



VFBV

VOLUNTEER FIRE
BRIGADES VICTORIA

2 Minute Briefings September 2021

The 2 Minute Briefings are a quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from recent Joint Committee discussions between CFA and VFBV.

They are intended to update members on key issues that have recently been discussed. Effort is made to include any related items that may have been progressed out of session or through other avenues that are related to each committee's subject matter. Priority is given to topics where recent progress has been made. Topics where no progress has been made or where there are differences of opinion are sometimes included to ensure members are aware of VFBV efforts in continuing to advocate for progress or outcomes.

Joint Committees are formal committees between CFA and VFBV made up of VFBV delegates appointed by VFBV State Council, and CFA management representatives appointed by CFA. They are a critical loop in our consultative structures. They endeavour to work collaboratively and cooperatively on issues but may also be required to escalate issues where resolution or common ground cannot be found - requiring executive attention.

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RADIO REPLACEMENT PROJECT

VFBV has welcomed the news that the bid to Government to fund the replacement of the current redundant radio system (including radios) has been approved. The \$126 million project will introduce new radios into the service across the state. The project has a 2 ½ year timeframe and will involve EMV and ESTA to ensure continuity with current systems in other emergency service agencies. Delegates look forward to working with CFA as consultation occurs with the project planning, selection and radio allocation policy updates. It is hoped that user-pilots will be well established by mid next year.

SUPPLEMENTARY ALERT SERVICE (SAS)

The Supplementary Alerting Service (SAS) has now over 13,000 members currently signed up to the new app. Version 4.0 update was recently delivered with improved functionality and 'bug' fixes that have been reported by volunteers. Developers are now working on future versions which will continue to deliver a system that is fully functional with user enhancements focusing on member availability and better administration improvements. A project support member has recently been approved to continue to work with developers on current issues with SAS as well as future releases and planning for the next 12 months. The SAS volunteer work group continues to meet and highlight and prioritise updates and enhancements, as well as support material. CFA will continue to communicate with members on the expected date for the next release. Members currently signed up to SAS can access FAQ sheets, user guide, support and helpdesk via the CFA members online website.

MEMBERS PORTAL

Delegates were pleased to get an update regarding the changes to the members portal but still expressed concerns that changes are going ahead without proper consideration and consultation with volunteers before changes are made. CFA has agreed to better utilise the 'Your Say CFA' portal on the CFA website to better engage and get broader member's input. Delegates have expressed the importance of building systems that are based on member feedback - as the main objective of the portal is to get more members online. Members have highlighted in the past one of the key areas that needs improvement is the search area which currently is very difficult and confusing to use. Training content has also been highlighted as one of the areas that volunteers find difficult to navigate and developers have promised to ensure the training page and Learning Management System (LMS) are easier to access. The next upgrade is expected shortly.

FIRS UPDATE

Delegates have long advocated for changes to CFA's Fire Incident Reporting System (FIRS) - advocating that brigades require better access to enter data directly rather than relying on a paper based or phone-in type system.

CFA has committed to using results from the online (support calls only) FIRS pilot to investigate and trial an expanded online system which would allow brigades to enter incident data for all calls directly through the app. The main objective of the platform will be to allow brigades to access the application and manage incident records themselves. Currently if a brigade wishes to access records they must phone into the SDRC (Service Delivery Reporting Centre) with only a very small number of brigades having direct access. The new system will allow brigades that wish to interact with the system directly to be able to do this themselves, when and where is most convenient, on an easy-to-use platform. There are a range of benefits from such an application; decreased calls between SDRC and brigades; improved incident reportability; improved compliance; more accurate data; and a technology lift up. The planned roll-out is expected to have 3 phases as it continues, rollout of the Support Report, rollout of the Primary Report and finally Reporting/Dashboard/Further Enhancements.

Joint Community Safety Committee

2 Minute Briefing



September 2021

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

CFA has informed the committee that it is intending to launch a new revised Community Engagement Framework. The framework is expected to have 3 overarching documents and is said to be grounded by the broader CFA engagement strategy that is based on CFA values. Delegates have noted the work done to date but have requested that CFA ensure appropriate engagement and consultation occur not only with the Committee but also the broader volunteer membership. CFA has committed to providing the draft framework for comment and feedback shortly.

The updated 'Community Engagement Newsletter' is one aspect of the work created by the community engagement team to better connect with Regions. Currently the newsletter is used to inform staff across the regions but responding to feedback, CFA now wishes to extend this to all volunteer Community Safety Co-ordinators so they are better informed of issues occurring within their patch. Delegates are supportive of this approach and has requested more involvement with this important work.

MOBILE EDUCATION UNITS

A small working group has been meeting with the Mobile Education Unit Project team and CFA engineering to complete a role statement and equipment list for the Mobile Education Units (MEU). CFA received \$950,000 from the CFA Donations Trust to go towards 10 MEU's to be distributed across the state. The vehicles will be available to brigades to use at open days, markets, community education events and fire safety awareness days for Community Safety Officers to deliver bushfire safety education to Victorian communities, schools, public events and tourist hotspots. The vehicles will also be able to be deployed to support and educate communities during major incidents. The vans will be fully self-supported with battery management system and solar panels for events where 240 volt power is unavailable. It is proposed to build several smaller units and some larger vehicles for use at significant events. All units will be able to be driven on a standard car licence and will come fully equipped to ensure a consistent fire safety message is delivered to communities across the state.

COMMUNITY SAFETY CONTENT PORTAL

There have been some significant changes made recently to the Community Safety content portal as a consequence of member feedback. The content portal is a one stop shop for Community Engagement brigade members to access information, programs, and key messages for your community. Content portal videos have been developed to assist members to log in and navigate the resources available as well as easy to access tabs directing members to common areas of interest. To access the page, type CFA Content Portal into the search box of the CFA members area on the CFA website, or go to the Members online homepage and click Programs → Community Programs and the link for the portal is on the right.

CONTENT REVIEW

For some time now delegates have been asking to be directly involved in the publication review process, in the last two minute briefings in June delegates reported of their wish to strengthen the consultation and engagement process when reviewing publications. A new content development and review process has been developed to give greater clarity around the work that goes into content review and development and hopes to provide a consistent approach making it easier to prioritise reviews. There are currently 51 publications, animations, videos, key messages, corporate campaigns as well as web and internet content being reviewed. Delegates are excited that they can finally have greater input into the review and guidance on the key messages sent out to communities. Delegates reminded CFA that while the new content is welcome there needs to also be a quality control process to ensure that the old publications are removed from service when the new content is distributed, and to ensure sufficient time is provided to consult more broadly with the membership.

Joint Equipment and Infrastructure Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2021

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

F15 STRUCTURAL HELMET STOWAGE

The stowage options in appliances for the new F15 structural helmet has provided CFA engineering with many challenges. Members would understand that this process is complicated due to the many variants in CFA's fleet of Tanker, Pumpers and specialist vehicles however work is progressing, and delegates continue to advocate strongly for appropriate stowage options. Priority was given to Pumpers (due to the higher proportion of F15 helmets) and now the DMO workshops are carrying out the changes to Tankers as required. Thanks must go to the brigades that tested brackets and bags and provided feedback to CFA to ensure the best option was chosen. There have been many challenges with consideration given to passenger safety, accessibility and compliance with OH&S regulations and vehicle limitations. Brackets and bags have been ordered and are due to be fitted to tankers in the near future.

FUTURE STATION DESIGN

Delegates are continuing to request CFA consider a significant review of new station designs. With innovation and technology progressing in leaps and bounds volunteer stations have not had a substantive design review since 2013. Many brigades are retrofitting stations with alternative energy sources to reduce their carbon footprint and using grant money and community funds to bring their stations up to modern building compliance. There are many brigades who are looking at OH&S concerns with ventilation and are requesting mechanical ventilation of motor rooms, separate turnout rooms, motorisation of doors, security upgrades and changeroom and toilet upgrades. VFBV is advocating for a full review of designs and broad engagement with brigades to discuss future options.

In related news, delegates have requested the close monitoring of the ACT emergency Service Agency (ESA) development of a concept zero emission hybrid electric fire truck that is in development. The intent will be to use the ACT's research and development to learn from and inform future discussions and technology options for the future.

MEDIUM PUMPER REVIEW

DPC's and VFBV District Councils have reported on early discussions occurring at the local levels regarding the upcoming refurbishment/replacement of ageing medium pumpers. The committee was told there are currently 50 of the NSW back pumpers that will need refurbishment or replacement in the next few years. The current medium pumper built on the Scania cab chassis is considered by many to be a very capable appliance that meets the needs of users. While CFA has no immediate plans to build any new medium pumpers - committee members have seen the upcoming future replacement deadlines as an opportunity to instigate a timely review of the current Scania type 3 medium pumpers. CFA has agreed to work with VFBV to establish a process to begin the review. We will keep you informed as this work progresses.

STORZ UPDATE

In a good news story for volunteer persistence, CFA has committed to fully fund the completion of the Storz coupling rollout across the state.

Members will remember there has been some resistance over the past few years for the organisation to commit to funding this program asking brigades to fund this equipment themselves by using donation funds or grant schemes. VFBV delegates have been very clear to CFA that brigades having to fundraise to buy operational and essential equipment such as fire hoses for example - is not fair nor reasonable and CFA needs to fully budget for such large programs of essential and basic equipment. While delegates have queried the funding allocated to each region, believing it is under resourced, CFA have agreed to fully fund the project and brigades will hopefully see this completed within the next 12 months

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FLU VACCINATIONS

State Council have endorsed a request from VFBV District 22 Council to pursue with CFA the provision of free flu vaccinations being made available to all operational CFA volunteers each year. Similar programmes are common across the private sector, where employers frequently cover the cost of annual flu vaccinations. Given the increased risks encountered by volunteer first responders, and the \$2.5 billion dollars of value provided by emergency management volunteers to Victoria each year - VFBV is advocating for a similar program to be made available across CFA.

Preliminary discussions with CFA have indicated that while CFA is open to discussing it, estimated costs of \$1 million per annum was prohibitive. VFBV has requested more detail on CFA's costings and assumptions, as delegates believe CFA's figures may be over-stated. The program being advocated by VFBV would be opt-in only, and if co-supported by government, would compliment the federal governments National Immunisation Program (NIP) which provides free influenza vaccines for the over 65's. We will keep you updated on progress.

CFA COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The Committee has discussed the latest data relating to completed and ongoing complaint cases. VFBV continues to highlight time frames as being a continual challenge for CFA and these concerns are well supported by the data. CFA have advised that in order to better case manage ongoing complaints, CFA have established a 'case tracker' to ensure all actions are captured and followed up and provide transparency on case load and progress. While VFBV welcome any tool that will assist in the timely resolution of complaints, VFBV will continue to monitor and strongly advocate the need to improve these measures and will continue to monitor time frames as systems and processes are refined.

Clayton Utz (law firm) was engaged by CFA early in 2020 to manage 66 historical 'legacy' cases. CFA has reported that to date, six of those cases have been resolved. VFBV has expressed concern with the low number of resolved cases, with CFA advising that these legacy cases were complex and interconnected. CFA has provided an assurance that many of these matters have reached a point where they are expected to be resolved shortly. VFBV will continue to monitor.

To provide stronger advocacy and address VFBV's ongoing concerns around the processes being used by CFA to manage complaints, VFBV has formed a small working party to liaise with CFA Management out of session on issues relating to the complaints process and management. This working group will provide information gleaned directly from volunteers involved in complaint matters both as complainants and respondents. It is hoped this information will further influence change and drive more timely policy around the complaints process in the future. VFBV also urge any volunteer who has been involved in the complaints process, either as a complainant or respondent, participate in the "Customer Satisfaction Survey" that is offered at the completion of the complaint process. The information provided enables CFA and VFBV to evaluate more clearly the effectiveness of independent contractors engaged by CFA as mediators and investigators; if case management is efficient and supporting volunteers with updates and welfare checks; how the overall system is improving and if not - where the challenges remain.

CHILD SAFETY

Delegates have highlighted several concerns around some wording in 'CFA's draft Child Safety Behaviours Statement', which required more clarity and CFA has agreed to refine those statements to address the concerns. CFA have also discussed its intent to provide Child Safety training exclusively via an online course for volunteers to complete. VFBV has reiterated our support for this important work but highlighted the increasing burden placed on volunteers with the delivery of courses only available online and are seeking a more flexible blended model that would also provide face-to-face options for those locations that would prefer. VFBV is also advocating that CFA volunteer Junior Leaders are well placed to lead and contribute to courses, including delivery. It is believed that the very sensitive nature of the subject

matter and possible misinterpretations could be better addressed in some situations by face-to-face options. In further news, excellent progress is being made with over 8,500 CFA volunteers now hold Working with Children Checks.

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

GROUND OBSERVERS

VFBV delegates continue to advocate for CFA to develop a clear pathway for members who wish to take up the role of ground observer. A discussion paper was recently sent to current ground observers with the intent on producing a volunteer role statement. Delegates have reviewed the draft role statement and provided feedback. The ground observer course is currently being updated to PUA19 with the training department advising VFBV it should be completed and courses ready to run during September, in time for this coming fire season. The intent is for CFA to roll out prerequisite courses once they have the final sign off by the Chief Officer. CFA has also purchased 13 Panasonic tough books and six battery powered chainsaws for six of the ground observer kits in preparation for the upcoming fire season.

TREE HAZARD AWARENESS UPDATE

Delegates were pleased to hear at their July meeting that CFA has almost completed the alignment of Hazardous Tree awareness to the 2019 AFAC guidance package. The final stages of the review are being undertaken by a Forest Fire Management Vic, CFA, and a subject matter expert group. A train the trainer workshop will ensure that instructors can train other suitable instructors to deliver the course. Alongside the tree hazard awareness package, the tree hazard awareness content has been updated to align with changes to the national tree marking system developed by AFAC. The package is close to completion and will go to the Chief Officer for final sign off.

FIRE INVESTIGATORS

VFBV advocacy on maintaining volunteer structural fire investigators continues to result in welcome changes to the rigid and discriminatory processes attempted to be introduced since the introduction of the Fire Service Reforms in July 2020. CFA and FRV have undertaken detailed discussions which have resulted in good progress on developing more open and transparent processes that respect and utilise volunteer fire investigators. In the 12-month period since reform, 339 fire investigations were conducted by the CFA in the country area of Victoria. Over 220 of these were structural fire investigations highlighting why CFA needs this critical capacity. There is still work to be done to ensure the ongoing training and utilisation of volunteer fire investigators, however with the commissioning of the new Huntly training ground which incorporates specialised capacity for fire investigator training - there are positive signs moving forward.

DEFIBRILLATORS

While it has taken some time, VFBV's campaign for every CFA appliance to have a defibrillator has reached an important milestone with the purchase and distribution of 426 additional defibrillators issued to brigades through the donations trust money donated during the horrific 2019-2020 bushfire season. While we still have some way to reach coverage for every vehicle, these additional defibrillators now mean almost every CFA brigade will now have a defibrillator available.

The extra defibs ensure our first responders now have access to this life saving equipment at most incidents. There are now 1700 defibrillators in CFA brigades across the state. VFBV encourages all defibs to be registered on Ambulance Victoria's public database of AED's (Automated External Defibrillator's) which can be utilised by the GoodSAM network that links trained responders to someone in cardiac arrest. Ambulance Victoria has led the use of public access defibrillators since 2002. A study in 2016 demonstrated how critical this program was, with every person during the study period who suffered a cardiac arrest at Melbourne Airport for example and was given a shock via a defibrillator, receiving it from a bystander.

In related news, VFBV is continuing to advocate for the expansion of CFA's Emergency Medical Response (EMR) program. Currently there are seven volunteer brigades participating in EMR, with members undertaking significant specialist training with Ambulance Victoria that enables the brigade to co-respond with Ambulance Victoria to specific 'Priority Zero' life threatening emergencies within their community. Work continues to try and garner government support and funding.

Joint Training Committee

2 Minute Briefing



September 2021

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

VOLUNTEER TRAINER AND ASSESSORS

VFBV representatives to the committee have recently made a formal request for CFA to engage in an authentic and genuine process to further enhance the capability and recognition of Volunteer Trainer and Assessors who continue to provide an excellent service to the membership. VFBV's request is based on your feedback and includes recommendations from reviews into training and informal discussions and statements that have occurred in the past, including feedback from the annual VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey.

Suggested initiatives include but are not limited to, identifiable helmets to be made available to all trainers and assessors, funded workwear allocation, additional PPC and genuine promotion, encouragement, recruitment, and retention of trainers & assessors. CFA has committed to consultation on these requests and has indicated in-principle support for most of the recommendations, agreeing that the recognition and enhancement of trainers and assessors is vitally important to the success of training delivery across CFA.

STRUCTURAL FIREFIGHTER COURSES

VFBV is continually receiving communications from Brigades expressing concerns that access to structure firefighting courses is increasingly difficult with CFA not running enough courses to meet the demands of our brigades. VFBV continues to raise this directly with CFA, sighting many reasons why this training is so important to Brigades and the safety of all members. CFA have reported that course and training planning/delivery is the responsibility of individual Districts with ACFO's being accountable for these activities. Although VFBV doesn't entirely accept that all the accountability sits at the District level alone (especially resourcing or IR/personnel issues that contribute to barriers), we do encourage brigades who are having issues with training plans or course scheduling to speak directly to your Districts in the first instance and escalate through your VFBV District Councils where required.

Related to the issues of unavailability of structural firefighter courses has been a failure in the past to properly engage and endorse trainers and assessors to be able to deliver structure firefighter training - resulting in only career staff being able to deliver training. CFA have committed to VFBV that where trainers and assessors hold the competencies and want to become endorsed to deliver Structure Firefighter, there will be no barriers stopping them progressing. VFBV will continue to pursue.

LPG EMERGENCY RESPONSE TRAINING

Delegates continue to raise with CFA serious concerns with the lack of training available to CFA members in LPG emergency response. CFA has many brigades that provide a specialist response to LPG incidents and currently can't access the acquisition training to qualify new members or re-accredit existing members. CFA have reported to VFBV that while the current training package for LPG response is a shared package between FRV and CFA (formally MFB and CFA), CFA can't deliver the package due to complications with scoping of registration. CFA has had a commitment by FRV that they will conduct the training based on priorities and needs for CFA on a short-term basis until CFA is in a position to deliver the training internally. Brigades that are affected by this are encouraged to speak to your District Training Team who will be able to organise priority training if required.

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS NAMING CONVENTIONS

VFBV would like to sincerely thank all those that took the time to submit nominations for the road naming network at CFA's new training ground - Central Highlands in Ballan. VFBV coordinated the nomination process on behalf of CFA, referring all nominations for further consideration by the CFA Executive. We were impressed with the calibre of nominations received and inspired with the work that volunteers continue to do for CFA and our communities.

Joint Volunteerism Committee

2 Minute Briefing



September 2021

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

BRIGADE CAPABILITY REVIEW

District Councils and Brigades continue to raise concerns with VFBV about the inconsistencies of Brigade Section 29 Inspections. Brigades have indicated that Section 29 inspections can quite often be one way and that there should be more transparency in how CFA management can help address issues raised. The annual brigade review pilot has been completed with CFA and delegates looking into next steps to progress this important initiative. The objective of the annual brigade review (ABR) was to empower volunteers to develop and maintain the capability required to manage the risk in their communities. The intent was to empower volunteers to help CFA make decisions where support is required and directed in a timely manner. To better reflect both the broader context and the interdependencies between ABR, Baseline Capability Profiling Application (BCPA) and other enterprise-level priorities, the program name has been changed to 'Brigade Capability Review' (BCR). Delegates will continue to progress with CFA the importance of the program for CFA to better support Brigades in timely fashion and also meet the requirements of the Section 29 inspection.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER ACTION REVIEW

The Urban Junior State Championships was held on 20 and 21 March with the combined Urban Senior and Rural Senior / Junior on 27 and 28 March, both in Mooroopna. An extensive after action review has been conducted with all stakeholders contributing valuable feedback. This was the first time in the event's history that the Urban Senior and Rural Senior / Junior events ran concurrently and overall feedback during the events was overall very positive, particularly given the circumstances and challenges faced in the lead up to the event. Like anything, there is always room for improvement. The after-action review (AAR) took place with eight online focus groups (focused on their specific area of expertise) along with a survey that was provided to various members who attended the event. Delegates are keen to review the report to see what learnings there are and also help inform the future direction of Championships.

YOUTH CADETS UPDATE

As reported last quarter, work is progressing on the cadet pilot program to develop activities and requirements for CFA youth members to participate in the pilot program. The program is being developed with input from delegates with experience in youth and school-based programs along with various CFA departments to ensure progression towards the ongoing program. The selection process is being discussed to ensure all members have access and that it is inclusive and fair.

The pilot program will investigate having a "Cadet" rank for all 16/17 year olds and better ways to engage parents/guardians and the use of a residential component along with the use of IT platforms. It is envisaged that as part of the program there will be a community project for members to participate in to ensure community connections and engagement. The program will now be expanded to forty 16 and 17 year old's across the state, this will ensure a diverse range of members, with a start date proposed of October 2021 and completed by June 2022. This pilot is being developed to encourage and develop our 16/17 year old members and will further enhance retention rates in our youth.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY MEDAL

Delegates were pleased that the long awaited FAQ sheet and member list has now been sent to all Brigades to assist them in the nomination process for the National Emergency Medal which was announced by the Prime Minister on Australia Day 2020. The FAQ sheet will provide clarity to enable a more simplified process for nominating members along with who may be eligible based on CFA records. Brigades are encouraged to review the spreadsheet and verify this to ensure no members are missing from the list. Those members that have not previously been awarded an NEM will receive a medal and clasp with "BUSHFIRES 19-20" and those previously issued a medal (such as Black Saturday – '09 Fires) will receive a clasp to be added to their existing medal ribbon. Delegates are keen to be involved and provide assistance regarding presentations of the medal and will review the '09 Fires presentation for learnings.