engage with their local community with a particular focus on preparing for the upcoming summer fire season, while also showing Victorians how to protect themselves all year round.

# Changing of the guard at Gordon

**Diane Lawson has become the first female captain of Gordon Fire Brigade in District 15. "Being chosen for this role by my peers is an honour," Diane said. But Diane is quick to point out that a brigade is about the team, not the individual.**

"I have a great brigade management team to help me and, while the buck may stop with me, I have complete faith in my team and the wider brigade," she said.

Starting her volunteering with CFA more than 15 years ago with the knowledge that the then secretary/treasurer was leaving, Diane joined to help the brigade to fill the vacant role. After playing with the hose and pump, she decided to complete Minimum Skills and, in her own words, "was hooked".

Diane stayed in the role of brigade secretary/treasurer for 12 years but has also taken on the roles of brigade community safety coordinator, Junior leader, FireSafe Kids presenter, juvenile fire awareness and intervention practitioner and a member of the Volunteer Reference Group operating from CFA's Headquarters in Burwood.

She is also an active firefighter for the brigade and most recently successfully gained her medium rigid licence to enable her to drive the brigade's tanker. She has attended many incidents over the years and was involved in the 2009 fires, Tasmanian fires and other strike team deployments.

Diane believes she has gained personally from being part of the fire brigade as she has become more interested in the emergency management sector as a whole, which led to her participation and subsequent volunteer teaching in the Volunteer Leadership Development Program run by AEMI. She then completed an Advanced Diploma Public Safety: Emergency Management.

"The lessons I've learned within the brigade have been just as important. Interpersonal relationships with different members of the community who join the brigade, working as a team with the same common goals, and being part of a larger organisation have been very rewarding," she said.

"I know that firefighting isn't for everyone, but if anyone is thinking of joining the CFA, my advice is have a go - you might be surprised."





# Edithvale's generous neighbour

**You don't have to look far to see that it's a pretty tight-knit community at Edithvale.**

When the local brigade needed a new station in late 2015 but had no room to expand, a generous neighbour decided to forego his own personal benefit in the interests of the local community.

88-year-old John Hennessey lived next to Edithvale Fire Station for more than 40 years. When the time came to move on from the area, he received multiple offers from developers with significant financial clout.

But in the end John chose to sell the land to CFA so that Edithvale brigade could have a bigger station on the same site.

Edithvale Brigade Captain Graham Fountain said John's decision to sell to CFA was a decision made in the interests of his local area.

"John is community," Graham said. "He thinks about the community before himself, and that's evidenced by the financial sacrifice he made for this brigade.

"We can't thank him enough."

Two years on and Edithvale brigade has settled into its new \$4.5 million fire station. It didn't take long for the new station to show its worth either, with firefighters called to a structure fire in nearby Aspendale within hours of moving in.

Improvements to the brigade's service delivery were obvious after the brigade's first response, in no small part due to operating out of its new location.



PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIN

The new station features a business hub, a community meeting facility and, most importantly, significantly more space.

Graham is excited by the impact the new station will have on the local community. "Already we've been approached by several community groups interested in using the facility.

"This is a testament to the foresight and planning put into the design and construction of the station. it's truly a community fire station."

STORY TIM MCGLONE

## Stay in touch and share your stories

We recently refreshed our News and Media website ([news.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://news.cfa.vic.gov.au)) to make it easier to use and more engaging; we highlight our favourite stories with large, colourful images on the home page.

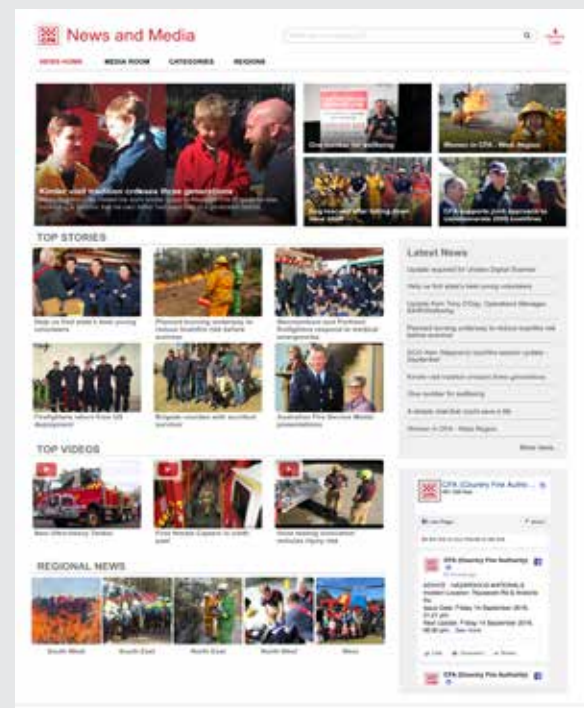
Any CFA member can register to upload stories to the website and we'd love to hear about your brigade's successes – whether they are fundraising activities, community engagement events, incidents you've attended, training, recruitment initiatives, or service medal presentations. And if you need a general image to enhance your message, we have thousands of images you can use in the CFA digital library: [cfa.vic.gov.au/images](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/images).

Sharing your brigade's smart initiatives with a wider audience may also act as a catalyst for other brigades.

Stories on News and Media reach a huge audience, and the story may be promoted in our revamped fortnightly newsletter, sent to 27,000 volunteers and all staff.

If you don't already receive the newsletter from us, go to 'Update your details' on Brigades Online and register your email address. You'll then automatically receive the newsletter containing links to the stories we think are well worth a read. It also has important messages from our leaders. You can unsubscribe at any time.

You can also keep up to date with Chief Officer Steve Warrington's latest messages on his Facebook page ([facebook.com/cfachiefofficer](https://facebook.com/cfachiefofficer)). Steve is happy to answer your questions and comment on your views.



# Turning tanks into treasure



PHOTO: GRAHAM HILL

District 17 has found an excellent use for some older water tanks that were due for disposal. Instead of discarding them, brigades teamed up with the District 17 Aviation Unit to repurpose the tanks. They have been moved to airports and used for loading water bombers during the fire season.

There are now five airbases across District 17, with trained volunteers responsible for loading the bombers. The redundant tanks were transferred across the region, with two heading to nearby Warracknabeal, one to Rainbow and one to Edenhope. Horsham Airbase also received an additional tank thanks to the local council.

As well as this recycled tank project, a federal government bushfire mitigation grant of \$54,000 paid for four new tanks at Nhill airbase, plus three quick-fill pumps and associated fittings.

By having these tanks dispersed across airports, District 17 has significantly increased capacity and reduced the cost to deliver water and foam to the fire front than would otherwise be possible, according to Aviation Unit Leader and District Support Coordinator John Robinson.

"We operate the bombers as close as possible to the fire front to deliver the maximum possible suppressant to the fire in the shortest amount of time," John said.

"In the long run, the extra air bases and the redeployed tanks are expected to save thousands of dollars in reduced flight times, minimised property damage and potentially lives saved."

A fire at Kenmare not long after the tanks were distributed highlighted just how effective it was to have the tanks at a number of sites (see table, above right).

But according to John, the advantages of the recycled water tanks aren't only operational and financial.

"The teamwork has been great between our unit and the local aviation people," he said.

"This process is engaging volunteers who have reached the point of stepping off trucks, but still want to make a positive contribution to community safety.

## Kenmare fire

	Distance to fire from nearest airbase	Turnaround from nearest airbase	Loads/litres (two bombers, four hours bombing)
Prior to tank recycling	85km from Stawell Airbase	40 Minutes	12 loads/36,000 litres
After tank recycling	40km from Horsham Airbase	24 minutes	20 loads/60,000 litres
After tank recycling (Warracknabeal now established for 2018/19)	6km from Warracknabeal Airbase	10 minutes	48 loads/144,000 litres

"They've been teaming up with local aero club members, the staff of an aviation maintenance business, and SES volunteers to provide this service."

In addition, the district converted a light pumper from the VEMTC Longerenong training facility into a mobile bomber loader, which means it can operate from any runway where there's water.

This resource recycling is a prime example of CFA's focus on being an adaptive and agile organisation.

But John said it is the experienced volunteers finding ways to help out, to innovate, and to stay involved that has been most beneficial.

"It can get pretty hot out there [at the airbases] during summer.

"We need enough volunteers at each air base to respond before the bombers arrive, and also to rotate crews during the day to look after their welfare.

"It's great that our volunteers want to keep helping out, and this has given them an avenue to do it."

STORY TIM MCGLONE



# Rockbank brigade back from the brink

Rockbank brigade members Andrew Ingram (left) and Derek Ramsay with Operations Officer Shane Bailey

PHOTO: CHANEL FORBES

**In 2014 Rockbank Fire Brigade, between Melton and Caroline Springs in District 14, was finding it difficult to protect its community. Poor leadership and poor operational skills meant the brigade's long-term viability was in doubt – especially given a predicted boom in housing development in the brigade's area – and Caroline Springs Fire Brigade was asked to administer the brigade.**

To help rebuild the brigade, a support team was set up comprising CFA staff and volunteers. Thanks to this team's innovative thinking (trailing new approaches and resources), persistence, creativity, effective communication and collaborative focus, the brigade returned to independence.

The team first carried out a needs analysis of the brigade using the Brigade Viability Wheel, which highlighted the main challenges faced by the brigade. Next, a sustainability plan was established outlining the strategies needed to tackle these challenges.

The team helped the brigade develop new policies and procedures to support management and governance, and worked with brigade members to put in place management structures that suited the capability of the members. The team also improved the brigade's training regimen, which resulted in an increase in the number of qualified firefighters.

Team members and brigade members attended community events to promote CFA as a volunteer organisation of choice. This led to recruiting new brigade members, including some from ethnic minority groups.

"Rockbank brigade had such a low membership that they had to put a lot of energy into their community to rebuild their profile," said team member Kirsten Dudink.

Staff members, including Kirsten, went out door knocking in the community to create awareness of the brigade and to recruit new members. "There was no-one else to do it," continued Kirsten. "The brigade didn't have the capacity to do it themselves, so staff had to step up."

Derek Ramsay is the current Rockbank brigade asset administrator and communications officer. He's also the only brigade member who has remained with the brigade throughout the four-year transition.

"The work by the support team was huge for our brigade," he said. "We wouldn't be in the position we are in now, on the verge of getting back to being independent, if it wasn't for the team."

"Around 2012, the brigade was flourishing but there was friction between some older active members, and the brigade leadership lost the trust of members. Many left.

"The team gave me a vision of better things to come, so I stuck at it." Derek persevered and drove the truck to call-outs by himself.

"The team encouraged me to pursue training and I joined other brigades when they did their training. At turnouts, I assisted Melton and Caroline Springs' crews to learn the operational side and I very much appreciated the mentoring from these brigades."

"I am beyond excited that we are promoting Rockbank brigade," said BASO and member of the support team Chanel Forbes.

"Rockbank brigade has experienced significant challenges to maintain its viability but over the past four years they've worked really hard, with few members, to build their capacity.

"They were administrated by Caroline Springs Fire Brigade and now are returning to independence, which is a significant milestone for the membership."

The impressive work carried out by Rockbank Fire Brigade and the support team won them the Excellence in Sustainability Planning award in the 2018 Spirit of CFA Awards.

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

# Weekend of celebrations in Kyabram

PHOTO: COURTESY OF KYABRAM FIRE PRESS



**This year marks Kyabram Fire Brigade's 125th year of serving the community and brigade members kicked off their celebrations with a torchlight parade along the main street.**

Hundreds of locals lined the street to cheer on Kyabram brigade and other brigades from around the state. The parade was led by the Bendigo Highland Pipe Band to keep everyone in step. The march finished at the local recreation reserve where locals gathered to watch the band and a spectacular fireworks display by Mr Skye Candy.

Brigades that participated in the parade were invited back to the station for refreshments and the opportunity to exchange some tales of years gone by.

The official 125th anniversary dinner was the following evening. Attending were past and present brigade members and representatives from surrounding brigades. Deputy Chief Officer Gavin Freeman and District 20 Operations Manager Peter Taylor also attended the dinner to present several awards:

National Medal: Sharon Crompton, Mark Squires, Alan West and Wayne Peterson.

Service Awards: Robert Vick (70 years), Mark Squires (40 years), Amanda Roberts (30 years), Wayne Stagg (30 years).

Brigade Life Membership and Gold Star: Wayne Stagg

National Emergency Medal: Amanda Roberts

Wayne Stagg was also presented the John Roberts Memorial Trophy for most outstanding contribution.

The weekend of events finished with an open day at the fire station, where several hundred people passed through the station. There were plenty of giveaways for the children and Captain Koala entertained the young ones.

STORY KYABRAM CAPTAIN MICK CROMPTON



PHOTO: COURTESY OF KYABRAM FIRE PRESS

# Wonthaggi honours war hero



PHOTO: COURTESY OF WONTHAGGI BRIGADE

**When Wonthaggi Fire Brigade moved from the site it had occupied for almost 100 years to a new fire station five years ago, brigade members took a close look at the memorabilia that had adorned the walls for as long as anyone could remember.**

The then captain Kim O'Connor was particularly interested in a photo of a firefighter called John Sparks. Inscribed beside his name is the regiment number 935.

Kim contacted the local newspaper to ask it to publish an article requesting information about John Sparks's history. The brigade also posted the story on social media. None of the brigade members thought the investigation would uncover the amazing life of a young soldier killed in action on the battlefields of France.

Kim and others checked online war records, which was an immense task as there were 75 pages linked directly to John. Brigade members tracked down John's family and heard stories about John: never knowing who his father was; his mother dying at an early age; stolen medals; a child being born out of wedlock in Britain during leave; being wounded at Gallipoli during World War One; and being promoted to corporal in France.

John worked as a wheeler in the coalmines and was a volunteer firefighter with Wonthaggi brigade and a founding member. The brigade, with the help of ex-Captain Bill Watson, had

replica medals made and mounted below the photograph of John to pay tribute to the sacrifice he'd made.

Kim asked Bill if he was interested in getting his teeth into a great project, and Bill accepted without hesitation. Bill met with John Sparks's family, and organised a medal presentation ceremony at the new station where John's portrait and replica medals were displayed.

As the day came to a close, brigade members were surprised when the family presented Kim with the original war medals along with the dead man's penny that was sent to the family after John was killed. These medals, along with a photograph of John in military uniform, have taken the place of the replica medals.

By this time, there had also been conversations about visiting John's grave in the Sunken Road Cemetery, Contalmaison, France, and paying the tribute to John that he never received from his firefighting comrades.

In August 2018, nine Wonthaggi volunteer firefighters their families, three other CFA firefighters from Ferntree Gully, Montrose and Kalorama, and the family of John Sparks funded a trip to France. They visited a town called Albert near the Belgian border, near to where John Sparks was killed in action 102 years ago.

On 18 August, the group marched in dress uniform from the town hall to the war memorial at Albert, accompanied by French firefighters,

police officers and the Mayor of Albert. Wreaths were laid at the memorial and the last post was played by a French bugler.

After the service, the firefighters visited the Somme Museum where there were speeches and presentations of gifts. The Shire of Bass gave books about the history of Wonthaggi and a pictorial book of photos from the Mornington Peninsula to Wilsons Promontory. The CFA Board donated a reproduction painting by Emma Bamblett from the Wemba Wemba clan, and a letter from CFA Chair Greg Smith. The Wonthaggi RSL gave poppies for the grave and to be worn, and Wonthaggi brigade presented a number of plaques.

Following the museum visit, the group went to the Sunken Road Cemetery with Colonel Scott Clingan from the ADF. Full honours were given including the fireman's service with evergreens.

"The ceremonies were emotional for all involved," said Wonthaggi brigade Captain Peter Dell. "It was great for members to be able to show their respect for a founding member of the brigade."

"We came away with a greater understanding of the trying conditions the young soldiers of the day had to endure and how they overcame them."

"All the people involved in the trip have formed a bond. They were proud to be involved in such a momentous event in the brigade's history."

STORY KIM O'CONNOR

# National Volunteer Week photo competition winners

**Each image submitted in this year's National Volunteer Week photo competition was judged on how well it reflected CFA's values, storytelling and creativity. It was a close competition and this year two people were awarded equal first prize.**

Loretta Binder from Keysborough Fire Brigade won with an image of brigade members at Seaview looking at a Bell 212 helitak (see below).

"We were a crew of four from three brigades all working together, and I wanted to capture that teamwork," said Loretta. "Whether paid or volunteer, we're all working to achieve CFA's mission."

"I used my iPhone, which shows you don't need expensive equipment to take an eye-catching image."

Allen Gray from Lovely Banks Fire Brigade submitted an image that depicts the multiple roles that members undertake in a brigade, and the camaraderie of the similar faces you see when you get on a truck and head to the fireground (right). Using a timer, Allen took five photos of himself and then overlaid them.

"It made sense to show how we take on different roles on the truck. One day we could be a crew leader, the next we could be on the back," Allen said.

Congratulations to Loretta and Allen, and thank you to all those who submitted an entry.



PHOTO: ALLEN GRAY



PHOTO: LORETTA BINDER

# Search and rescue training

Over two days in May, CFA members took part in urban search and rescue (USAR 2) skills maintenance training at VEMTC Craigieburn to build capability.

The training simulated how a Victorian multi-agency USAR 2 team is normally assembled and briefed at MFB Burnley, before being deployed to the incident location and a USAR base of operations (BOO). The simulated deployment extended into the night, and included some cold and wet weather.

Each day's 12-hour exercise involved two USAR Cat 2 teams, made up of technicians from MFB, CFA and Ambulance Victoria.

"Having CFA and AV personnel in the state USAR resource helps to enhance the relationship with our MFB and AV counterparts," said Boronia Senior Station Officer Kevin Randall. "It allows for familiarity with the multi-agency capability that Victoria has with Special Operations."

After receiving a more detailed briefing at the BOO, all technicians were medically assessed by Ambulance Victoria USAR paramedics. Once cleared, the teams went to the simulated collapse site and the team leaders outlined the objectives.

The main objective was to extricate live people. Some were injured but not physically trapped, while others were trapped in debris and required breaching of structural collapse debris to gain access. The variety of tasks that needed to be carried out were performed concurrently, requiring effective teamwork, communication, flexibility and logistics. The equipment needed for each task was communicated via radio to the equipment cache at the BOO, and then transported by John Deere Gators to the collapse site.

Breaching and shoring tasks were carried out over the two days so that the teams could access trapped people. To achieve this the teams used hydraulic and battery-powered concrete drilling and cutting equipment, search cameras and ventilation.

"It was a benefit to go through deployment procedures, work out of a BOO remote from the incident, and perform USAR work at night," said Lucas Senior Station Officer Luke Shearer.

Geelong City Leading Firefighter Mathew Geerings said, "Working in small groups gave us the opportunity to maximise our time and skills in different roles in the team, being able to get hands-on experience with the tools in the cache".

The CFA USAR Cat 2 technicians who took part in this training would like to thank MFB, CFA Specialist Response Officer/Operations Officer John Katakouzinis, and Station Officer Ben Thorn for their support.

For more information about CFA technical rescue email [opssro@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:opssro@cfa.vic.gov.au)



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF MFB



# Minimum Skills being updated

**Seventeen years ago, in response to losing five CFA volunteers at Linton in 1998, CFA introduced Minimum Skills Wildfire training. Before the Linton tragedy, there was no formal requirement for CFA volunteer firefighters to complete any training and assessment in wildfire firefighting.**

The original Minimum Skills training closely matched the General Firefighter training used by the forerunner of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). This training became the minimum requirement for responding to bushfires under supervision in Victoria.

Over time, more and more has been added to Minimum Skills, all with good intention, but this has made the training more onerous. Some

parts of the training now take too long, there's a lot of paperwork, the assessment processes are inflexible, and presentation materials vary between groups, districts and regions. The result: it takes longer to get new firefighters ready to turn out and there are inconsistent standards across the state.

The new General Firefighter programs are really just Minimum Skills 2.0. There will now be an all-hazards approach, but with a bushfire focus to provide flexibility in delivery, and to prepare new firefighters to work under supervision at incidents. The biggest change that members will see is an online theory option. However, face-to-face sessions will still be available, and there will be a scenario-based theory assessment where new firefighters will have to apply knowledge rather than just answer questions.

Broadly speaking, 10 per cent of the training will be learning from courses to provide tools to help firefighting decisions. Learning from others through peer feedback and mentoring will account for a further 20 per cent, and the remaining 70 per cent will be on-the-job training to give firefighters the opportunity to apply the skills they've learned.

We will be trialling training components across the state as we develop the package, and will gather feedback as we build it. The practical skills drills are already being trialled by brigades in the North East, South East, and South West regions, and we expect to complete the package by the end of 2018.

For more information about the program, contact Jamie Mackenzie on **0438 673 109**.

STORY JAMIE MACKENZIE

## Drama in the bush

**Smoke swirled around the stricken body of a bus on its side. A large tree had fallen on top, further denting the upturned side. The scene was dramatically lit by the tall light towers above CFA trucks, as firefighters carefully stabilised the bus and rescued its passengers.**

The good news is no one was hurt. This was just a realistic training exercise carried out by Gruyere and Wandin fire brigades to prepare them for the real thing. A bus accident is always a dreadful possibility, with many buses transporting students to and from school, and tourist buses exploring the Yarra Valley's riches on the weekends.

Gruyere Fire Brigade members asked a landowner who had a bush area, an old bus and a large excavator whether he would help set up a training scenario. He was happy to oblige. He donated the bus to the brigade, used his excavator to push it down a bush track, rolled it on its side then placed a recently-felled tree on top.

Dummies with notes attached describing their injuries were placed in the bus before it was rolled and another dummy had a leg pinned under a wheel. A smoke machine was placed in the bus and connected to a generator. The whole site was given a safety check by an operations officer.

The two brigades gathered at Gruyere Fire Station for a briefing and were then turned out one at a time to mimic likely intervals. Radio traffic was sent to a ute near the scene.

After the training, many firefighters remarked that the props gave them a very realistic experience.

STORY DAVID MILLER



PHOTOS: DAVID MILLER





# Bailey's enthusiasm and work ethic win him youth award

Twenty-year-old Bailey Rhodes, an inspirational member of Melton Fire Brigade, won the 2018 Spirit of CFA Youth Award. As well as coaching the Junior brigade – creating a nurturing environment to encourage them to continue their participation – Bailey is an active firefighter and organised the Pink Stumps Day charity cricket match between Melton and Werribee brigades.

"I've been around CFA ever since I was young," said Bailey. "I was always wanting to play on the fire trucks and help out around the station."

Melton Fire Brigade held its Pink Stumps Day charity cricket match in mid-February 2018, where they played Werribee Fire Brigade to raise funds for charity. The event was Bailey's idea and he took the lead in arranging all the required resources, including a ground to play on, and the two teams. The match raised more than \$2,600 for the Jane McGrath Foundation, and also increased the profile of Melton and Werribee brigades in the community.

The cricket match looks to be the start of an annual tradition for the brigades, with planning underway for next year's event.

Bailey also makes significant contributions to the operational capacity of Melton brigade. He's one of the most active volunteers at one of CFA's busiest stations, regularly attending complex incidents. He also maintains the high standard of training expected of all firefighters (volunteer and staff) at the brigade, and trains at least three nights a week to improve his firefighting and competition skills.

Bailey has competed in the Champs since he was 11 years old and has won many events. He promotes an active culture in the brigade's running team, which encourages members to be involved with the brigade outside of firefighting. At the 2017 State Urban Champs, Bailey won the Marshall – One Competitor event, and was named as part of VFBV Team of the Year. (Bailey is picture far right in the top photo.)

Bailey is an assistant coach of the Junior brigade at Melton. There are 26 Juniors who participate in competitions all over the state, and Bailey is instrumental in ensuring the team is organised and has the right skills to compete.

He puts in extra effort to ensure that events at the Champs can be run and won. For



example, he took on the additional task of maintaining and transporting the running cart and equipment to and from events using his own car.

"My dad has been part of the brigade since he was 11, and when I was the right age I

was pretty keen to join and follow in dad's footsteps," said Bailey. "It's a good bonding experience for us.

"We all get along really well at Melton and it makes for an enjoyable time. I hope the fire brigade will always be a part of my life."

# Junior brigade survey results

Earlier this year the Volunteer Sustainability Team (VST) carried out a review of CFA's Junior brigades to give Junior leaders the opportunity to have information about themselves, their Junior members, and the program they run. The survey also enabled VST to gather some baseline data about Junior attendance rates, support networks and interaction with other Junior brigades.

A staggering 96 per cent of CFA's endorsed Junior brigades completed the online survey,

which is a testament to the dedication and engagement of our Junior leaders.

With such a phenomenal response, the survey has given VST a clear picture of how and why our Junior brigades operate. VST will use the results as a foundation to assess how CFA resources and supports our Juniors and the brigade leaders who look after them.

A one-page infographic is being developed by the Volunteer and Strategy Insights and Analytics Team as part of a 'dashboard'

style analysis tool that will allow data to be viewed from a local, regional or state perspective. This will allow VST to focus on specific themes, such as communication and development needs.

Special thanks to Anthea Gurr in the Service Delivery Reporting Centre (formerly FIRS) who gave one-on-one support to Junior leaders who couldn't access the online survey.

STORY SHANE CRAMER



**213** Junior brigades responded to the survey

**156** Junior brigades are active (ie have at least two Junior leaders and one Junior)

**98** Junior brigades have a Juniors code of conduct

**94** Junior brigades meet only in the school year

**85** Junior brigades have a Junior leadership structure

**76** Junior brigades meet/train weekly

**51** Junior brigades run activities with another Junior brigade

**38** Junior brigades have their own bank account

**32** Junior brigades decide on the day what activities to do

**17** Junior brigades only take part in competitions

**221**

brigades registered to have Juniors (at time of survey)

# New Junior Program Planning Kit

**Calling all Junior leaders and brigades who are thinking of starting a Juniors program – the Volunteer Sustainability Team has created a simple kit to help you design an entire program, a single session, or a string of activities.**

The fabulous new Program Planning Kit was created to help you organise sessions and activities, and complement what you already have on the go with your Juniors. However, it doesn't replace the JVDP Guidebook which is still your go-to reference to establish and manage a Junior brigade.

The kit has been designed so that brigades can tailor their Junior program to suit their desired outcomes. The activity guides can be used as presented or shaken up to suit a brigade's objectives. There are also nifty templates and activities in the kit to help you plan the year through.

The kit will help you develop a clear vision of what you want to achieve, maintain your Juniors' interest, help with the scheduling process and help you evaluate your program to make sure your Juniors are getting the best possible experience.

There are details about 32 activities, plus a further 58 ideas to choose from. Each one relates to one or more of the five program elements:

- Understanding volunteering and community service
- Knowledge of CFA's history and competition
- Emergency response skills
- Teamwork and leadership skills
- Familiarisation with all hazard types.

To download the kit, go to Brigades Online and search for Junior Program Planning Kit.

STORY EMMA PEARS

Junior Volunteer  
Development Program



**Program Planning Kit**



PHOTO: MATT CLARE

# Bayles Juniors fundraise for Dolly's Dream Foundation

**On a wintry and windy Sunday morning in March 2018, the Junior crew from Bayles Fire Brigade set up shop outside the local Woolworths supermarket, keen to raise money for the Dolly's Dream Foundation.**

Fourteen-year-old Amy 'Dolly' Everett tragically took her own life following online bullying. Her family set up Dolly's Dream Foundation soon after she died to help prevent the lives of other children being lost.

Bayles brigade has only four Juniors aged between 12 and 15 years, and Junior leaders, parents and brigade members were impressed with the way the kids went about their campaign.

It started at a Juniors session earlier this year. They were asked if there was anything in particular they would like to do during the year and this fundraiser was what they suggested. With little assistance from their peers, they approached the supermarket, and created and put up flyers around town to promote the event. They got the support of their school to produce some anti-bullying flyers.

While the Juniors manned the table and engaged with the community, the parents and Junior leaders cooked the snags. It was a shaky start, but after an hour, they were confidently letting their customers know what the fundraiser was for and why the cause was so important.

Their great teamwork, amazing stamina and pride in what they were doing paid off – they raised more than \$750 for Dolly's Dream Foundation. The Bayles Juniors should be proud of themselves.

STORY JO ARNOLD



# Emergency Memberlink



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



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

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

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- Save money on pre-purchased **movie tickets, theme park and attraction tickets**.
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- 15% discount on **Trackaus** vehicle tracking units and 15% discount on monthly subscription fees.
- 10% discount at **The Athlete's Foot** stores.
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- 20% off online bookings at **Goodyear Airport Parking**.
- 5% off a trip booked through **Contiki Holidays**.
- Commercial pricing through **The Good Guys Commercial Division**.
- Save between 10% and 40% off the best available rates at **Wyndham Resort Hotels**.
- 10% off all online and in store items from the **Farm Store**.
- Discounts and unique offers through the **JB Hi-Fi Family & Friends Program**.
- Discounts on a range of pre-purchased **Gift Cards** including Woolworths, Coles, Myer, Kmart, Target, Flight Centre, Rebel Sport, JB Hi-Fi, Ray's and BCF.
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