



PROTECTING LIVES AND PROPERTY | SPRING 2012

# BRIGADE



## FISKVILLE INQUIRY

**'INFORMING THE FUTURE': OUR RESPONSE  
TO PROFESSOR JOY'S REPORT**

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Mark Schroeder from District 18's Murrayville brigade



## KERRY MURPHY CHAIRMAN

After five and a half years as Chairman of the CFA Board and many more years as an active CFA member, I have decided to retire from the Board. I contemplated retirement a couple of times in recent years, but it has only been in the last six months or so that I have felt the time is now right to do so, satisfied that the organisation is in good shape and is well positioned to progress in the future.

I have been privileged to have served at a time that has seen a transformation of CFA. The devastating 2009 fires tested our all and also validated the safety improvements put in place since the Linton tragedy, such as enhancements to crew protection on trucks that saved the lives of crew members who experienced many burnover incidents on Black Saturday. I do believe that this major event has been a catalyst for CFA to introduce an array of new equipment, improved operational procedures, further safety improvements, better personal protective clothing and a better design of our tankers.

CFA continues to evolve, adapt and participate in a wider field of cooperation with other agencies, which is good for CFA and Victoria. We are contributing to the government's emergency management reform – the most significant review in 30 years – that will shape the future of fire and emergency management in Victoria.

I want to acknowledge and thank all those who have made up the CFA Board. In recent times the Board has excelled and achieved a level of maturity and quality previously unmatched. This has been attained in a collegiate environment of vigorous debate, but always resolved for the best outcome for CFA and the communities we serve.

We have developed an outstanding executive team headed by Chief Executive Officer Mick Bourke and, importantly, we have re-established the primacy of the role of Chief Officer Euan Ferguson. These leaders demonstrate what can be achieved through a harmonious and respectful relationship.

Lastly, I want to pay special tribute to the sustained and extraordinary commitment of volunteers and career staff to firefighting, incident management, community engagement, resource coordination, logistics, peer support, community assistance, and numerous administration roles; and all in the interests of their local communities.

While we have faced great adversity we have also achieved enormous success and this could not have been achieved without the support of everyone. Let me again convey my heartfelt thanks to all CFA members for your extraordinary efforts. ■

## FIRE AWARENESS AWARDS STORY SHEONA URQUHART

**A**re you working on an exciting new fire-related initiative that needs a little financial help to take it to the next step? Or have you worked on a great project over the past two years that deserves some recognition?

The Fire Awareness Awards (FAA) are back to acknowledge the efforts of people, groups and communities in reducing fire and the effects of fire across Victoria. Entries are already being received and we've caught a glimpse of some very good projects.

Farmer John McIntyre, a member of Yackandandah brigade, has submitted his water-driven fire brigade hose washer for three awards and both grants. "The encouragement that the FAA staff members have provided has been fantastic. It keeps me enthusiastic and without their help I wouldn't have gone as far as I have," John said.

Submissions can be made online at [fireawarenessawards.com.au](http://fireawarenessawards.com.au) or, like John, feel free to call Sheona (9262 8969) to organise a hard copy application form.

"I simply saw the need and the opportunity to create something that could benefit the community," said John, "and I strongly advise other interested applicants to submit their projects, too."

Entries for this year's awards close on 2 October. ■



*Left: John McIntyre with his hose washer*

PHOTO: SHEONA URQUHART

## TRAINING IMPROVEMENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

**F**urther training initiatives have been implemented as a result of the independent inquiry led by the Honourable David Jones. The report, *Effect of Arrangements Made by CFA on its Volunteers*, reaffirms the central place of volunteers in CFA's emergency response capability.

There has been excellent progress on a number of programs and initiatives, including the development of a clear statement of vision, mission and values along with the development of organisational leadership and structure.

"We have been particularly focused on volunteer training and skills and the 41 Jones Inquiry recommendations serve as a blueprint for our future," said Operational Training and Volunteerism Executive Director Lex de Man.

CFA continues to implement programs aligned to the Jones Inquiry's six themes, including:

- the launch of a set of new online training programs which will assist brigades in the maintenance of training as well as accessibility to training
- upgrades to existing CFA training grounds
- ensuring more training is delivered by volunteers within brigades
- portable training props to bring training direct to volunteers
- greater consultation with members through the Statewide Operations Training Strategy. ■

*To find out more about the inquiry and our progress, look at the Chief Officer's blog on [cfaconnect.net.au](http://cfaconnect.net.au). To read about OT&V's management team, go to [cfaconnect.net.au/meettheteam](http://cfaconnect.net.au/meettheteam).*

## PROJECT 2016 ON TRACK STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

**P**roject 2016 has achieved several major milestones so far this year, including the creation of 67 career firefighter positions. Thirty-nine firefighters have been deployed to integrated fire stations in outer metropolitan and regional areas.

Recently, 25 career firefighters graduated from Course 2 of 2012. These new firefighters build on the Project 2016 target of creating 342 firefighter and operations positions.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said CFA career firefighters play a key role in delivering fire and emergency service to the communities at integrated fire brigades around Victoria. "They do an outstanding job working with

volunteers to ensure that 24/7 emergency service is met in places where population growth has put increasing demands on CFA for fire and emergency service response," Euan said.

Two more operations officer positions have been created and appointed to Districts 2 and 24 under the program. These positions follow two further operations officer roles, assigned to Districts 8 and 13.

Project 2016 recently released its Annual Review that highlights the program's achievements over the past 12 months. The Annual Review can be read on the Brigades Online website under the Projects tab in Fire & Emergency Management. ■

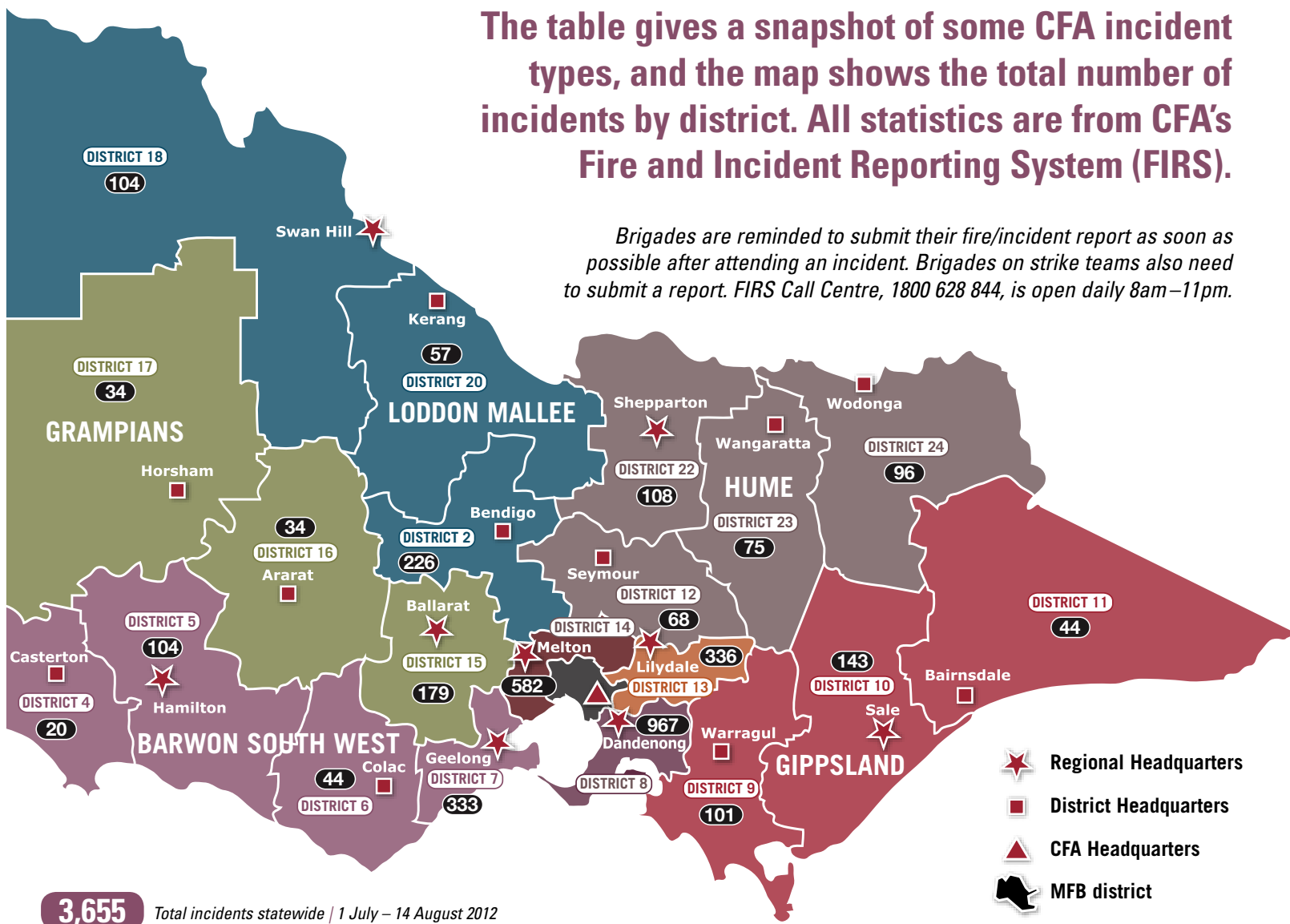
# INCIDENT STATISTICS

INCIDENT TYPE	1 JULY – 14 AUGUST			1 APRIL – 30 JUNE 2012		
	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	No. of incidents	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	No. of incidents
Bush and forest		0	0		29	11 <sup>a</sup>
Car fires and motor vehicle accidents			464			1,257
False alarms			792			1,725
Grassfires		7	2 <sup>b</sup>		871	72 <sup>b</sup>
Hazardous materials			280			641
House fires	\$10,390,270		152	\$16,593,500		338
Industrial fires	\$1,255,550		28	\$10,312,800		52
	<b>\$11,645,820</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1,718</b>	<b>\$26,906,300</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>4,096</b>

<sup>a</sup>Forest and bushfires and scrub or bush and grass mixture fires larger than one hectare; <sup>b</sup>Larger than one hectare

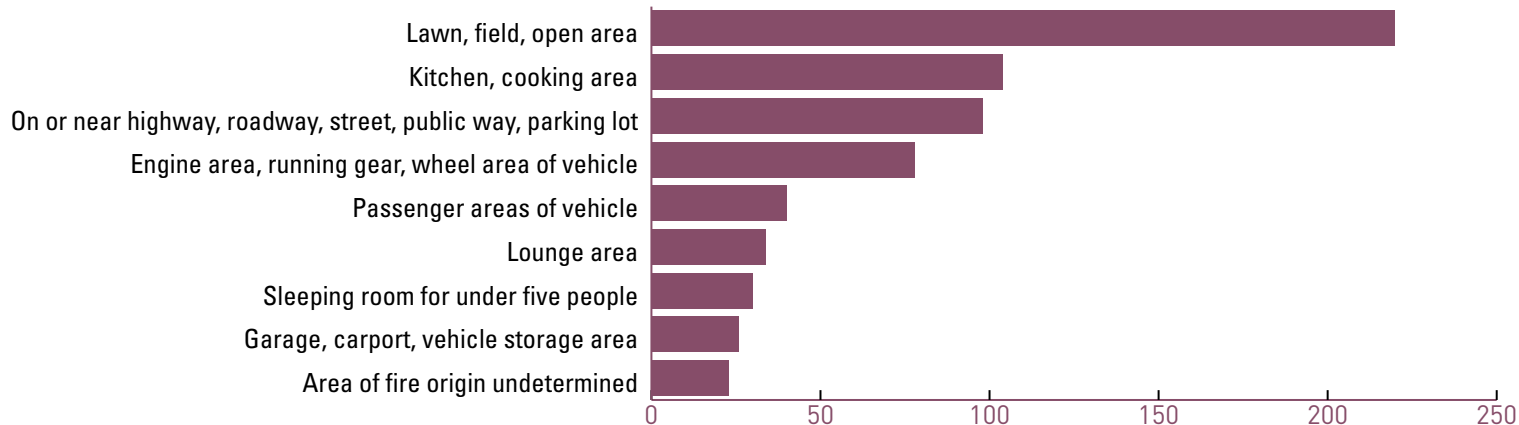
The table gives a snapshot of some CFA incident types, and the map shows the total number of incidents by district. All statistics are from CFA's Fire and Incident Reporting System (FIRS).

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



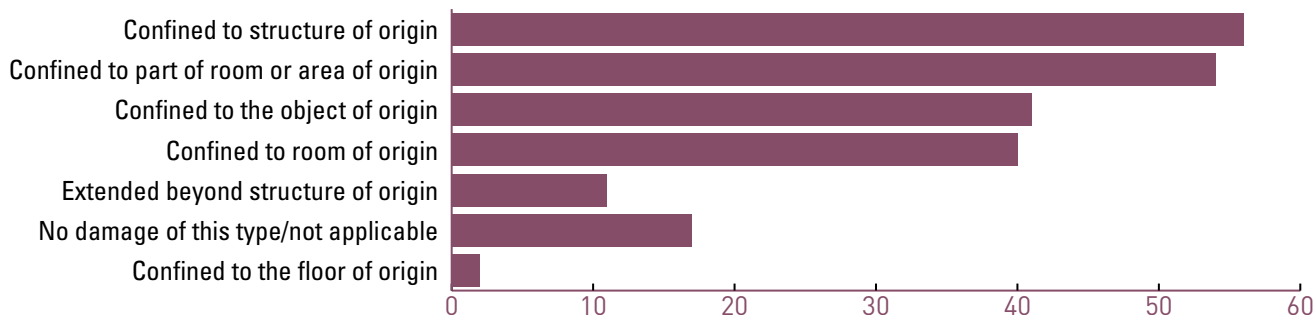
ORIGIN OF FIRE

1 JULY – 14 AUGUST 2012



EXTENT OF FLAME DAMAGE

1 JULY – 14 AUGUST 2012



# AMMONIA LEAK AT FACTORY

STORY CAMERON LEWIEN

**INCIDENT:** Hazmat

**DISTRICT:** 8

**DATE:** 12 June 2012

**BRIGADES:** Pakenham, Hallam, Nar Nar Goon, Dandenong, Frankston, Officer



A significant ammonia leak caused the evacuation of residents around Army Road in Pakenham in the early morning.

A factory on Army Road leaked an estimated 100 kilograms of ammonia. Incident Controller Phil Craig from Pakenham brigade, in conjunction with Victoria Police, issued an advice message for the surrounding area via the Emergency Warning System, and Victoria Police evacuated surrounding streets.

Crews entered the factory in protective gas suits to isolate the leak and ventilate the high levels of ammonia that had accumulated, using positive pressure ventilation fans.

"This process proved to be quite difficult and time consuming due to the building design and layout," said Phil.



PHOTO: CAMERON LEWIEN

Dandenong and Hallam hazmat units monitored the atmosphere.

"The remote monitoring capability of the Dandenong hazmat detection vehicle proved to be a very effective way of monitoring ammonia levels during ventilation," continued Phil.

WorkSafe and the Environment Protection Authority also attended the scene. ■

# GIPPSLAND FLOODS

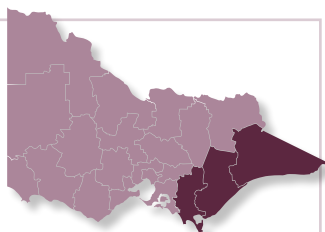
STORY JASON LEIGH

**INCIDENT:** Flood

**DISTRICTS:** 9, 10, 11

**DATE:** 5-7 June 2012

**BRIGADES:** District 9: Yallourn North;  
District 10: Briagolong, Loch Sport, Newry, Sale,  
Stratford, Tinamba, Traralgon, Yarram;  
District 11: Bairnsdale, Bemm, Bruthen, Cann River,  
Lakes Entrance, Mallacoota, Orbst, Paynesville



“ I worked the nightshift during the week-long flood operations as deputy incident controller. CFA shared the deputy incident controller role with SES and assisted in a number of other roles including public information, divisional and sector commander roles.

It was an unusual event as it was actually three events in one. The first part of the weather event was rain, then a wind event, then the riverine flooding all within a short time frame. Some areas received 250mm of rain in 48 hours. There were eight river systems in Gippsland that went into major flood warning classification. ”

**Adam Townsend, Paynesville CFA volunteer and SES regional officer**

“ The floods really highlighted the strength of local command and control and brigades across District 11 provided outstanding support to SES.

The efforts of the Paynesville and Lakes Entrance brigades were well rehearsed and organised – they’re used to dealing with flood events every five or so years. They know where to get prepared and put the sandbags and they just go and do it – they showed great leadership.

Our brigades and groups have again shown themselves to be incredibly capable in setting up that initial local command and control, getting things done themselves. They’ve been tested through fire, flood and now earthquakes – we’re just waiting on pestilence! ”

**Bryan Russell, District 11 operations manager**

“ Our crews worked tirelessly through the late hours of Monday and into early Tuesday morning. There was some outstanding work done in Traralgon to assist residents out of flooded areas around Traralgon Creek and into the relief centre that was set up.

Many of our crews went straight in to warn local residents directly. There was a lot of doorknocking work and it was quite effective. They’re well versed in where the flood waters generally go and what precautions need to be taken. They were well prepared and we didn’t experience any significant issues, which is a credit to all involved.

Gippsland received a month’s worth of rain in one day. The Princes Highway and all roads east of Orbst were closed and several communities including Cann River, Hollands Landing, Mallacoota and Marlo had no power or access for several days.

Up to 45 Traralgon properties were inundated as well as some properties in Loch Sport. Properties in Bairnsdale, Denison, Eagle Point, Heyfield, Maffra, Paynesville, Sale and Stratford were also affected.

A number of CFA brigades across Gippsland worked to prepare their communities through warnings, sandbagging and rescues. Here are the thoughts of some CFA members who were on the front line. ■



PHOTO: ADAM TOWNSEND



PHOTO: NOEL MCWILLIAMS

The recovery effort and activity will continue for some time – for some communities it will take longer than others. Fences and some farm infrastructure will need to be rebuilt and there’s productive farmland that needs to be assessed and rehabilitated. ””

**Allan Rankin, District 10 operations manager**

”” I first got the call-up at 11pm on Monday night and went out doorknocking homes with Captain Mark Whitehurst from Newry brigade soon after.

Five or six houses were affected by the floods in Tinamba – mine was one of them. It wasn’t too bad though. It came in the back and squished up through the floorboards a little bit. We’ve never seen clean floodwater like this, which makes the tidy-up a lot easier – usually you end up with a heap of mud.

We had crews come in from Heyfield, Glenmaggie, Cowwarr, Seaton and Coongulla to help clean up and they did a really good job. ””

**Chris Speedie, Tinamba first lieutenant**

”” We were on our way home from Orbost and kept coming across cars on the side of the road and trees across the road. We had a chainsaw and axe in the back so we began clearing the road as we went. By the time we were 3 kilometres from home we had four cars in tow behind us and had already pulled five trees off the road.

We chopped through another 10 trees and got to within 200 metres of the town before coming across a huge tree in the middle of the road with others hanging above it.

My son James was cutting some of the branches off this tree with his wife Robin on standby ready to hit him with a stick if the hanging tree moved at all. It’s an old trick we use in the bush because you can’t hear anything over the noise of the chainsaw and the wind – if someone gives you a whack you know to get out of the way.

I was watching it all in the car headlights and saw the tree move. I yelled out and Robin gave him a whack – they both ran out of there. We were stuck out in the cold with trees crashing down around us and it wasn’t pleasant. The tree finally fell about 10 minutes later.



PHOTO: ADAM TOWNSEND

James was cutting into the tree again when his saw jammed – nothing was going to shift it. He ran half a kilometre home to grab the tractor and a bigger chainsaw. It’s got a 30-inch bar on it, one of the biggest ones you can get.

Even with the rest of the brigade clearing from the other end it took an hour and a half to cut through it all and get everyone home. The road was blocked again the next morning – 38 more trees had come down overnight. If we’d left those four cars parked on the side of the road they’d be pancakes now.

According to our weather station the wind reached 103 kilometres an hour that night. The town was left isolated for three days without power or phones.

We set up an incident management team at the fire station with a generator and freezer for residents to store their food. We’ve prepared as a community to be isolated in these sorts of situations, so we’ve got a plan for flood and fire and we make do with what we’ve got. ””

**Russell Pardew, Bemm captain**

# A GLOW IN THE HILLS

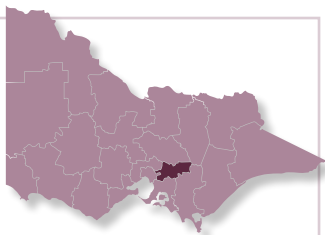
STORY **KEITH PAKENHAM**

**INCIDENT:** Structure fire

**DISTRICT:** 13

**DATE:** 23 June 2012

**BRIGADES:** Belgrave, Upwey, Sassafras, Bayswater



The tall trees of Belgrave were filled with smoke – but not from Puffing Billy – late on a Saturday night. When Belgrave pumper responded to a house fire in Station Street, the glow was illuminating the surrounding trees.

When Belgrave firefighter and Incident Controller Martin Kirby and his crew pulled up at the weatherboard and fibro cement sheet home, they knew they had a battle on their hands.

Sassafras and Upwey pumpers soon arrived to join in the firefight and Martin sectorised the job to protect a natural timber house on the west side of the fully alight home.

Belgrave Captain Phil Keep worked alongside Martin, as firefighters in breathing apparatus provided an external fire attack after the building’s roof collapsed. Neighbours confirmed that the owners were away.

During the incident, the gas meter at the front of the home exploded making a few members jump. The gas pipe was then on fire until local authorities shut it down.



PHOTO: LEAH KIRBY

Metro stopped trains from running along the rail line behind the property for a while because smoke and flames prevented drivers from passing through safely.

“It was a great team effort by all firefighters and brigades involved. Their professionalism and commitment to the job allowed me to focus on the job at hand,” Martin said. Thirty firefighters were involved at the height of the blaze.

Due to the age of the home, Martin decided to treat and bag all gear because there may have been asbestos in the structure. ■

# MYSTERIOUS OIL SLICK

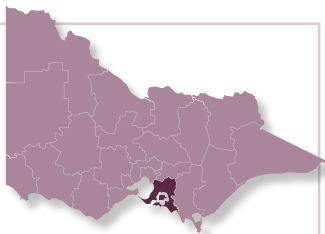
STORY **SCOTT HAMILTON**

**INCIDENT:** Hazmat

**DISTRICT:** 8

**DATE:** 2 July 2012

**BRIGADES:** Phillip Island, Wonthaggi, Dandenong, Officer



When crews from Phillip Island brigade responded to a police request for assistance at the Cowes Jetty, they were faced with an oil slick in Westernport Bay and a bulk tanker moored off the township.

But after investigating the scene, crews realised that the slick was caused by diesel coming through the storm water drain system and had nothing to do with the tanker.

Under the direction of Group Officer Damien O’Connor, a multi-agency emergency management team was formed in the car park of Cowes Jetty and a plan to combat the spill was devised from the bonnet of the Bass Coast field command vehicle.

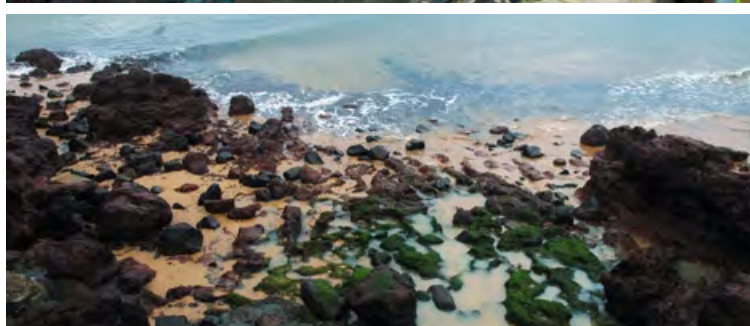
Phillip Island brigade was supported by Wonthaggi brigade’s hazmat, Dandenong brigade’s hazmat detection vehicle and Officer gas support with its marine spill response booms to trap and clean the storm water flowing on to the beach.

CFA was joined by Bass Coast Shire Council, Victoria Police, Parks Victoria, Phillip Island Nature Parks and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). It was a painstaking task to check potential leak sites in Cowes’ storm water system. The service stations were checked first and quickly ruled out.

Crews spent around four hours checking the network but no source was found.



PHOTOS: SCOTT HAMILTON



Fortunately, by the end of the day, the quantity of diesel had decreased significantly.

While several crews looked for the source, others cleaned up the spill on the rocks and placed booms into the storm water system to capture the diesel.

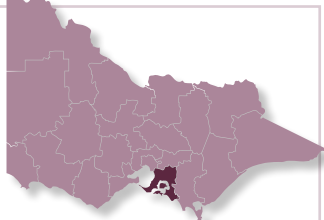
After discussing it with the EPA, it was decided to leave the booms in situ overnight and stand all units down as the main danger had passed. ■



# DOUBLE STOREY DRAMA

STORY KEITH PAKENHAM

**INCIDENT:** Structure fire  
**DISTRICT:** 8  
**DATE:** 9 June 2012  
**BRIGADES:** Hallam, Narre Warren North, Dandenong



A house was badly damaged by fire in Sydney Parkinson Ave, Endeavour Hills, at around 9.30pm on a Saturday night.

The two-storey home was well alight when crews arrived at the scene, but were happy to hear that the next door neighbour had alerted the home owner after he went outside and saw smoke.

Crews from Hallam, Narre Warren North and Dandenong attended the call and had it under control within 30 minutes.

Dandenong's ladder platform was used to access the upper storey after the fire spread through wall cavities.

Senior Station Officer Stephen Keating was the Incident Controller from Hallam brigade. ■



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

# RECYCLING TRUCK FIRE

STORY MICHAEL DOREIAN

**INCIDENT:** Truck fire  
**DISTRICT:** 14  
**DATE:** 12 June 2012  
**BRIGADES:** Eltham, Research



A \$400,000 council recycling truck caught alight in Eltham North when crews from Eltham and Research arrived at the scene, part of the vehicle's cargo of recycling waste was well alight.



PHOTOS: ANDREW HEATH



After putting out the visible flames, it was apparent it was going to be difficult to completely extinguish the fire while the waste was compacted inside the vehicle. A decision was made to offload the waste in a suitable nearby location so that crews could make sure the fire was completely blacked out.

Nillumbik Council was extremely quick in its response, providing plant and additional waste trucks to help, and also cleaned up the soggy mess after the fire had been put out.

Thanks to quick work by members there was minimal damage to the expensive vehicle, which has since returned to service. ■

To see more images go to [cfaconnect.net.au/recyclingtruck](http://cfaconnect.net.au/recyclingtruck)

# TANKER SPILL SHUTS FREEWAY

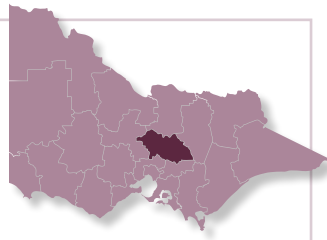
STORY **DUNCAN RUSSELL**

**INCIDENT:** Hazmat

**DISTRICT:** 12

**DATE:** 27 June 2012

**BRIGADES:** Wallan, Craigieburn, South Morang, Clonbinane, Kilmore, Wandong, Golden Square, Sunbury, Bendigo, Darraweit Guim, Kal Kallo, Whittlesea



Thousands of litres of fuel spilled from a B-double tanker after it collided with a utility in the northbound lane of the Hume Freeway near Wallan in the early evening.

The tanker rolled over and leaked an estimated 30,000 litres of petrol and diesel on to the freeway and into drains.

CFA crews attempted to contain the spill by damming the area. Gas monitoring equipment showed there were explosive vapour levels so both sides of the freeway were closed.

Fortunately, there wasn't a fire but the amount of spilled fuel combined with the gas in the air was a highly explosive combination.

Crews began decanting unspilled fuel at around 1am and were cleaning up all night.

The two drivers were treated by paramedics but had only minor injuries.

The southbound lanes of the freeway reopened at around 11.30am the following day, but the northbound lanes remained closed for the rest of the day.

"The tanker was carrying both petrol and diesel, and this mixture eats into



PHOTO: WARREN MITCHELSON

the tarmac. A section of the road may need resurfacing," said Incident Controller Gerry Hauke. "The fuel mixture is a solvent on tar."

The tankers and truck were towed away late morning.

The environmental impact of the spill took several hours to assess by the Environment Protection Authority, VicRoads and WorkSafe. "They looked at where the fuel has gone – inspecting the ground and drains," said Gerry.

"This is one of the worst fuel spills on the freeway for a long time. There are houses only 200 to 300 metres away, so it could have been a lot worse.

"We've got some good blokes up here who sorted the incident very quickly," said Gerry. ■

To see more images, go to [cfaconnect.net.au/wallan](http://cfaconnect.net.au/wallan)

# HEALESVILLE CLEANERS WIPED OUT

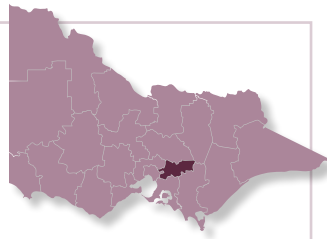
STORY **KEITH PAKENHAM**

**INCIDENT:** Structure fire

**DISTRICT:** 13

**DATE:** 10 July 2012

**BRIGADES:** Healesville, Badger Creek, Coldstream, Yarra Glen, Lilydale, Scoresby, Hallam, Dandenong, Montrose, Yarra Junction



Healesville brigade was paged at around midnight for a building fire on the Maroondah Highway.

When the brigade arrived at the fire at Healesville, crews found the 90-year-old French's Laundry and Dry Cleaners business well alight and impinging on adjoining shops in the Coles shopping complex. The factory was about 60 metres by 30 metres, including an office block at the front.

Firefighters worked hard and were successful in preventing the fire from spreading to other buildings. The call was made for five pumpers and then upgraded to seven plus a hose layer unit and two aerial vehicles. Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) crews also battled the blaze.

As there was a risk of structural collapse, crews were kept at a safe distance and the aerial appliances worked from above. This was the right decision as the side wall collapsed on to the road and nobody was injured.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Being a dry cleaning company, the building contained a variety of chemicals and there was a chemical residue run-off that was monitored by the Environment Protection Authority. Health inspectors, water and power companies also attended, and police closed the highway.

A fire stop was placed on the call shortly after 3am, though blacking out continued well into the day after the council had supplied machinery to help push walls down and gain access. ■

To see more images, go to [cfaconnect.net.au/cleaners](http://cfaconnect.net.au/cleaners)

# FACTORY DAMAGED IN DANDENONG

STORY KEITH PAKENHAM

**INCIDENT:** Structure fire

**DISTRICT:** 8

**DATE:** 26 June 2012

**BRIGADES:** Dandenong, Hallam, Frankston



When crews arrived at Quality Drive in Dandenong South at around 12.30am, smoke was billowing from a metal fabricating factory.

Senior Station Officer Don Wilkie called for the Dandenong ladder platform as soon as he arrived at the 30-metre by 15-metre structure. Hallam pumper and its crew worked with the Dandenong firefighters to contain the fire to the main factory.

Crews used quick cut saws to get access through the front and rear doors of the metal-clad building. Computers in the front office were raised from the ground to protect them from water run-off and all the paperwork was saved.

"An aggressive firefight by the initial crews contained the fire to the factory, saving the office," said Don.

A good water supply was available in the busy industrial area, which helped with the operation of the ladder platform. Frankston breathing apparatus van arrived to refill cylinders on site as firefighters rehydrated between circuits. ■

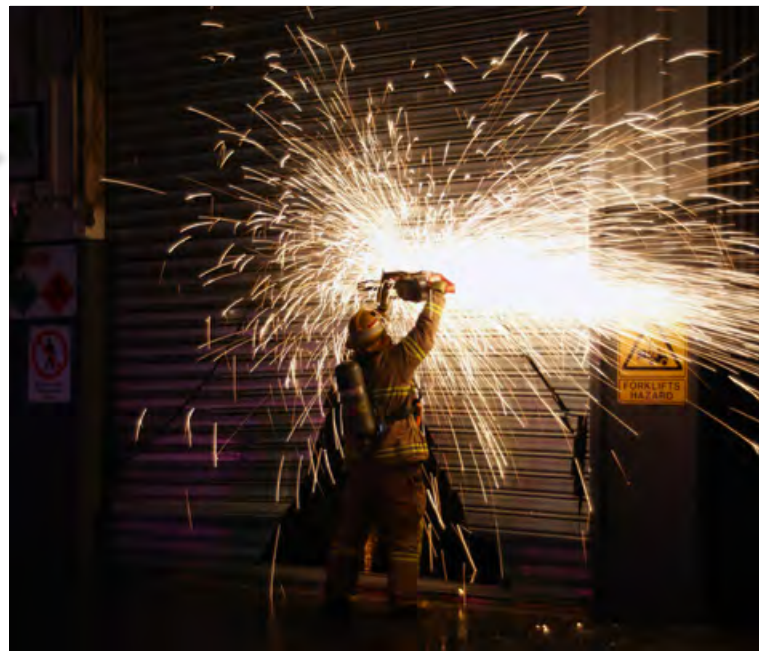


PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

# NEW SKILLS SAVE HOUSE

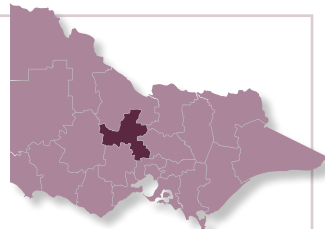
STORY ALASTAIR DOWIE

**INCIDENT:** Structure fire

**DISTRICT:** 2

**DATE:** 12 July 2012

**BRIGADES:** Carisbrook, Maryborough



Firefighters used advanced structural firefighting techniques to limit the damage to a weatherboard house in Carisbrook.

The blaze started in a bedroom/storeroom of the house in Bucknall Street when an electric heater was left unattended while the owner took his dogs for a walk.

Members of the Carisbrook brigade were alerted and the nearby Maryborough brigade was paged to provide support.

Carisbrook Captain Ian Boucher said that when they arrived there were flames and smoke coming from a window and smoke billowing from other parts of the house.

One room of the building was already fully alight, but the presence of grey smoke pouring from the building was a sign that the fire was being retarded due to a lack of oxygen.

The brigade initially used an indirect attack to reduce the flames before members wearing protective clothing and breathing apparatus entered the building.

Maryborough brigade member Peter Higgins and Carisbrook First Lieutenant Jamie Herd recently learned firefighting techniques as part of compartment fire behaviour training. Peter (who's the Goldfields Group training officer) has been learning the new techniques under Ross Pollard in District 2, and was able to combine his knowledge with the local brigade to control the fire.

The techniques enable firefighters to quickly identify whether the building can be saved before they enter the building to directly attack the fire.

Peter and Jamie tested the partly opened door using pulses from a



PHOTO: JANDEN TAGSART

Protek nozzle to identify the 'neutral plane' (the level to which the hot gases had descended).

Once they identified that the plane was about 1.2 metres to 1.5 metres above the floor, they entered the building and continued to use pulses of water as hydraulic ventilation to cool the gases as they went. As the gases cooled, they dissipated upwards.

Firefighters moved systematically towards the adjacent room where the fire had started. When they found the seat of the fire they used longer pulses of water on the flame to extinguish it, and hot embers were pencilled with a light stream of water.

Peter said the techniques used much less water, caused less damage to property and preserved the scene for fire investigators.

The direct attack limited most damage to one room, so the occupant was able to salvage some belongings. In the past most fires of this type would destroy the building. ■



# PROFESSOR JOY REPORT: ALL RECOMMENDATIONS ACCEPTED

Last December, a number of serious allegations were raised in the media around the use of chemicals for live firefighting training at Fiskville Training College between 1971 and 1999.

An independent inquiry was set up, led by Professor Rob Joy who has more than 30 years' experience in environment protection and resource management, including time as the deputy chairman of the Environment Protection Authority.

After six months work by Professor Joy and his team, including interviews with 324 people and accessing four million documents, the investigation is now complete.

## “THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE OF OUR PEOPLE REMAIN OUR FIRST PRIORITY”

Professor Joy's report *Understanding the Past to Inform the Future* was released on 12 July this year along with CFA's detailed response. You can read both documents at [cfa.vic.gov.au/fiskvillereport](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/fiskvillereport).

“The Professor Joy report studies the practices of periods that have gone before us. It confirms that chemicals donated to CFA were used in live firefighter training up until the mid 1990s,” said CEO Mick Bourke.

“We deeply regret those practices and the impacts they may have had on CFA members and others who used the facility. We are confident that the events and practices discovered by Professor Joy in respect to the use of hazardous substances in hot fire training are events and practices of another era.”

CFA has committed to implementing all 10 recommendations contained in the report and announced 11 additional initiatives including a health impact study.

“Professor Joy's report was a crucial first step for CFA in understanding what occurred at Fiskville in the time that was studied. To understand where the chemicals came from, how they were handled, how they were stored and how they were used,” Mr Bourke said.

“Having this knowledge enables us to understand who might have been exposed to these chemicals. The Professor Joy report refers to some people at Fiskville being relatively more exposed to risk than others. This can be concerning for people but important to understand.

“While the overwhelming majority of people who used that site had low to negligible exposure, we do have some occupations in that period of time that had high and medium exposure, namely practice area drill (PAD) workers and full-time and part-time instructors.” See the table on p14 for details.

## SUPPORTING MEMBERS

“The health, safety and welfare of our people remain our first priority. Within our welfare package, we have support mechanisms including health monitoring for those who wish to take it up,” said Mr Bourke.

CFA has an existing Health and Welfare Service that provides access to health services and to a peer support program, chaplains, psychologists and counsellors. This program has now been extended to take into account the outcomes of Professor Joy's report.

For those in the high to medium risk exposure groups, a health surveillance program has been implemented. As part of the program, members who undertook activities as a PAD worker, full-time instructor or volunteer/regional staff instructor are eligible to access the program which offers annual medical assessments – a medical examination and health questionnaire.

As outlined in the Professor Joy report recommendations, CFA will be conducting a study to examine the risk of exposure to hazardous chemicals from past practices and any potential health impacts.

Discussions have already begun with Monash University about conducting a study to assess the health effects. Preliminary steps have shown that a study is likely to be feasible.

Mr Mick Bourke said the report highlights work that needs to be done to understand whether there is any environmental contamination at Fiskville or other regional training grounds.

“It gives us a couple of safety issues to pick up and we're working through those now so we can keep running business as usual at our Fiskville facility and at our regional training facilities as we implement the recommendations. Work has already started on testing and monitoring at the training sites but business will continue as usual,” Mr Bourke said.

“CFA will also arrange for an external audit of our response to the Professor Joy report, to maximise the confidence of the CFA Board and management that the issues have been addressed effectively. More importantly, such an audit will give our people, stakeholders, local land owners and the community information and assurance about the steps we've taken to rectify the problems found by Professor Joy.

“I'd like to thank Professor Robert Joy and his team for a fantastic effort over a six-month period. They've done an immense job and I know they've drawn on the knowledge of CFA members past and present to get a real understanding of what happened.”

Any member needing welfare support can call the CFA hotline (1800 628 616) or sign up for updates by emailing [fiskvilleprojectteam@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:fiskvilleprojectteam@cfa.vic.gov.au).



## THE REPORT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Work has already begun to implement the report's recommendations. For the latest information about our progress regarding the recommendations, visit [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au).

### Recommendation 1

That soil and groundwater quality be assessed in areas where fuel storage tanks are currently located or have been located in the past both above and below ground.

### Recommendation 2

That groundwater investigation be undertaken in the vicinity of the historical flammable liquids PAD, the fuel mixing area, the historical foam training pits, the prop storage area and the area used to rehabilitate contaminated soils in 1998.

### Recommendation 3

That further investigation be undertaken into surface waters in and discharging from Lake Fiskville to:

- better quantify the risk to downstream human health receptors, taking into account downstream dilution and environmental fate and transport mechanisms
- investigate potential sources of fluorosurfactants perfluorooctanic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) discharges to Lake Fiskville and discharging off site, if the potential risk of adverse impact on downstream human health receptors is found to be unacceptable
- collect surface water samples at a representative location to assess whether the reported copper and zinc concentrations are consistent with background levels
- assess the ecological condition of Lake Fiskville.

### Recommendation 4

That any electrical transformers located at any CFA training site be inspected by an independent hygienist and, if not able to be certified as PCB-free under the National Polychlorinated Biphenyls Management Plan 2003, that it be treated as a scheduled waste and disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the plan.

### Recommendation 5

That any subsequent study of possible linkages between exposure of persons during training at Fiskville to materials such as flammable liquids and health effects, evaluate the usefulness of the qualitative assessment of relative risk of exposure of different groups developed in Chapter 7 [of Professor Joy's report].

## “WORK HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO IMPLEMENT THE REPORT'S RECOMMENDATIONS”

### Recommendation 6

That procedures be put in place to protect the health of personnel potentially exposed to waters and sediments in Dams 1 and 2 of the firewater treatment system and, in particular, to manage the risks to individuals who have the potential to come into contact with sediments in the dams during routine maintenance.

### Recommendation 7

That soil and groundwater quality be assessed in the following areas that were not examined during the site investigation stage of the preliminary site assessment of Fiskville:

- Part of Drum Burial Area 1 (south of the airstrip and south of Deep Creek Road)
- Drum Burial Area 2 (north of Administration Building)
- Drum Burial Area 3 (east of Administration Building)
- Historical landfills 1 and 2.

### Recommendation 8

That historical Landfill 1, which has been disturbed by the construction of a walking track, needs to have its extent clearly identified, have an appropriate impermeable and properly drained cap constructed and be revegetated with shallow rooting species that will not compromise the integrity of the cap. This should ensure the safety of any people using the walking track.

### Recommendation 9

That any decision on the future management of historical Landfill 2, including possible exhumation of buried drums and further site rehabilitation, await the results of soil and groundwater quality assessment at the site (Recommendation 7).

### Recommendation 10

That the site-specific recommendations of the Golder Associates' Preliminary Site Assessment – CFA Regional Training Grounds (RTGs) be adopted including recommendations to:

- undertake targeted soil and groundwater investigation at sites where possible sources of contamination have been identified
- assess firefighting water quality for contaminants associated with flammable liquids and extinguisher foams
- assess water quality where discharges occur to the environment.

## MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

As well as implementing all 10 recommendations contained in the report, CFA has announced the following 11 management initiatives:

- Commission a health impact study to examine linkages between exposure to hazardous materials at Fiskville and health effects, taking into account different levels of exposure

## STATEWIDE NEWS

- Provide a health surveillance program for identified high and medium exposure groups (see table below)
- Provide information packs for CFA members and their families outlining support services
- Make information packs available for the public that provides information on community-based services
- Establish a Board Committee for Occupational Health, Safety and Environment (OHS&E) that will have independent membership with relevant expertise
- Implement AS4801 (in relation to occupational health and safety) and AS14001 (in relation to environmental care) processes at CFA training facilities
- Include a standing item on CFA Board agendas relating to progress reports on implementation of the report
- Arrange an external independent audit of CFA actions to implement Professor Joy's report and make the results publicly available
- Acquire specialist personnel in environment management to support personnel already working on health and safety and increase the presence of OHS&E across the state
- Allocate executive responsibility, management and control for all training grounds with the Executive Director Operational Training and Volunteerism
- Provide project management capability for the implementation of all recommendations.

## RISK OF EXPOSURE

Professor Joy and his team looked at the different groups of people who spent time at Fiskville between 1971 and 1999, and categorised them according to their risk of exposure to chemicals. This is outlined in the table below.

### QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF RELATIVE RISKS OF CHRONIC EXPOSURE OF VARIOUS GROUPS

GROUPS	MATERIALS				OVERALL RISK OF EXPOSURE
	Flammable chemicals	Combustion products	Foams	Recycled firewater exposure	
PAD workers	High	Medium	Low	Low	High <sup>1</sup>
Instructors (full-time)	Low	High	Medium	High	High <sup>1</sup>
Instructors (volunteer and regional staff)	Very low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Trainees (practical firefighting)	Very low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Trainees (regional officers 1970s)	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Other employees and residents <sup>2</sup>	Negligible	Very low	Negligible	Negligible	Very low
Students and teachers	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Trainees (non-practical firefighting)	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Persons off site	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

1. Based on giving particular weight to the groups' frequent and long-term exposure to chemicals via inhalation and absorption.

2. Students who were residents at Fiskville are seen as belonging in this group.



# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



## JUSTIN JUSTIN

Justin Justin first visited Fiskville when he was 17, working for three weeks as a work experience student. He is now the operations manager of Training Delivery at the site.

"Fiskville means a lot to me. I've put a lot of time in here and done a lot of courses. I'm proud of the facility, everyone that works here and the quality of their work," Justin said.

"The job has been challenging at times and also extremely rewarding. One of the key challenges has been the media attention the facility has been receiving.

"Working with this team has been rewarding. The team has shown great

resilience given the intense scrutiny the facility has received. It makes it easier to come to work knowing the staff are dedicated to the facility.

"I'm extremely proud of the way the staff have conducted themselves at work as well as in the general public. Many of the staff live locally and are involved in local sporting clubs and committees.

"It's been great to see our training courses increase and I'm proud to say the quality has exceeded where we were in the past."

The next 12 months at the site will continue to be busy.

"We are working to implement the recommendations made by the Jones Report and to help the Operational Training and Volunteerism Directorate in delivering a better service to volunteers and staff.

"We continue to work with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria to make Fiskville more accessible to all CFA members and continue to develop new courses and packages that will be made available to the greater community and run locally.

"There's a lot of exciting work happening at Fiskville behind the scenes around improvements to online learning and recognition of prior learning – this will make training accessible to everyone.

"I'd like to thank all CFA members for their ongoing support. We've received emails, phone calls, text messages of support from the greater CFA family. We look forward to ongoing support and to working with them in the future."



## MARTYN BONA

Martyn Bona is the facilities manager at Fiskville.

"It's been an unbelievable 12 months. Justin and I knew we were in for a challenge when we first came here but didn't realise just how big it would be.

"Even though the Independent Fiskville Investigation has created an interruption to our everyday work, the silver lining is that Fiskville will continue to grow and we will still be a training college of excellence.

"Fiskville has passed the workplace safety tests and there is more expenditure on infrastructure to grow

the site further. Our focus now is on ensuring Fiskville continues to function as 'business as usual' and as a safe workplace for everyone.

"Our people are committed and passionate about Fiskville and it's been difficult to see the media spotlight placed on the site as a result of the investigation. The actions that took place happened in the past and unfortunately inaccurate information about the site today has been published.

"However, we will still focus on making sure the college is not only state-of-the-art to train and live, but also a great conference centre.

"In November, we'll have a communications tower and full connectivity across the site for phone reception as well as Wi-Fi.

"We are also building a business centre on site so that members and visitors can maintain their usual lives and businesses when they visit and also keep in touch with their families through email and Skype.

"We're here to stay and will make it a fantastic college for everyone. Both Justin and I have moved our families here because we believe in the college.

"We've had a lot of support from some of the CFA people who have assisted us – phone calls and emails and words of support in really hard times – and those things are really appreciated."




**MICK BOURKE** CEO

Our brigades have attended an average of six house fires a day through a busy winter. That has meant a lot of chilly overnight turnouts for our members in the service of some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Lives and properties have been saved because of your tireless work.

The Fire Services Commissioner has released his strategic statement with its purpose being a safer and more resilient community, supported by the primary goals of engaging our people, building a safer community and achieving organisational excellence.

Interagency cooperation is embedded within the three-to-five-year priorities by ensuring that the statewide training framework lies at the heart of organisational planning, and building a common approach to fire and emergency management planning. All agencies are also working in the challenging space of community behaviour change, developing a model that influences community perceptions and behaviours.

Actions to be taken within 12 months include establishing the state's capability and capacity framework to guide investment in incident management, infrastructure, resources and service delivery.

From a CFA point of view, the emphasis is also on strengthening and supporting the integrated service delivery model, training delivery and assessment and the development of leaders.

Work continues with the Creating Our Future Together project. I'd like to thank the 460 members who participated in the culture survey designed to help us better understand our existing culture and get an idea of our preferred culture.

In early August we received the first results and our initial analysis shows there is a very strong view of the preferred culture which provides huge opportunities for improvement. While our members' current experience of culture varies within every region and directorate team, there is universal agreement on the culture our members want. There was a strong commitment across CFA to create a culture where we all work closely together, enjoy our work and fulfil our commitment to the communities we protect.

The real value in the survey will be in how we apply the insights and work towards closing the gaps from our actual culture to the preferred culture. We've made a commitment to share the results and we'll be supporting teams to develop action plans. Facilitators will set up debrief and action planning sessions over the next few months.

The Implementation Monitor Neil Comrie released his report outlining the progress on implementing the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC) recommendations. The report details progress against nearly 300 action items and notes that 35 VBRC recommendations have now been fulfilled, along with hundreds of implementation actions across government departments and agencies.

The report notes the "clear evidence" that communities across the state are better prepared than ever before to confront bushfire risk. It's gratifying that this independent report acknowledges the highly effective work of our people involved in Bushfire Program projects.

Notable achievements include our IMT Training Project which has focused on the development, selection and accreditation process for Level 3 incident controllers. A total 225 Township Protection Plans have been updated using the new action-oriented template.

The role of the Implementation Monitor has been extended until 30 September 2014 to review the implementation of longer-term recommendations.

A record \$11.95 million was recently allocated to CFA brigades under the new Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP). A total of 166 brigades received funding towards operational equipment and appliances such as quick-fill trucks, tankers, trailers and amenities upgrades.

It's a huge boost to our hardworking brigades and is further supplemented by \$1.4 million to fund new or replacement equipment such as pumps, generators and fire blankets. Congratulations to all brigades who submitted successful applications. There's always plenty of competition for the VESEP dollars but I urge any brigades not on this year's list to apply again. ■

## NEW TEMPLATE TOOLKIT STORY CHRISTINA BUCCI

In September, for the first time, CFA will have an online hub of CFA-branded templates that will make it easier for all members to deliver consistent communication materials within our organisation and to our communities.

Not only will these business and marketing templates be available online for all members, but they will also be accessible through CFA-networked computers. This means that when you create a new document in Microsoft Word or PowerPoint, you'll be able to choose from a range of templates.

In the autumn edition of *Brigade*, we asked for feedback on the documents you used the most. Now you can view the Template Toolkit from the homepage of the CFA intranet and Brigades Online. Look out for the red banner (see right). ■

*If you have any suggestions for other templates that would be handy to have in the toolkit, contact Nancy Thompson, CFA Communities and Communication (9262 8314)*

**THE very  
HANDY  
TEMPLATE  
TOOLKIT**



# QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS 2012

**C**ongratulations to the 17 past and present CFA members recognised for their contribution to the fire services and their communities.

## MEDAL OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA

**BRUCE CAMPBELL** – Much like dairy farming, volunteering is 'in the blood' for Bruce Campbell. A volunteer with Kernot brigade for 58 years, Bruce is also a life member who has held many positions including captain.

**DAVID MCGAHY** – A former captain of the Arthurs Creek brigade, David has given his time to CFA for almost 50 years and is currently the second deputy group officer for the Whittlesea Diamond Valley Group.

**GEORGE AND FRANCES BURNS** – This dedicated couple are volunteers with CFA's Seaspray brigade (where they are both lieutenants) and St John Ambulance, and they received their medals for their service to the Sale community.

**IAN EWART** – Ian has been heavily involved in both CFA and St John Ambulance for over four decades, and in his role as captain of Callignee brigade he was instrumental in fighting the February 2009 fire and in helping the community to recover.

**MICHAEL CHAPMAN** – The captain of Arthurs Creek brigade received his award for service to the community of Arthurs Creek, particularly during the 2009 bushfires. Michael is also involved with a number of committees dedicated to fire prevention in partnership with other agencies and the community.

**ROBERT RANKIN** – The former executive manager of CFA Fleet Services first joined CFA in 1981 as a design engineer in the mechanical services division. Over the next 30 years he was instrumental in a number of firetruck upgrades that still protect firefighters today.

**RON JACOBS** – The former member of Chelsea brigade and CFA life member was recognised for his years of dedication to the organisation. He received the Australian Fire Service Medal in 1992 and retired from CFA after 50 years of service.

**TERRY BAKER** – Terry Baker's dedication to the community of Casterton has been a driving force during his 55 years with CFA, and he's also involved with teaching road rescue to Casterton brigade.

**ALEXANDER STONEMAN** – The former school principal was awarded an OAM for service to education and to the community of the Central Goldfields region.



## AUSTRALIAN FIRE SERVICE MEDAL

**ALAN DALE** – Throughout his 43 years at CFA, Alan has shown an outstanding commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. He has been a career firefighter at Boronia for 28 years, where he is currently the senior station officer, a volunteer at Dandenong for eight years and is also currently a volunteer at Upper Beaconsfield.

**BILL WATSON** – As well as his 40 years of distinguished firefighting experience, Ferntree Gully volunteer Bill Watson has dedicated himself to the welfare of CFA members across the state in his role as a mentor and personal adviser.

**DON KELLY** – Grampians Regional Director Don Kelly was awarded the medal for his exceptional contribution to the safety of the Victorian community through his 40-year service as a volunteer firefighter, an officer and as a regional director.

**JOAN STEEL** – Joan joined the ladies committee linked to Wedderburn brigade during the 1960s. But it was during the 80s she became fully entrenched in CFA life as the brigade's communications officer, and has shown outstanding leadership in all the organisations and groups she's been involved with.

**PETER MARKE** – To say Peter Marke is the beating heart of Upwey brigade is a bit like saying Don Bradman could bat a bit. For 53 years, including 35 as captain, Peter has been protecting lives and properties in the community in which he was born.

**TREVOR ROCHE** – Former Chief Officer Trevor has served CFA and the community diligently for more than 45 years. As chief officer he provided outstanding leadership, support and stability to volunteers and career firefighters, particularly during the Linton Coronial Inquiry.

## PUBLIC SERVICE MEDAL

**CRAIG LAPSLEY** – The Fire Services Commissioner, CFA member and former CFA Deputy Chief Officer received his medal for outstanding public service to the community through the improvement of the emergency management sector. ■

*For more information about the award recipients go to [cfaconnect.net.au/queenshonours2012](http://cfaconnect.net.au/queenshonours2012)*

## EUAN FERGUSON CHIEF OFFICER

Along with the new executive team, I have made some recent appointments to the Fire and Emergency Management Leadership team. Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington has taken on emergency management and Deputy Chief Officer John Haynes is responsible for service delivery strategy. Executive Manager Terry Hayes has been reaffirmed in his role leading the Community Capability team.

New Deputy Chief Officers Alen Slijepcevic and Joe Buffone have recently been appointed to the roles of DCO Capability and Infrastructure and Readiness and Response, respectively.

I sense an energy and optimism in our team. We are actively promoting 'visible leadership' and you can expect to see a lot of the Fire and Emergency Leadership team at functions at CFA brigades, stations and in districts and regions and with other agencies.

At a recent recruit graduation ceremony it was my pleasure to award a number of CFA members with Commendations for Courage for actions taken during a flash flood event near Ballan in 2011. A number of Commendations for Courage, at both a unit and individual level, have recently been made for actions during the 2009 bushfires and numerous 2011 flood events. We should all hold the recipients of these awards in high esteem, as they have demonstrated the values and ethos of CFA to the highest degree and we proudly recognise their efforts.

There is a lot of exciting activity going on in CFA. In the next few months we will see:

- the start of full production of the new 2.4 tanker
- updating of the multi-agency bushfire command and control arrangements
- preparations for the upcoming fire season, including pre-season briefings and exercises
- the development of new community safety messaging and engagement strategies
- the production of a bushfire handbook that will be a common bushfire doctrine for all fire agencies
- the development of CFA doctrine for Mission Command

including a draft version of a new Red Book (our base command philosophy)

- the review of the role of the group and local command and control
- CFA brigades planning and undertaking burning off and fire prevention works in their local communities.

This is set against a backdrop of the Government's anticipated White Paper on emergency management arrangements in Victoria; recruiting firefighters and building new integrated fire stations to meet our targets set out in Project 2016; and a challenging budget environment.

Also on the horizon is CFA Sunday which is on 25 November 2012. CFA Sunday is a chance for Victorians to interact, and have fun, with CFA members, and for brigades to unite. Last year, more than 400 brigades opened their doors to the public.

This year we are encouraging brigades to get out and about in their community. Follow the crowds – if the public won't come to you, you can go to them at local markets, town halls, parks or shopping precincts. Obviously, if opening your station on CFA Sunday works for you then host your event there. CFA Sunday is a great opportunity to showcase our great organisation and our members to the local community. I encourage all brigades to get involved and sign up at [surveymonkey.com/s/cfasunday2012](http://surveymonkey.com/s/cfasunday2012) or through their local regional office before 14 September. Kits full of fantastic support material will be provided to every brigade that signs up before this date.

Finally, can I reiterate my admiration and appreciation for the work that you do. At every level in CFA we rely on the commitment, professionalism and hard work of our people. You do important, vital work in our communities. Your individual and collective efforts inspire others to do great things. Thank you and keep up the great effort. ■



## CALL FOR STORIES STORY JASON LEIGH

CFA members have some of the best stories in the state and we want to see more of them in our publications.

From our recent communications survey and other feedback, we know that CFA members are especially interested in reading about:

- other members and what they get up to
- technical information about firefighting and incident reports
- the history and heritage of CFA
- training, fundraising and community preparedness activities.

If you've got a story to tell – whether it's a recent training session, attending an incident, a special celebration or fundraising activity – we encourage you to post it on [cfaconnect.net.au](http://cfaconnect.net.au). Alternatively, contact *Brigade* magazine Editor Duncan Russell

– email [duncan.russell@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:duncan.russell@cfa.vic.gov.au), phone 9262 8978, or post your story to Duncan Russell, CFA, PO Box 701, Mt Waverley Vic, 3149.

We're also building a network of active writers and fostering their skills. The Community News Network is a way to recognise and support existing contributors with mentoring from the CFA communications team as well as attracting new writers to the fold.

As a member of the network, you would be submitting stories (and accompanying photographs) to be published on CFA Connect or in other publications including *Brigade* magazine and *The Fireman*. ■

*For more information about the Community News Network or to register your interest, please contact Natalie Pearson on 9262 8045 or email [n.pearson@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:n.pearson@cfa.vic.gov.au)*

# BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT OVERLAY

STORY JASON LEIGH

Victoria is one of the most bushfire-prone areas in the world and it's vital that anyone planning to build, renovate or landscape their property takes the local risk into account.

Incorporating bushfire risk into the design and layout of your property is one of the most effective ways to protect lives and property. It's also useful for CFA members to have a basic understanding of the planning rules as leaders in the community and experts in the local bushfire risk.

If people consider their bushfire risk early in the building process and do good up-front planning, they can save themselves time, money and hassle down the track.

Anyone wishing to build in Victoria should first check with the local council to find out about restrictions, especially in a high-risk bushfire area. There might also be other planning issues to consider such as floods, erosion, native vegetation and heritage controls.

You can use the map at [land.vic.gov.au](http://land.vic.gov.au) to check whether there are restrictions on your property, and local councils can answer most questions about planning permits.

Areas with the highest bushfire risk are covered by a planning

control called the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO). Any new development in these high-risk areas must comply with a set of requirements that aims to avoid an unacceptable risk to lives and property.

The BMO was introduced as part of the Government's response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

Anyone wanting to build on land covered by the BMO needs a planning permit from their local council. It can be a complex process and it's common to employ a consultant to help prepare the application. Applicants need to prove there's adequate defensible space on the property, the building is constructed to the appropriate 'Bushfire Attack Level', and there's an appropriate water supply and access for fire trucks.

It's also important to remember that there are some areas where the risk to life from bushfire is so high that new development should not occur. ■

*To explain the process and planning provisions, CFA has produced the Planning for Bushfire Victoria booklet that's available at [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au)*



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

## POTTED ROSES NOW ON SALE

This spring we're launching potted FireStar and FireStar Phoenix roses.

FireStar has continued to be a big seller. It has lush green foliage, a continuous kaleidoscope of orange, raspberry, peach pink and apricot coloured blooms and an unusual split petal that gives it a frilly appearance. It's also extremely resistant to black spot.

This rose has won many awards for its health and vigour including the All-America Rose Selections. Only the best survive the rigorous two-year testing in all conditions. In the National Rose Trial Garden of Australia, it won a silver medal and also best in trial for 2009.

FireStar Phoenix is a beautiful French rose in colours of blushed apricot to pink tips with a cupped form and extremely fragrant. Both roses can stay in their CFA pots for up to a year and make a great gift.

Potted roses are now available to purchase at [firestarrose.com.au](http://firestarrose.com.au) for \$36 plus postal charges. \$6 from the purchase price of each potted rose is donated to the brigade of your choice. ■



### IN BRIEF

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

CFA exhibits at the Royal Melbourne Show 22 September – 2 October.

October is Community Safety Month, with events happening all month to remind Victorians they can help make communities safer.

Fire Action Week is 18 – 25 November (with CFA Sunday on 25 November) and is a great time to prepare for the summer fire season.

The Fire Awareness Awards will be celebrated on 3 December to recognise initiatives of individuals, groups and organisations that reduce the effects of fire.

# CFA'S CULTURE SURVEY RESULTS

STORY SALLY YOUNG

**W**e're continuing to focus on improving our work performance by establishing a clear direction for the organisation, developing the right structure to support it and improving our leadership capability.

To achieve these objectives we need to create a culture where we all work closely together, enjoy our work and fulfil that real commitment to the communities we protect. Culture can be defined as 'how we do things around here' or 'how individuals feel they need to behave to fit in'.

We recently asked around 2,100 members to participate in a culture survey designed to help us better understand our existing culture and what we would like our culture to be. Thank you to the 460 members who participated in the survey – your views are important.

Here are the main results of the survey:

- There is universal agreement about the culture we would like to work

in. Regardless of how we dissect the data – career members/volunteers, male/female, within directorates/regions – the preferred culture is consistent and our members are unanimous.

- There are gaps between the actual and the preferred culture across the organisation and in every area. These gaps limit our effectiveness and give us opportunities for improvement.
- There are differences in the actual culture in different parts of the organisation – differences within every region and directorate teams
- More than 90 per cent of members participating in the survey are willing to contribute to building the culture we want.

Facilitators from across the organisation will present a detailed breakdown of the findings over the next few months and help teams to develop action plans.

We will continue to communicate the results and progress – check CEO Mick Bourke's blog on [cfaconnect.net.au](http://cfaconnect.net.au). ■



PHOTOS: FRANK BEIJELMAN



## PODS IMPROVE RESPONSE

STORY CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

**C**FA is continuing to build on its response capacity with the delivery of the latest CFA vehicle equipment.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and CFA staff were given the opportunity to view the Technical Rescue Pods and hydraulic hook vehicle at CFA's Burwood East headquarters at the end of May.

Operating in a similar way to trucks that deliver skip bins, the hydraulic hooks can pick up and drop off the technical rescue pods where required.

The pods are containers in which specialist equipment such as tools for confined space and trench rescue can be stored and transported. A hydraulic hook mechanism on the appliance is able to rapidly pick up and release pods as they are needed.

Acting Manager of Structural Planning Craig Brownlie was among the team who contributed to the design of the pods.

"The pods are purpose built and allow for ease and manual handling. They will significantly increase operational capacity. The pods are the first of their kind at CFA and have been in the design and development phase for a number of years," said Craig.

"The key benefit of the pods is having a flexible vehicle within the fleet. An increased load capacity of 22 tonnes cab chassis and the 17-tonne lift hook lift helps achieve this.

"Another great feature is the ease of use. Tools for confined space and trench rescue are easily accessible from the pod. Not only does it increase our capabilities but it improves public safety."

There are still a number of things to be completed before the pods will be settled at their brigades including consultation with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, UFU and members. A complete training package is also being prepared for people who will be using the vehicle and technical rescue equipment. ■

### IN BRIEF

#### RESOURCE ALLOCATION

A set of principles has been established by the Chief Officer to guide the allocation of resources for operational purposes. The principles provide greater flexibility around service delivery and resource allocation and help CFA deal with changing community needs and expectations. The overarching principles are that primacy will be given to the protection of life, and community risk is a shared responsibility. Read the principles at [cfaconnect.net.au/principles](http://cfaconnect.net.au/principles)

# MARK REID MOVES ON

STORY JASON LEIGH

After 38 years with CFA, Gippsland Regional Director Mark Reid recently decided it's time for a change.

"Things are going really well for CFA and I'd prefer to leave at the top of my game. It was a tough decision because I enjoy my job and work hard at it, but it feels like I've done my time," Mark said.

"The recent core leadership group conference confirmed for me that all the pieces are starting to fall into place – things that we've been pushing in Gippsland over the last few years, such as Mission Command, principles not prescription, getting back to basics, reinforcement of local command and control and development of the operational doctrine."

Mark became a career firefighter in 1979 and progressed through the ranks. In 2007 he was seconded to the National Fire Authority of Fiji, where he filled the role of chief fire officer for two years.

"It was probably the hardest and best assignment I've had, it was really tough. Working as the chief fire officer in a foreign country with an extremely limited budget required innovation," Mark said.

"It taught me that good leadership is about providing strong and simple messaging. I wish I'd done it 20 years earlier."

Mark was promoted to the rank of regional commander in Gippsland in 2010 and eventually appointed to the role of regional director.

"There's been a significant change in direction over the last two years – in line with the direction set by the Chief Officer. That's been an easy thing to do in Gippsland as our volunteers understand and support that mode of operations."

Mark will be providing some short-term technical assistance to the Secretary to the Pacific Communities, continuing on from his time in Fiji.

"I'll be helping small island nations develop fire and emergency plans, building the capacity and capability of their fire and emergency services. I'll be working on some practical outcomes to help them deliver better services."

Mark is also looking forward to spending more time with his family and at his boatyard. "The regional director position entails a lot of travel and nights away from home. I have a small boatyard business in Paynesville so it will be good to spend more time with my boats.

"I'd like to acknowledge and appreciate the strong support I've had from the staff in Gippsland, but more importantly the senior volunteers and brigades. To me these are the elder statesmen who really drive, guide and support the management within the region." ■



PHOTOS: LEITH HILLARD

## OPENINGS FOR MURRAYVILLE, COWANGIE

STORY LEITH HILLARD

*Above: Operational members of Murrayville brigade*

The mid-winter opening of two fire stations on the Mallee Highway was a good excuse for a community-wide celebration, a Sunday drive and a feast.

The chilly day started at Murrayville with an inspection of the new station and the surrounds and plantings that members had worked so hard on. It was a family affair with multiple members of core brigade families such as the Wyatts and Willersdorfs in attendance, though it was open house for anyone in the community.

The official party included Mildura Mayor John Arnold, CFA Board member Reid Mather, Loddon Mallee Regional Director Pat O'Brien and District 18 Operations Manager Bill Johnstone as the master of ceremonies, with MP Peter Crisp officially opening the station alongside Captain David Allan.

"We've been in the station for about six months now when the radios were moved over," said David, "and things are ticking over pretty well. We've got about 60 members registered so there are people willing to help at the station or run the champs if they don't turn out. We've got 11 juniors and one of our members is 80 years old and comes down to the station every Sunday."

After the official ceremony, trestle tables were erected in the engine bay and it was time to eat and chat with whoever sat next to you.

The road trip continued after lunch with the official party and guests driving down the highway for the opening of Cowangie station.

"The truck came back the day before with the crew protection system installed," said Captain Barry Beer, "so we're pretty well set up now. We've just got two new young members and about 30 members apart from that – all farmers. CFA and the community are the same thing here." ■

*Below: Cowangie Captain Barry Beer with District 18 Operations Manager Bill Johnstone*



# YOU'VE EARNED IT



Emergency Memberlink is a key recognition program that thanks members for their significant contribution and dedication to CFA and creating safer communities.

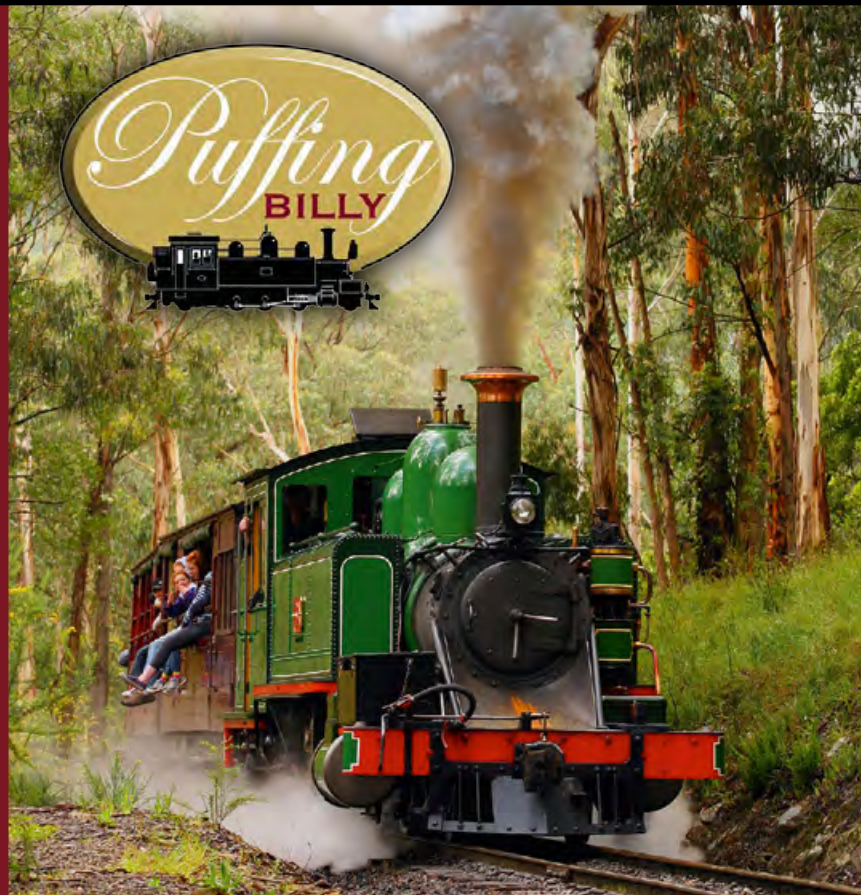
Through Emergency Memberlink, members can receive discounts and benefits on a wide range of products and services. In excess of 250 offers are now available, with new benefits being added regularly.

Details of the offers can be found in the Emergency Memberlink Guide which is sent out with all new Memberlink Cards and on the Memberlink website [www.emergencymemberlink.com.au](http://www.emergencymemberlink.com.au). Be sure to visit the website regularly to keep up to date.

There are a number of ways you can access your Memberlink Benefits. These include:

- **Show your card and save** – discounts and benefits available upon presentation of your Memberlink Card at businesses throughout Victoria, and some nationally.
- **Online Shopping** – goods below RRP delivered state-wide.
- **Purchase Cards** – Safeway/Caltex and Coles Gift Cards available through your Memberlink team at 5% discount.
- **Discount Vouchers** – time limited, special offers updated regularly. Members can download these vouchers from the Memberlink website or call the Memberlink Team.

For anyone without a Memberlink Card, you can call the Memberlink Team on **1800 820 037** or register online.



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A joint initiative of CFA and SES

# ROYAL MELBOURNE SHOW

22 Sept - 2 Oct 2012  
MELBOURNE SHOWGROUNDS  
[www.royalshow.com.au](http://www.royalshow.com.au)

The Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria (RASV) would like to make a special offer to CFA & VICSES Members regarding the 2012 Royal Melbourne Show.

The RASV through the Show, is making a special gesture as they have done in past years, to recognise Victorian volunteers in those areas which have a strong and positive impact at the Show and/or in regional and rural areas, which are the RASV's main constituency.

The RASV would like to offer volunteers, their families and staff a **discounted price of \$27 for adults, \$19 for concession, \$14 for children and \$67 for families (2 adults and 2 children)** to attend the 2012 Royal Melbourne Show.

Simply show your Memberlink Card at the Show ticket box office to obtain the discounted rates.

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*\*Excludes gas refills, interest free purchases, gift vouchers, fishing licenses, embroidery, advertised lines or in-store specials. Not in conjunction with any other offer. Savings are off our regular retail prices or manufacturer's recommended retail prices.*



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# HELP WITH FLOOD RELIEF

STORY GERARD SCHOLTEN

More than 80 CFA volunteers swapped the city fringe for the bush in mid June to help farmers in the state's north-east clean up following devastating floods in March.

Organised by a committed band of senior volunteers from Eastern Metropolitan region, the visitors set to work clearing weeds and fixing fences at eight properties around Wilby, between Yarrawonga and Wangaratta.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria District 13 Council President Bill Watson said volunteers east of Melbourne experienced the same generosity following the 2009 fires.

"During Black Saturday we were hit pretty hard by the fires. We had firefighters come from all over Victoria to help us and it's one way of returning the favour," Bill said.

"What folks up there need now is arms and legs and we have plenty of those! There's been no shortage of city volunteers keen to help their country comrades."

After a hard day's work, the crews joined locals around a campfire for a roast dinner made by the renowned caterers from Hoddles Creek brigade. At night, the volunteers bedded down in a shearing shed and an old farm house.

Bill paid tribute to everyone involved in the organisation of the trip and those who made the journey. He also thanked Wilby locals, including Gus Campbell and his family, for their hospitality. ■



PHOTO: LES GARBOU



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

*Above: Children from Peninsula Special College have fun with Mt Martha volunteers*

## BRIGADES BRIGHTEN CHILDREN'S DAY

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

Two Mornington Peninsula brigades have gone over and above their call of duty as firefighters by sharing their skills and knowledge with children with cancer and special needs.

Volunteers from Mount Martha brigade give more than 10 presentations of the Fire Safe Kids program a year to several schools and kindergartens in the area. As part of this program, senior and junior children from Peninsula Special College visit Mount Martha brigade every two years.

The sessions show the kids different firefighting uniforms and teach them how and when to ring Triple Zero, 'Get Down Low and Go Go Go', 'Stop, Drop and Roll', fire safety in the home and smoke alarms.

"Fire safety is so important – it could save your life, so hopefully we give these children a better understanding of the dangers of fires," said Patricia Richardson, one of the organisers.

"We make the sessions as fun as possible with many activities. We

also let the children have a look through the fire trucks and squirt the hose, which they love!"

Mount Eliza members visit Camp Manyung five times a year to assist the Kids with Cancer program, Camp Challenge (children with cancer and other blood disorders) and Muscular Dystrophy Australia.

The children, aged between 4 and 11, spend a few hours with CFA members who give them fire truck rides to the beach and around the local area.

Mt Eliza First Lieutenant Chris Nicholson said CFA members also show the children how to use the fire hoses.

"Carers at the camp continually tell us that the highlight of the camp for the children is the rides in the fire trucks," he said.

"Many of the children are experiencing very tough times in their lives so it's a wonderful feeling to be able to take their mind off things and put a smile on their faces." ■



# CHIEF VISITS WONTHAGGI

STORY BILL BARBOUR

CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson visited the State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi at the invitation of Wonthaggi brigade at the end of June.

Mine volunteers took Euan and his wife Kristen on a tour of the facilities, both above and below ground.

They were then given a presentation at the Fire Museum display within the grounds of the State Coal Mine. This display was made possible by the cooperation of Parks Victoria management at the site and the efforts of Wonthaggi CFA volunteers and local community artists in preparing and assembling the displays. The display is open to members of the public who visit the State Coal Mine.

Later that evening, Euan attended the 101st Wonthaggi brigade annual dinner, where he and Southern Metropolitan region Operations Manager Trevor Owen presented service awards to brigade members. The awards were made that little bit extra special because they were presented by the Chief Officer!

"Having the opportunity to get to know the Chief Officer personally was a great experience," said Captain Kim O'Connor. "It was also a great morale boost to our brigade having him attend the dinner. He was genuinely interested in the history of both the brigade and the town. A memorable night for the Wonthaggi members."

This was the first time Euan had attended an event in Bass Coast and it was great to see many local brigade captains and their partners at the dinner.

PHOTO: COURTESY JACOB DE KUNDER/LEONGATHA GREAT SOUTHERN STAR



*Left: (left to right) coal mine volunteer Phil O'Connor, Wonthaggi brigade Captain Kim O'Connor, coal mine volunteer Rod McLean, Kristen Ferguson and Euan Ferguson*

Member of Parliament for Bass, Ken Smith, attended the dinner as well as Bass Coast Mayor Veronica Dowman, and representatives from Victorian State Emergency Service, Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria. ■

# AZEM'S FOOD FOR FIREYS

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

In a modest Shepparton restaurant called Lutfiye's Shish Kebab sits a cool room full of supplies ready to meet one of the most essential needs of any fireground – food for the firefighters.

Over the past few years, Azem Elmaz has become an integral and invaluable part of incident response in District 22. Equipped with his own pager, Azem is ready to turn out at the drop of a hat to cater for CFA crews – as he did last Christmas day when it took him only 45 minutes to be at the scene of a local structure fire.

"Any time, 24 hours a day, if it's a hot day or a cold day, that's just what we do," said Azem.

"The last job we went to was the Tallygaroopna pub fire where we gave people chicken wraps and a hot coffee. The volunteers really appreciated it and it was great to put a smile on their faces."

According to First Lieutenant Ray Stockwell from Mooroopna brigade, the most remarkable aspect of this story is that Azem and his team don't want to be paid for the work they do.

"The quality of the food they are serving is first class, but they don't want to accept a cent for it," said Ray. "Though I did have to draw the line when he was trying to make them all lattes!"

However, Azem's support of CFA goes much further than food.

"A few years ago our Operation Manager Steve Allen caught wind of the fact that Azem was looking for worthwhile local projects to sponsor," said Ray.

PHOTO: RAY STOCKWELL



"At the time the district was purchasing a floating collar tank [for helicopters to draw water], Azem ended up sponsoring the trailer for about \$7,000 and has gone on to sponsor the fitting out of a new field command vehicle." ■

## IN BRIEF

### ULTRALIGHT FOR QUEENSLIFF

In mid June, Queenscliff brigade Captain David Hume received the keys to a new Mitsubishi Canter ultralight tanker. It replaces the Brigade's twin cab utility and is an invaluable rapid response vehicle with four wheel drive capabilities. The brigade received the ultralight partly through the Government's Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) and from fundraising efforts, the generous support of the local community, community groups and businesses. For more about VESEP go to [cfaconnect.net.au/vesep2012](http://cfaconnect.net.au/vesep2012)

# THE RISE OF female captains

STORIES LEITH HILLARD AND JASON LEIGH

**CFA's first female captain, Sue Sheldrick, donned a red helmet in the mid 1990s. Since then, the number of women in charge has grown to 23. Here are some of their stories.**



## A SOCIAL CLUB WITH CALL-OUTS

**T**wenty years ago there were no women in Korumburra brigade, and it took Jodi Butler six months to talk her way in. Now she's the captain.

"There were probably only two or three other ladies in the group at that time. I persisted because I knew I was joining for the right reasons and they would see that in the end," said Captain Jodi Butler.

"The guys realised I was here because I wanted to help the community. I was here in the middle of the night, weekends, any time. I did a lot of courses. Over the years you learn to build and win people's respect.

"I'm the only female captain in the Leongatha-Korumburra Group but there are now a lot more women joining and being accepted in the ranks, there's been a cultural change. Brigades are now quite open and welcoming.

"I love getting out and helping the community. When you have a big save it makes you feel good. Helping in any circumstance feels good – especially for the people that might not have the capacity or skills to join CFA like I've been able to do," Jodi said.

Ex-captain Bill Rodda has seen Jodi develop from her first day with CFA.

"Jodi has the respect of the people here and she knows her stuff. She will do a good job. She's honest, social, all those things that come with being a genuine volunteer," said Bill.

"She was secretary for quite a few years while I was captain and a very good one too. She was our first woman member and there was a bit of opposition floating around, but she soon fixed that up.

"Jodi got in just by being Jodi – her personality, friendliness and eagerness to learn. She's a very sociable lady – you'll never die wondering what Jodi's thinking. She's also a very good firefighter."

Jodi said that although Bill is moving on from the role of captain, she'll be maintaining his philosophy.

"I'm going to run the brigade like Bill has for the last 26 years: 'Korumburra

brigade is a great social club that occasionally gets interrupted by a call-out'. If you have happy members they'll be there when you do have to put in the hard yards and attend the tough jobs.

"We'd also like to increase the brigade profile and wave the Korumburra brigade flag a bit more. We're a brigade that just gets on with it and does a good job, but we never publish information about it. We'll be looking to make the most of local papers, CFA Connect and other media resources.

"We'd like to be getting out there and representing the brigade in the community, and also mixing it up a bit more with neighbouring brigades. We'll be looking to involve some of the smaller neighbouring brigades in our training such as Kongwak, Ruby, Poowong and the road rescue brigade at Loch."

Jodi is also the brigade administration and support officer for the South Gippsland Shire area in District 9.

"I guess it gives me more knowledge as to how CFA actually works and also getting to see other brigades – how they function and where we can improve in some areas. It makes you appreciate what you've got. Not all the brigades are as happy as we are."

Does she have any advice for women joining CFA today?

"I'm not really one for banging the wagon on women joining CFA – it's just about giving them a fair go. It's about doing whatever you can that's within your means.

"Just be honest and join for the right reasons. Be yourself – don't try to do something you're not capable of. Get in and have a good go, make friends and have a long and enjoyable time with CFA.

"I'm a single mum with a 13-year-old daughter, a black Labrador and a full-time job. I'm a busy person and why not – you don't know what's around the corner.

"We're a very social brigade and we involve families in a lot of brigade events. It's been really great to meet such fantastic people with similar interests and build strong friendships." ■

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN A HIGH-RISK TOWN

**E**rika Nash was an intensive care nurse and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) qualified when she joined CFA in 2010. Just one year later she took on the captaincy of Otway brigade located in Lavers Hill, one of the highest-risk bushfire towns in Victoria.

It's a gutsy move that has earned her the respect of District 6 Acting Operations Manager Brian Brady. "She's got what it takes to be a leader and that's what counts," he said. "She's backed 100 per cent by her brigade and the district."

Erika seconds that. "I can learn as I go. I email and call Ops and our BASO [Brigade Administrative Support Officer] and the support is there."

"The members always come to me with good enthusiasm and ideas. It's very democratic. Everyone has a voice. We listen to what everyone has to say and treat each other with respect."

"I just clicked with CFA. My partner and I were new to the community and we set out to make ourselves locals. We both joined the brigade and that involvement has given us meaningful relationships."

"I think one of the qualities of women in leadership is to see different sides of an issue and that's especially important in a community as complex as this one. Joining CFA was a good decision. The brigade is going from strength to strength."

Erika is working on her Masters in clinical leadership and, in the CFA world, has completed crew leader training and Fireline Leadership. She's clearly up for the challenge of the Otways and led the brigade involvement in last year's trial community evacuation of Lavers Hill.

"That got a lot of conversations going at the pub," said Erika. "We followed up with a survey asking households if they now had a plan, and an emergency planning committee has been set up." ■



PHOTOS: LEITH HILLARD

## FIREFIGHTING IS A FAMILY THING

**H**elen Henry is a 10-year captain leading Glengarry West brigade towards amalgamation with Glengarry brigade to its north. The small rural brigade in District 10 is relatively close to substantial economic assets such as Yallourn power station and the Maryvale paper mill.

"We've had major fires in the past 10 years and I've had to make weighty decisions," said Helen. "We had to put last-chance firebreaks through our area in 2002-03, 2005-06 and 2006-07 – but 2009 was the worst. We had a truck burnover in the Churchill fire when my husband was crew leader, which meant a near-miss investigation and going to the Royal Commission."

"The good news is that all those members on the truck are still active in the brigade. The peer program support, the district and CFA's lawyers were all great."

The amalgamation is also good news with Glengarry brigade soon to get a new three-bay fire station.

Being a female captain isn't an issue. "I grew up reading the Red Book and we always had the listening set. My father Doug Henry was a captain before me so there's that sense of continuity."

"People just see the helmet and the crew leader tabard and they know that you have the competencies. I think a mixed crew in a dangerous situation is a good thing. Women might not tend to rush in but then guys have that impetus and you need both. We balance out each other. The trucks don't rely on arm-strong steering any more and we've got smaller hands that can get into narrow spaces, like opening the tank-fill."

Helen describes her personal style as inclusive. "It not 'my way or the highway'. Know what you're going to do and get people to come over to your way of seeing."

CFA has given Helen one of the proudest moments of her life. "I have two qualified firefighters as sons, Adam and Joshua," she said. "I'll always remember the first time I took the oldest out to a fire with me as captain. He joined CFA because of me." ■



PHOTO: LETH HILLARD

## COMPASSION AND PROFESSIONALISM AT HILLCREST

When Launching Place and Woori Yallock brigades amalgamated to form Hillcrest brigade in 2007, the members devised a motto: ‘Three communities, two stations, one brigade’.

“The transition was challenging and I really admire the time and commitment [ex-captain] Rick Shaw put in,” said Captain Fiona Burns, who took over this year after 10 years in CFA.

“I feel really fortunate to be captain at a time like this and honoured to be appointed the first female captain in Yarra Valley Group.

“I wanted the job because I do feel I have something to offer the brigade. I hope I can achieve six years in the role. That would be two years to bring in changes, two years to consolidate and two years for succession planning.

“We’ve started a mentor program for recruits and we’ll extend it to members interested in leadership roles as part of the brigade’s succession planning. You can’t put a value on the experience of members and we don’t want those members just walking out the door with all their expertise and no formal way of passing it on.”

Hillcrest brigade has 48 members, 38 of whom are operational, and 40 per cent female. It’s a diverse group ranging from lawyers, tradies and childcare workers to boat builders, engineers and two Year 12 students. Members attend an average of 160 incidents a year. There are 28 juniors – 25 of them girls – across the Yarra Valley Group.

“Fifteen of our members are new to CFA,” said Fiona, “so we’re growing our membership with some people prepared to help with fundraising, paperwork or station maintenance. We’re also really keen to support members in community engagement roles. We’ve got a good membership with people creating the time and space to volunteer.”

A plan for new training facilities at Hillcrest Fire Station – paid for by the brigade – will benefit all members of the group. The emphasis is on building the brigade and Yarra Valley Group by creating training opportunities and bolstering teamwork.

Fiona is a lawyer so she’s a crack negotiator. She’s been employed by CFA since 2009 working on Yarra Valley recovery and is now fire prevention team leader.

The range of experiences has given her insight into the qualities of an effective leader. “Be consistent in decision-making,” she said. “Respect for every member; fairness in the way we treat all our members. You have to support the officers, look after the welfare of everyone in the brigade as well as look forward to where you want the brigade to go.

“I’ve learned a whole heap of skills. I joined CFA because I wanted to give something back to the community and meet people when I was running my own business and I’m better off for the experience. I went to the fires on the outskirts of Perth as a planning officer, I’ve been deputy group officer, crew leader, strike team leader and a Level 3 planning officer in the State Control Centre.

“It’s great to see more women taking leadership roles across CFA. For younger women, I’d say look for opportunities to develop your skills. It’s all about self-improvement. Don’t ever be afraid to give it a go. There are really good people around to support you.

“Women do things differently on the fireground but we still get the same outcome. It’s not wrong; it’s just different.

“Responding in an emergency takes you into an intimate part of someone’s life. The compassion and professionalism you show makes all the difference. We really pride ourselves on that. As a brigade we’ve got a really bright future and that’s not about trucks and stations – it’s about people.” ■

## A FOCUS ON GOOD TRAINING

After 18 years as a volunteer and eight years as captain of St Leonards-Indented Head, Niki Habibis knows that leadership is “80 to 90 per cent HR [human resources]. Of course there are ups and downs dealing with 25 different personalities but it’s rewarding.” CFA creates such a good environment to be part of something,” said Niki.

“Our level of training is very high, and the leadership workload is really in training and running the brigade. We average 30 calls a year but it’s about always having people ready to respond. We manage to maintain 12 to 14 operational members at all times and average seven to 10 people at our training nights twice a month. We work hard to build people up and give them the roles they’re suited for. Any good leader should be drawing on the experience of their team.”

St Leonards and Indented Head are tourist and retirement areas and their small population quadruples in the summer. The average age of brigade members is 50 with only four or five still working. “It means we don’t have the problem so many other brigades have with daytime turnouts,” said Niki.

“It also means that we have some very dedicated non-operational members. Five years ago we decided we needed a slip-on and formed a committee. They raised \$60,000 from our community within three years. It was a huge achievement.”

As for being a female captain, Niki believes that “when you know what you’re talking about, it doesn’t matter if you’re male or female.

“A lot of the time it’s not about the job; it’s the people you help. When you go to some jobs and you see how much people have lost, it can weigh heavily on you. I have a lot of empathy and the feelings around trauma aren’t buried in our brigade. We promote the peer program and we’re friends outside the brigade.

“I have a really good brigade. I’m so proud of what we achieve.” ■



PHOTOS: LEITH HILLARD



## JUST KEEP TALKING

Marilyn Clifford balances her captaincy of Ellerslie brigade, her dairy partnership with her father and home life with three high-school-aged children. She’s been in the brigade for 26 years and the leadership role for one. She’s also a member of neighbouring Mortlake brigade.

“I grew up to be just one of the boys,” said Marilyn. “CFA was just something you did. I was really encouraged by all the guys in the brigade, especially the ex-captain, to go into the leadership role. Dad’s in the brigade but he’s not operational now. My brother is active and I’ve got a sister who’s active in Woodford.”

Marilyn views practical brigade skills as continuous with the hands-on skills learned during her farm apprenticeship all those years ago. Running a farm business also means keeping on top of paperwork. “Half an hour a day and it’s done,” she said, “and the CFA paperwork is lumped in with that.”

The new Ellerslie Fire Station opened last December and members plan to take advantage of the facilities with Friday night get-togethers. “We have community friendships and good close neighbours and you all look after each other. I’m friends with all the members and keep them all talking together and friendly. The lieutenants call me ‘Boss Lady’!

“Women talk to men about different things to what men talk about together. Kids are a big topic of conversation. We talk about everything and that ease flows into brigade matters. We talk through ideas for the brigade. If you don’t know how to do something, you don’t have to have the bravado. It’s easier to admit you don’t know and we’ll work it out together.

“I know who’s around at what time and they all know when I’m under the pump milking, so we spread the incidents across the brigade to manage our workload.” ■

## TAKING AN EVEN KEEL APPROACH

The phrase “even keel” crops up a number of times when Dianne Simmons talks about her captaincy of Christmas Hills brigade in District 14. Clearly, this is a brigade that values balance and stability.

“In 30-odd years in the brigade,” said Dianne, “I can’t recall any power struggles. All the ex-captains are still in the brigade which makes for a good, strong group. You don’t lose the tempering factor. We have a lot of women in the brigade, too, but that’s not necessarily because there’s a female captain. I think it’s the men in the brigade who make it female friendly. They’re not threatened.

“We’re old hippies and that has informed the brigade and the group culture. We take a consensus approach. One of the challenges is that CFA and the fireground are hierarchical and they need to be, whereas the natural impulse for women is to be part of a round-table approach.

“As captain of a consensus-style brigade, it doesn’t mean I’m not running the show. I don’t pass on instructions from high – it’s more about harnessing people’s skills and energies and bringing them along with you.”

Dianne calls herself a “recycle”, stepping back into the captain’s role after February 2009.

“We spent four solid weeks at the station and in the trucks,” she said. “The Kilmore East fire started about 50 kilometres from here and the speed of the spotting was extraordinary. It reached Skyline Road about 5pm and 18 local houses were lost.

“Before retirement I was a lecturer in environmental science, which gave me an awareness of post-fire recovery. I thought I had something to bring to the recovery, both academically and emotionally.

“The community hasn’t changed enormously in 30 years but, after Black Saturday, the sky’s the limit in terms of what they expect.” That even-keel approach will be vital as the brigade works with the community on the shared responsibility of bushfire risk. ■



PHOTOS: LETH HILLARD

## JUGGLING PERSONALITIES AND PROCESSES

Like so many CFA members, Pip Johnson has her own personal bushfire history. Her great grandmother put her children in the vegetable patch under wet hessian sacks and watched her life burn down in 1939. Her father was CFA’s first legislative officer around Ash Wednesday and Pip patrolled burn offs on a bush block from age six.

“Dad really urged me to join CFA, which I did in 1997,” said Pip, who became the first operational woman in Tallarook brigade. “I told the brigade that I wanted to get on the big red truck. I was so lucky I came into a brigade with a group of blokes who embraced that. There were three significant standouts who gave me extra mentoring. I just shut up and listened and took my lessons.

“I went to lots of incidents but then, in 2002, our property was burnt out. I was part of an emergency from go to whoa and I watched what we’d learned as firefighters all come together – I saw its practical application to what was most important to me. It cemented my commitment to CFA.”

Tallarook was in the first echelon of responders to the Kilmore East fire on Black Saturday but the brigade’s average workload is 80 call-outs a year. Pip was elected captain in the middle of 2009.

“It can be a hard slog and long nights,” she said. “Being captain is about juggling personalities and processes without dropping any of the pieces. You’ve got to have a good working relationship with everyone. And you laugh! Phone calls come out of the blue and you learn confidential information about someone. You have to be a safe deposit box.

“Women know they don’t have to know everything. It’s about capability. Recognise the skills you already have. There’s an enormous amount of support and encouragement in CFA, especially in the past five years. I think they’re seeing the benefits of the women who came before.

“The role doesn’t belong to me. If other people are nominating for the role in the future, that means we’re working.” ■



# STAN'S THE MAN

STORY LEITH HILLARD

At 98 years of age, Stan Brown remains an active CFA member. He's more than 40 years into his role as Yalca and Yielima brigade's communications officer and has received his 70-year CFA service medal. Stan has 14 awards including life memberships, coaches junior cricket and pulls his weight on the farm.

"I went to fires until the 1970s," said Stan, "then I went straight into comms. Since then there have been some fires that needed attention all through the night. I'd get the next crew together and keep families informed about when a shift would end. We're pretty well organised and I've got some very loyal firefighters who drop everything and go."

There are a few things that Stan believes put him on the right path in life. "I grew up in a family that talked cricket," he said, "and I represented Victoria Country against the English national team in 1937. I got out the English captain Gubby Allen.

"When I was 16, I met Don Bradman. He told us to get as much as possible out of our natural abilities. He said, 'you must forget about the little white things' meaning cigarettes and, 'you mustn't go in the brick buildings on the corners' meaning pubs. And I never did. When Bradman tells you something, it makes a big impression."

Stan was married to Vera for more than 60 years – she passed away two years ago – and they shared a love of farm life. "It's a very healthy life," said Stan, "because you're living with nature. Your area becomes part of you and you want to keep it alive.

"A lady who lives nearby said to me, 'We're awful lucky. We don't get flooded out or burnt out. We don't have car fumes. We're our own boss.

"If you forget the dollars and cents, farm life is the best life there is." ■



PHOTO: AMERIL KENNEDY

## NEW STATIONS IN D8

STORY BILL BARBOUR

Two brigades in District 8 celebrated the official opening of their new fire stations on the same day in mid June.

Member of Parliament for Bass, Ken Smith, presented the new buildings to Heath Hill-Yannathan and Glen Alvie brigades. Both stations were funded by the Rural Fire Station program.

Heath Hill-Yannathan's station is built on the site of the old station, though extra land has been leased from an adjoining landowner to fit the new station and car park. Glen Alvie's station is on a new site in the Glen Alvie Recreation Reserve. Southern Metropolitan Regional Director Peter Schmidt acknowledged and thanked Bass Coast Shire Mayor, Veronica Dowman for the cooperation shown by Bass Coast Shire and the Glen Alvie Recreation Reserve Committee in securing the lease for the land.

As well as Peter Schmidt, both openings were attended by CFA Board member Michael Tudball, Southern Metropolitan Operations Manager Trevor Owen and Operations Officer Jim Dore.

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, Peter Schmidt distributed CFA Firestar roses to those who attended. The plants were donated to the brigades by Knight's Roses and Gardener's Gate Nursery in Keysborough. ■

*Left: Glen Alvie's new fire station*



PHOTO: BILL BARBOUR

# KEEPING THINGS SIMPLE

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

PHOTO: COURTESY OF DISTRICT 24

Julie Reeves is one of those rare people with a gift for making complicated things simple – a trait she has put to valuable use in her role at CFA.

The District 24 staff member recently received a Rotary Pride of Workmanship award for her work as district support officer and her operational role as warnings and advice officer. She was presented with a certificate and plaque at a function held at the Rotary Club of Belvoir-Wodonga.

District 24 Operations Manager Paul King praised what he called Julie's "uncanny knack" for making the complicated uncomplicated.

"A large number of our colleagues are not used to dealing with bureaucracy and government processes and Julie just has this ability to make life easier for everyone," Paul said

"Julie is a subject matter expert on district and brigade business, and has established such exceptionally well thought-out practices and processes that she has others around the state calling her for advice on a regular basis.

"There are 61 brigades working with us at District 24 and, among other things, Julie oversees management of the district command sector systems and the essential documentation that goes with it.



"Our decision to nominate Julie was based on her excellent overall contribution to CFA's mission to protect lives and property," Paul said. ■

*Left: Julie with Operations Manager Paul King (right) and President of the Rotary Club of Belvoir-Wodonga Michael Carne*

*Below left: Members of Arthurs Creek and Strathewen brigade travel to Anglesea*

# BRIGADE SHARES ITS EXPERIENCES

STORY CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

PHOTO: MICHAEL CHAPMAN



The ability to learn from the experiences of others – especially in the toughest times – shouldn't be underestimated, according to Anglesea brigade volunteer Jamie MacKenzie.

Seven months ago Jamie, Sam Ryan and Claire Johnson visited members of the Arthurs Creek and Strathewen brigade to talk about their experiences during the 2009 campaign fires.

Seriously affected on Black Saturday, Arthurs Creek and Strathewen members have been sharing not just the events of the day, but the lead-up and the recovery efforts.

"I think there were lessons to be learned from everybody and I wanted volunteers at Anglesea to hear what they had been through," Jamie said.

"I feel very privileged to have been allowed in to hear their story. It was amazingly powerful stuff."

Since the first meeting in February, a mutual trust has been built between the brigades, and members of Arthurs Creek and Strathewen

brigade visited Anglesea at the end of July.

"The brigade made it clear they wanted their story to help other people. A lot of our people who listened had tears in their eyes. They're an inspiration," Jamie said.

Arthurs Creek Captain Michael Chapman echoed Jamie's sentiments.

"The reason we started these meetings was to share what we'd learned having been in one of the worst bushfires ever known. We thought we should share this information because, unfortunately, it will happen to someone else," he said.

"We spent a lot of time talking about recovery and although some people might not think that a brigade should be involved, we're community first.

"A lot more has come out of these meetings than we ever anticipated. Even though it's three years on, we've been able to share a lot in a comfortable and friendly environment." ■

## IN BRIEF

### NEW STATION FOR JANCOURT

In mid June, Jancourt brigade in District 6 celebrated the opening of its new fire station. The building includes a two-bay engine room, toilet and kitchenette, and is a great improvement over the old one-bay shed.

CFA Board member Robert Spencer thanked the Red Hill Hall Committee for providing the land for the new station. With the assistance of Arthur Matheson, a member of the Jancourt brigade for almost 65 years, Robert unveiled the plaque to officially open the station.





**PETER SCHMIDT**  
SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Welcome to the first of what will now be a regular column within *Brigade* magazine. The recent communications survey, which many of you completed, clearly indicated a high level of interest in the regional directors' activities. I'm pleased to welcome this opportunity to provide you with a regular update on our direction and happenings within Southern Metropolitan region.

We are further enhancing our communication to the region via a new circulation called 'From the Regional Director' that will replace our current *Eight* magazine. This will enable us to communicate on a timelier basis within the region, providing information sooner.

This initiative forms part of our regional management team's (RMT) key strategic focus for 2012-13, being our 'People First' strategy. This will see us concentrating on building a vital communication and consultation framework, stakeholder and partnership maintenance regime, and the embedding of CFA's values and behaviours that will be used as part of our everyday business in the region.

We will also take more opportunities for face-to-face contact between brigade members and RMT. We are doing this through monthly field consultation meetings with volunteers and also working closely with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) District Council and being involved in their leaders forum on Sunday 9 September 2012.

Many of you will be well aware that we are key contributors to the current emergency medical response (EMR) trial being conducted by CFA. Seven of the 10 brigades across the state in the trial are part of our team. These brigades include Mornington, Edithvale and Berwick (from the original trial in 2008) and joining that group in the latest phase is Dandenong, Hallam, Cranbourne and Springvale. These brigades have attended 371 EMR calls in the 2011-2012 financial year over and above their normal dedicated service to our communities, which is a great effort.

This pilot program is scheduled to conclude in October 2012, after which CFA and Ambulance Victoria will conduct a thorough review. Without pre-empting this review, our participating brigade members have successfully saved several lives and supported many individuals that has resulted in a very positive outcome for the patients involved. I continue to be impressed by the commitment of our participating members in this program and, in terms of community service, it would be good to see this program expanded.

This trial has once again proven our ability to take on diverse and challenging tasks in Southern Metro and do it well. ■



**DAVID BAKER**  
EASTERN METROPOLITAN  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

The inaugural Former Captains Dinner and Living Legends Dinner held in June and July were outstanding successes and will become regular events in our regional calendar.

It's vital we embrace former captains and explore opportunities to retain their invaluable leadership skills and experience within other elements of our service.

An incredible 1,742 years of service to local communities was celebrated at our first Living Legends Dinner where I had the distinct pleasure of hosting stalwarts of our organisation. I was humbled to share a meal with such great people who have devoted a lifetime of service to CFA.

While CFA's strength relies on a ready volunteer workforce of committed and trained members, we appreciate the generosity of employers in releasing staff to attend to CFA business. Brigades also benefit from many community-based supporters who contribute significant funding and in kind assistance.

The first Emergency Medical Response (EMR) volunteer employer and brigade supporter recognition function is an excellent opportunity for CFA's senior leaders to recognise that support.

Each brigade will be asked to nominate one local CFA volunteer employer and one local business brigade supporter to be invited to attend the function in September 2012.

I am proud that 26 EMR volunteer and staff members attended the recent CFA State Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Forum at Creswick.

It's worth noting the specific efforts of some of our volunteer members who helped organise and presented at the forum: Nick Waldron, Fiona Sewell, Elissa Jans and April Himmelreich – excellent community safety champions!

Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington recently implored us all to focus as much effort on prevention and community preparedness as we do to response. To reinforce this, I recently discovered that according to the United Nations every dollar spent on disaster prevention saves up to \$7 in response!

Local brigade delivery of the majority of CFA's community-based services (with regional team support) is the preferred model in the future and our manager of community safety and his team will soon release a three-year strategy describing how we can achieve this together.

Finally, thank you to our senior volunteer leaders in the region who recently responded to the new service delivery snapshot survey. There was a 72 per cent response rate and, overall, there was a healthy level of satisfaction with regional service support. However, there were a few areas of our service support to volunteers that we could focus on and enhance and the regional management team is currently reviewing the feedback and developing an action plan to improve those services.

I intend to conduct the survey regularly so we can track our level of service delivery and make necessary adjustments to support our volunteer leaders. ■



**PATRICK O'BRIEN**  
LODDON MALLEE  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

**O**ur primary purpose in Loddon Mallee region is to create and deploy an effective operational capability focused on preventing and suppressing fire, in order to achieve our CFA objective of minimising loss of life and property.

All our volunteer and staff efforts go to creating and maintaining viable volunteer and integrated fire brigades, and creating a safe, capable and resilient community. Viability refers to the right number of people with the right knowledge, skills and attributes, equipment and infrastructure, actually achieving desired community outcomes.

Viability also implies an obligation to provide support to CFA members and their families. Our CIS peers and chaplains provide this welfare support through drought and floods. Capable and resilient communities are indispensable partners in the management of risk. Our experience during drought and floods has emphasised the importance of close links between CFA brigades and their communities.

Our philosophy is that good leadership and good teamwork are critical to everything we do. We believe that every CFA member, whether holding a formal leadership position or not, can be a leader.

That leadership can be exercised simply by providing the right example to others. In some critical situations, good leadership can be demonstrated by asking the right question at the right time; by pointing out what no one else is prepared to acknowledge, or by taking action when all others are overcome by the moment. Any team member should be able to show this leadership and we seek to build this capability in all members.

We believe that this approach to developing leadership capability is entirely consistent with the doctrine of Mission Command, founded as it is on mutual trust, initiative, a positive culture and a common objective or purpose. Good teams respect every member's contribution and value difference.

Our leadership and teamwork behaviours are founded on the Fire Star Virtues. For 16 years we've invested time and effort to provide teamwork and leadership skills to our volunteers and staff. We've seen the benefits of this approach prior to and throughout February 2009, during the millennium drought and during the 2010, 2011 and 2012 floods. ■



**GREG ESNOUF**  
NORTHERN AND WESTERN  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

**N**orthern and Western Metropolitan region continues to grow to meet the challenges posed by rapid urban growth and changing risks.

In July, another new brigade was created at Eynesbury, which is a new township bring created to the south of Melton. Thanks to Parwan brigade and District 15 for supporting and nurturing this new brigade. This follows on from the creation of Wyndham Vale brigade 12 months ago, which is servicing the rapidly growing suburbs to the north-west of Werribee. Congratulations to both brigades.

Over 30,000 additional people are coming into Northern and Western Metropolitan region every year and our long-term planning is for another six brigades to be created in the next 20 years when it's forecast that CFA will be servicing 1.2 million people in the region – double the current population.

The region has also seen some other changes recently with additional career firefighters at Point Cook, Melton and Sunbury, and MFB secondees at Sunbury and Point Cook providing some much-needed additional support to our staff and volunteers. We're also keenly supporting the next generation of career firefighters with 12 graduates from the last two recruit courses at Fiskville being placed in the region.

We are currently half way through a nine-month trial for a new pilot mentoring program for captains and first lieutenants involving 12 participants – six as mentors and six as mentees. The mentors are experienced captains and first lieutenants from within the district. The program aims to provide support to captains and first lieutenants around their broader brigade leadership role, rather than command and control.

A particular feature of the program is that it is mentee driven, giving those being mentored a space to work through problems or bounce around ideas about any aspect of their role that they find challenging or are seeking to further develop. The mentor role focuses on support and knowledge sharing, rather than taking a directive approach, with an emphasis on professional development for all participants.

To date feedback is positive, and program participants appear to be reaping the benefits of the opportunity to share experiences through access to a peer they may not normally encounter.

In addition to the trial mentoring program, our bushfire safety program in camping stores in the region around peak holiday time has received positive feedback. ■



**BOB BARRY**  
BARWON SOUTH WEST  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

About 18 months ago the team at Corio brigade established a business plan that set out guidelines to engage the community within its fire district.

Being such a diverse community, a lot of factors had to be considered and the crew down there has done a fantastic job to achieve something we should all be proud of.

Their vision was to facilitate networks and promote greater understanding and communication among the residents of Corio.

They developed a plan that identified objectives and allocated team leaders to drive them.

One of those objectives is to pursue partnerships within Corio's multicultural population that can benefit safety outcomes for the community.

These strong relationships have allowed Corio to provide fire safety messaging to people from refugee backgrounds. It's a credit to the team that Corio firefighters have been welcomed by communities with vastly different backgrounds and histories.

A great example of this was when CFA sponsored the purchase of a pole that was part of a religious ceremony for the Karin community. The trust and respect CFA has gained from the community can't be underestimated.

Another objective is to provide CFA personnel with an understanding of poverty within the community. CFA's understanding of hazards and the protection of life and property is top class, but we need a better understanding of the greatest risk within Corio – the people within the fire district.

The final objective of the plan is to engage the youth of Corio and surrounding areas, refugees, disadvantaged, alcohol or drug-affected young people and other at risk groups.

The Corio brigade has developed partnerships with a number of local schools with large refugee populations.

Corio has provided fire safety messages through visual and interactive programs designed to overcome language and cultural differences.

Corio has also helped foster a relationship between Lorne and North Geelong Secondary Colleges to share ideas and knowledge about the different cultures in the areas.

Corio will continue to work with the community in the future and has participated in a training and education program called 'Rock and Water' designed for troubled and challenged youth, to help them better understand themselves and provide techniques to deal with anger management, overcome bullying and promote confidence.

I have no doubt the brigade will be able to share this knowledge across CFA to extend the great work being done in diverse communities. For more information, please contact Senior Station Officer Geoff Brown at Corio brigade: 5277 0414. ■



**MARK REID**  
GIPPSLAND REGIONAL  
DIRECTOR

Firstly, thank you to the dedicated volunteers and staff who supported the recent flood and storm activities in central and east Gippsland. Whilst the flood was dealt with over a period of approximately one week, we are fully aware that agencies and organisations, including CFA brigades, are continuing to clean up from the storm event that preceded the floods.

We are now into the planning phase for another summer. I encourage all of our groups and brigades to continue with the pre-planning work that you have undertaken in the past. This pre-planning includes fire prevention and community and brigade preparedness. I encourage all brigades, if you haven't already done so, to start planning for summer and discuss this with your group, operations officer, municipal fire management planning committee, local land managers and, most importantly, your community. Don't be afraid to get out and work with and seek advice from your community on how best to prepare them and yourselves for the coming summer.

I encourage you all to continue with your own personal development through exercising and practising. A key opportunity to do this is by using the Tactical Exercise Without Troops (TEWT) maps that were supplied last year. The feedback I've received from brigades and groups who've used the TEWT maps for training has been extremely positive. At your next brigade or group meeting, think about what you are planning to discuss and determine if it's really that important. If it isn't, think about how you can better use that time for developing yourselves and your teams. This is operationalising your meetings. Stop talking about the past and start discussing the future. Use the limited time you have together to focus on the important matters.

I also encourage you to use your own internal networks to further progress your preparedness. That is, engage with your neighbouring brigades and groups when planning and preparing. As you all know, bushfires don't burn along administrative boundaries.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support since I returned to Gippsland in October 2010. During this time I have served as the regional commander and, for the past 18 months, the regional director. I have decided to retire from CFA to spend more time with my family and continue other interests. My time as the Regional Director has been enjoyable and I leave knowing that a very capable team is in place, and with a high level of comfort that through the leadership of Chief Executive Officer Mick Bourke and Chief Officer Euan Ferguson, CFA is a great organisation to be involved with. ■



**DON KELLY**  
GRAMPIANS REGIONAL DIRECTOR

**G**rampians region has defined its approach to effective, proactive and deliberate engagement with brigades, groups and other internal stakeholders with the development of the Grampians region engagement strategy.

Our objective is to build relationships with our members, brigades and stakeholders so that we have a good understanding of their needs and how we can best service them.

The strategy sets a framework for dealing with CFA members, brigades, groups and catchments, with an emphasis on regular face-to-face communication at all levels. It encourages the establishment of partnerships with relevant people including community groups, other emergency services and CFA stakeholders.

It's about engaging in conversations with interested parties to improve decision-making and accountability towards corporate social responsibility.

This is our way of meeting our consultation obligations as set out in the CFA Volunteer Charter, *Country Fire Authority Act* Section 6 and other legal responsibilities, including occupational health and safety regulations.

This stakeholder engagement takes into account the interests, concerns and objectives of CFA stakeholders in CFA decisions. Most often, the engagement involves two-way dialogue seeking an understanding and solution to a mutual concern. The engagement takes into account the varying perspectives, priorities, and limitations of different stakeholders.

We recognise that volunteers' views, opinions and concerns need to be fully considered, and meaningful consultation is necessary, allowing enough time for real involvement with the elected representatives of the volunteers. This is particularly relevant on matters that may impact on volunteers before the adoption or implementation of new or changed policies, procedures or approaches. Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) is considered a key partner in the implementation of our strategy.

This approach provides us with the ability to monitor, identify gaps in service and adjust work plans accordingly. Importantly it also provides an opportunity for CFA members to be involved in wider discussions, planning and other activities. Our intention is to record interactions so that we can benchmark our performance and develop improvement strategies.

Engaging with our stakeholders ensures that we're able to provide open and transparent two-way communication on all issues that might reasonably be expected to affect volunteers.

We also acknowledge that the style of consultation is important and that the type of consultation should be clarified up front. We use the International Association of Public Participation framework to meet this objective.

The strategy has been developed in conjunction with district planning committees and District VFBV committees, and will be regularly reviewed by seeking feedback. ■



**ALAN DAVIES**  
HUME REGIONAL DIRECTOR

**T**he second half of 2012 sees us rolling out an initiative I feel will bring enormous benefits in building volunteer capacity and capability for incident response.

Training exercises for incident management personnel will be held around Hume region up until late September and resume next year at the end of the Fire Danger Period.

This initiative is all about having local command facilities (LCFs) in a high state of readiness with dedicated and well-rehearsed incident management teams. Those small but flexible teams will have the capacity to fill a variety of functional roles, enabling transitions from Level 1 to Level 2 incidents to happen as effectively as possible.

For Hume, and no doubt for other CFA regions, the challenge for some time has been making sure that we have the best possible people both on the fire truck and filling those critical roles within the incident management team.

Rather than an ad hoc approach where personnel are making last-minute calls on whether they should be in the local LCF or on the truck, we need to be sure our systems are ready to go and our people have a clear idea of where they should be.

These facilities are a vital link between the fireground and the district rostered duty officer, supporting our firefighters so they can concentrate on working safely and effectively. That's why it's so important to have those appropriate and well-trained people earmarked to be there at the point where they are needed.

Andrew Payne-Croston, one of our senior training advisers, has spent a considerable amount of time going through local networks to identify people from brigades and the wider community who can bring to the table their experience in data management, administration or logistics.

A great example is Tungamah, where we've trained the local postmistress because her life skills tick all the right boxes for the job in terms of information management and coordination.

The program addresses a key objective for Hume – developing our volunteers while supporting front-end service delivery. It's an intensive process, involving three separate exercises per location, but the results will be well worth it.

I'd like to acknowledge the work of everyone who's been involved with the initiative to date and look forward to seeing improvements across the board to our local command and control arrangements. ■



## HAZMAT ALERT AT YARRA GLEN STORY GERARD SCHOLTEN

**M**ore than 80 emergency service personnel turned a Yarra Valley racecourse into a scene from a chemical attack, at a multi-agency decontamination drill in June.

Led by CFA, the usually tranquil country racetrack became a hive of activity as firefighters in protective suits and breathing apparatus used special showers to 'decontaminate' around 15 'racegoers'.

CFA Eastern Metropolitan Regional Commander Graeme Armstrong said the drill was an opportunity to work in a multi-agency environment while building on CFA's hazmat capability.

"CFA's hazmat capability is increasingly in demand, particularly in the industrial areas of outer Melbourne and large regional cities. The ability to put our members

through their paces in this type of environment is invaluable," Graeme said.

The drill scenario simulated the deliberate release of a gas that affected a small section of the crowd at a large regional race meeting.

Volunteer 'victims' were isolated and moved through three decontamination zones including special enclosed showers.

Graeme said while the focus of the exercise was a deliberate chemical release, the response would be the same at a chemical spill at a factory or workplace.

Members of Victoria Police watched the exercise.

Such drills help forge stronger relationships and cooperation between brigades within CFA and other emergency services. ■

## COMPLEX CRASH TESTS AGENCIES STORY KAYLA MASKELL

**I**t's an incident that emergency service workers dread attending – a road accident with fatalities. But this was the scenario that formed part of important training held at CFA's Bangholme Training Ground in June.

The fatalities and numerous injuries were the result of a car colliding with an asphalt truck after the driver had a heart attack and lost control.

As part of the exercise, CFA was first to arrive at the scene, with Cranbourne brigade's First Lieutenant Lee Bostock acting as incident controller.

Bangholme Business Manager Leona Latcham said the incident controller initially had a car fire to deal with, but the emergency quickly became more complex when CFA members realised there were many casualties.

The injured included a number of Boral staff who had been asphaltting the

road before being struck by the car.

"Because of this, a number of other agencies and emergency services needed to become involved, which is something the incident controller had to take into account as he was handling the incident," Leona said.

"It was a great opportunity for both Boral to test its emergency procedures, and for emergency services to practise working together in this sort of environment."

Taking part in the training were CFA members from Cranbourne and Hampton Park, Ambulance Victoria, trainee paramedics from Monash University, Victoria Police, the Environment Protection Authority, WorkSafe, Boral Logistics, Boral Asphaltting and the team that coordinates Boral's emergency response. ■



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM

## MASSIVE OIL SPILL STORY KAYLA MASKELL

**M**oorooduc brigade hosted emergency services personnel from across Australia in June as part of a major pollution spill exercise.

Held over two days, Exercise Sea Dragon tested national preparedness to deal with a major oil and pollution spill on Victoria's coast.

The scenario involved a 100,000-tonne oil tanker breaching its cargo hold and releasing significant amounts of crude into Western Port Bay.

A Victorian-led multi-government and multi-agency incident management team (IMT) was set up to manage the Level Three incident.

As part of this, the incident control centre (ICC) at Moorooduc Fire Station was set up to coordinate operations at two main areas – Somers and Stony Point.

Moorooduc brigade Captain Nev Jones said that, as in a real incident, CFA would be relied on for its facilities and local knowledge.

"It's fantastic that our members have the capacity to support an operation such as this and this exercise has been a great chance for us to test how it all works," Nev said.

Nev said a significant part of the brigade's ability to host such an operation was thanks to its auxiliary. This is a group of around 18 non-operational members who

support Moorooduc brigade in a number of ways, including fundraising.

"The auxiliary has just done a fantastic job and it wouldn't have been possible without them," Nev said.

Jan Heath, president of the group, said the auxiliary had assisted with catering for the ICC, which involved providing more than 150 meals a day.

"Nev and I went out to get all the food on Sunday and then we've had the auxiliary and brigade members in here each day from 5am helping to get ready for breakfast and the rest of the day, which is morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea," Jan said.

The auxiliary also delivered meals to exercise participants out in the field, as they would do in a real incident.

During the exercise, CFA also provided mobile communications vehicles (MCVs) and comms teams, as well as logistics staff.

Exercise Sea Dragon involved the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, Australian Marine Oil Spill Centre, Department of Transport, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Department of Primary Industries, Port of Portland, Parks Victoria, Patrick Ports Hastings, St John Ambulance, Victoria Police and Mornington Shire Council. ■

## TRAINING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

**C**FA is a step closer to introducing three mobile training props. The units are now built and undergoing safety checks and evaluation.

These training units will give volunteers much better access to realistic, safe and effective operational training opportunities. The props will offer training in fighting a car fire, a factory fire and a fire in a room in a house.

In the next phase, trials and training will take place at various CFA sites across the state so that local brigades and groups in all regions have the opportunity to view and use the props.

Meanwhile, work on CFA field training grounds is also well advanced with site upgrades at Sale, Longerenong, Penhurst, Huntly, and Wangaratta. This includes improvements to breathing apparatus (BA) filling stations, classrooms, ablutions, mess areas and storage facilities.

Draft drawings have been prepared and reviewed by the CFA Protective Equipment team to ensure that the BA filling station layouts and adjacencies to other areas of each field training ground meet required safety and process standards.



The objective of this work is to ensure that volunteers and staff have access to field training grounds that are fit for purpose, deliver the learning outcomes necessary to support the operational service delivery requirements, and are located where they will provide access to the greatest number of CFA members possible. ■

# NEW STRIKE TEAM LEADERS

STORY **KERRY HANSEN**

Ten District 24 members gained their strike team leader qualification at a course run in early June in the Burrowa Pine Mountain National Park in Cudgewa North.

The day began with an early drive through the beautiful Tallangatta Valley, past a full Lake Hume. As it turned out, it was a day for beanies and long johns, with the temperature never making it into the teens.

At Shelley, course participants were divided into crews, with each crew accompanied by an assessor. The participants took turns in the role of strike team leader. From Shelley, the crews headed to the staging area at Cudgewa Fire Station. Along the way, various issues were thrown at the strike team leaders via trunking radio.

From the staging area, crews headed to the operations point at Bluff Creek campsite. A campfire was quickly lit, and we also had a camping stove and billy going so that we could have a hot drink. The low-lying fog didn't lift at all, but at least everyone could pretend they were surrounded by smoke!

Crews then headed into the park to manage their tasks and record fuel loadings and weather observations.

The newly qualified strike team leaders are Bruce Morrison (Leneva brigade), Mark Muldeary (Mitta Mitta), Shane French and Matt Dobson (Wodonga West), Gerard Peeters and Rowan Montoneri (Wodonga), Mark Goldsworthy (Baranduda), Andrew Chalmers (Tallangatta), Ken Star (Granya) and Terry Bailey (Nariel Valley).



PHOTO: KERRY HANSEN

The course couldn't have been run without volunteers assisting instructors Trevor Ebbels and Allan Rodgers. We appreciate the time given by Staging Area Manager Wally Prior, and assessors Don Downey, Neville Frichot, Jon Hansen and Howard Smith. ■

*Kerry Hansen is the training officer for Districts 23 and 24*

# BACK TO BASICS FOR CAPTAINS

STORY **GERARD SCHOLTEN**

Eastern Metropolitan region CFA captains were put through their paces during a day of fun team building activities at Bangholme in late June.

Captains participated in a series of 'back to basics' practical exercises aimed at getting their hands dirty, while building relationships and team spirit.

Acting District 13 Operations Manager Colin Brown said it was a rare opportunity for captains to get together and share their collective experience.

"Being a captain is a high pressure position with immense responsibility," Colin said.

"Sharing experiences and creating links between the top echelons of brigades can only strengthen CFA."

It built on the success of last year's inaugural forum that focused on human relations.

The captains forum has now become an important annual event. ■



PHOTO: COLIN BROWN



# FOCUS ON FIRE AWARENESS

STORY PAUL WEBSTER

Victoria's Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Forum, with a theme of 'New frontiers – where to from here', was both inspiring and entertaining.

Held at Creswick in mid July, with around 220 attendees from more than 100 brigades, it seems that community safety is really taking off.

The forum's objectives were to:

- unite and inspire 'champions' from around the state, giving them the opportunity to build networks, share local initiatives with others, and develop further projects
- enhance skills and learn new engagement and community partnership knowledge
- provide tips, tools and approaches to assist members to better engage with brigade and community members
- provide an opportunity for CFA regions and HQ to capture valuable input and feedback from our volunteers on what support and skills they need
- recognise and reward our volunteers who are active in a range of community engagement roles.

Following opening statements by Terry Hayes and Euan Ferguson (on video), Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington gave a very funny speech that made the point that firefighters no longer see community safety people as "kaftan-wearing, bong-smoking hippies" and community safety people don't view firefighters as "baggy-ass hose holders".

The first of the keynote speakers was David Chalke who focused on the effects of cultural change on Australians' attitudes and behaviours. He gave us some pointers on how to engage communities more effectively.

Then Travis Heam spoke on community profiling and how two local communities 15 kilometres apart can be so different.

We then had breakout sessions covering a range of useful topics such as recruiting brigade members for community engagement, developing a

community engagement plan, tips for Fire Safe Kids presenters, social media and emergency management, enhancing your brigade profile and thinking about the role of the group.

At dinner there was a mad hatter's trivia quiz, with the fun provided by quizmaster Bruce Jewell from Drouin West assisted by Jamie Devenish. We all wore a silly hat that we had to bring with us.

On Sunday there were two outstanding presentations by the Playback Theatre acting out scenarios, followed by 'Mr Body Language' Allan Pease, who gave a highly entertaining and fast-moving presentation.

It was a fantastic forum and I think everyone left inspired.

## INTERSTATE IDEAS

Over the border, this year's NSW Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Conference took place at the end of May. The aim was to recognise the role of engagement in organisations, promote its importance as core business, and build networks to share ideas and find solutions.

Twenty Victorian volunteers and staff (pictured above) all passionate about community safety, travelled to Wollongong for the opportunity to hear about a range of engagement initiatives that have been successful in communities across NSW. This gave CFA members ideas they could take back to their brigades and regions.

The state's programs include FireWise communities, Women's Fire Awareness Program, engaging women in bushfire safety, bushfire resilience for aboriginal communities, asset protection zones (APZ), different nationalities education, climate change awareness, and a program for vulnerable residents. All programs are delivered by volunteers in the community.

At the Friday night dinner, with a Fright Night theme, the Victorians stole the show with some fantastic costumes. ■





## SALE BRIGADE GOES BACK TO SCHOOL

STORY NICOLE COOPER-WARNEKE

Guthridge Primary School Principal Sue Burnett and her dedicated teaching staff are committed to keeping their students safe from fire.

CFA volunteers from Sale brigade, including Yvonne Dennett (pictured), visited the school in late June to help students understand the risk of house fires and what to do in the event of a fire.

CFA Operations Manager and member of the school community Allan Rankin said, "With recent house fires in and around Sale, home fire safety is at the forefront of parents' minds. We are all responsible for fire safety in the home."

Sue Burnett said, "The visit from CFA was a fantastic learning opportunity for our students. They now have skills and strategies should they ever be in a situation where there's a fire. The visit stimulated much discussion among the students and their teachers.

"It was particularly great to know that many of the students discussed their home fire safety plan with their families."

Over two days, 270 students participated in the Fire Safe Kids program, which is a wonderful achievement.

"I was overwhelmed when I returned on the second day and students were running up to me saying that they'd checked their smoke alarms and got their mum or dad to check that the alarms worked," said Sue.

As a result of the visit, teachers have requested follow-up lessons in the lead-up to summer to further educate their students. ■

*Nicole is a community education coordinator for Gippsland region*

## CAN I OR CAN'T I?

STORY PAUL HUGGETT

The updated version of *Can I or Can't I?* is now available in print and online. It covers common questions about what's legally allowed during the Fire Danger Period and on a day of Total Fire Ban (TFB).

The new *Can I or Can't I?* also reflects recent changes to the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*:

- The requirement to have a person present at all times while a fire is alight has been bolstered to include them having the capacity and means to extinguish it; and on days of Total Fire Ban this must be an adult
- There is no longer the requirement that the fire is not within 7.5 metres of a log or stump
- An organisation involved in fundraising can apply for a permit to have a barbecue on a Total Fire Ban day
- Activities such as welding, gas-cutting, soldering, grinding, charring and heating bitumen are prohibited during Total Fire Ban days without special permits that apply to these days, called Section 40 permits
- Section 40 permits can now be sought for religious and cultural reasons on Total Fire Ban days
- The restriction on the use of a gas or electric fired portable barbecue on a Total Fire Ban day to within 20 metres of a dwelling has been removed.

CFA Manager Community Resilience Gwynne Brennan is urging all CFA members to get familiar with the new publication.

"Some of these changes to the CFA Act will have a significant effect on Victorians this summer, such as the removal of restrictions around barbecues being within 20 metres of a dwelling.

"Penalties have also been increased – you can be fined close to \$30,000 if your fire gets out of control and starts a bushfire on a TFB day. You could even get up to 15 years imprisonment," Gwynne said. ■





# Tanker ON TOUR

STORY JASON LEIGH



PHOTOS: KETHI PAKENHAM

Two of CFA's new medium-sized tankers made their way around every district in the state during July and early August so that members got the opportunity to operate the impressive truck ahead of its roll-out later this year.

The \$25 million project is due to be completed by the end of June 2013, by which time 74 trucks will have been delivered to rural stations across the state.

According to Operations Manager Gary Weir the tanker is more versatile than ever before.

"The new tanker has an improved power-to-weight ratio which means it has the power of a 3.4C cab chassis but only pulling the weight of a medium tanker."

Although the outside of the new truck looks virtually the same as the recent 2.4C tanker it replaces, there are a lot of internal changes and upgrades.

"We've been able to include a lot of new features that improve the vehicle's durability and effectiveness – mainly new technology and safety systems as well as new crew protection systems," Gary said.

"The tanker features a two-staged pump powered by a 22kW diesel engine. The pump puts out 900 litres of water a minute at 700kPa pressure – double the output of the last model and on a par with a large tanker.

"This means trucks can be filled with water more quickly and will let our members get more water on to the fireground quicker."

It's also equipped with an ultra-high pressure pump with two electric rewind reels, each with 60 metres of lightweight half-inch hose.

These hoses can deliver class A foam solution at high pressure – ideal for extinguishing fires high up trees and even for blacking out when baffled at the nozzle. Class A foam is also plumbed into the main large pump.

The tanker has a chainsaw locker designed around a Farm Boss-sized chainsaw at the deck level, including a maintenance bench with separated storage for fuels, oils and protective clothing.

The district mechanical officers (DMOs) had a high level of input into the design and prototype stage.

"The DMOs have a lot of experience with regards the way the plumbing is fitted, the things that are most likely to break and how we can make them more reliable," Gary said.

"The new model will be a lot easier to maintain as a direct result of their input, from small improvements such as the low current LED lights



PHOTO: NEVILLE BRITTON

fitted throughout the vehicle, to the new 'CAN bus' electrical control system that allows them to easily fix faults from their computer."

The monitor on the bull bar is controlled by an electrically-operated joystick in the cabin, which requires less maintenance than the previous cable-operated system. The new electric system also now has a flow range of 100 to 400 litres a minute using a select flow nozzle, which is 200 litres more than the earlier cable version.

The introduction of an electrically-operated three-way pneumatic valve will make it a lot easier to switch between tank supply and hard suction. Switching between water sources is now as easy as flicking a switch and a lot easier than the old hand wheel gears that created maintenance issues.

All fibreglass parts have been replaced with aluminium or plastic to make the truck a lot more recyclable and environmentally sustainable. The new water tank is made from polyethylene, which is easier for DMOs to maintain and can be sourced in a few days rather than months.

While the cabin deck access hatch is no longer included in the design, a crew protection drop-down awning is now provided for the deck area, similar to the earlier versions of the 3.4C tanker.

The vehicle is fitted with a rear-view reversing camera and comes with an insulated storage area that holds 24 bottles of water.

The tankers will be built by Victorian manufacturers SEM Fire and Rescue and Bell Environmental. ■

**Above:** Members of Mount Warrenheip brigade inspect the new tanker

For more images and video go to [cfconnect.net.au/mediumentanker](http://cfconnect.net.au/mediumentanker)

# THROUGH THE AGES Walmer

COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM



# FACES OF CFA

## MARK SCHROEDER MURRAYVILLE BRIGADE, DISTRICT 18

### How long have you been with this brigade?

I've been a member of Murrayville since 2002. I started competing in the Region 18 demos when I was in school then did minimum skills in 2005. Now I'm fourth lieutenant.

### Why did you join CFA?

Being a member of the brigade has been a part of the family tradition with both grandfathers and my father involved. Norm Auricht, my grandfather on my mum's side, was captain of the first urban brigade, and Grandpa Bill Schroeder had some of the first mobile communications in the rural brigade. They've both passed on but the radio set is still sitting in my grandfather's Holden FJ in the shed. My father Ron Schroeder has been in the brigade for more than 40 years and he's now deputy group officer.

### What was the first incident you attended?

The first big incident was going to the Mansfield fires in 2009. Flying in a Learjet from Mildura to Albury was quite an experience. I've been in strike teams a couple of times in January and February when there's not much going on around here.

### What is the most memorable incident you've attended?

If you can call it a memorable incident, our header caught fire in the 2010 harvest. We'd only had it for a few weeks. Murrayville, Cowangie and Pinnaroo turned out but it took about 15 minutes and it was gone. Dad was lucky. The front tyre burst and blew him over and then it burnt a few hectares. My sister brought out dad's unit on the back of his ute and we put the crop out. All the neighbours came and we had seven headers helping us get the crop in over a few days. It's still very much in our minds each year when harvest comes around.

### After a hard day firefighting, what's your favourite meal?

I eat most things, so probably just a steak or whatever is going.

### What do you listen to in the car on the way home from an incident?

If it's been a rough day like a Total Fire Ban, 594 ABC radio is always good to hear what else is going on around the state.



### What have you done to protect your property?

We have a unit on my dad's ute ready to go and a portable water cart pulled by a tractor during summer when fire restrictions are on. We make firebreaks around the paddocks, and also try to burn and clean up around the sheds and houses before restrictions come in.

### What do you do when you're not firefighting?

I farm with my father running merino sheep and fat lambs and cropping wheat, barley and canola. I roustabout for us and other farmers when there's not a lot to do around the farm. I play football and tennis on weekends and ride the dirt bike when I can. ■

*Interview and photo by Leith Hillard*



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