



VFBV

VOLUNTEER FIRE
BRIGADES VICTORIA

2 Minute Briefings June 2022

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.

Joint Communications & Technology Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2022

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

NEW WORKING GROUPS

The VFBV Joint Communications and Technology Committee members have welcomed a move to work more collaboratively to develop several Working Groups.

The first Work group being proposed is to look at the Microsoft 365 Applications for members. This is the result of volunteer questions relating to requests to manage their own contact lists, access to additional SharePoint functionality, and difficulties adding CFA member email address into some versions of Outlook. The Committee are also investigating other parts of the Microsoft suite for improvements such as the adoption of Microsoft Forms to enable the use of a tick sheet as an alternative instead of members having to continue to use paper based forms which are easily misplaced or lost in transit.

The second Work Group will be discussing the future of Mobile Communication Vans (MCV) and Forward Operations Vehicles or FOV's as they are commonly called. This Work Group will consist of one member from each Region and a Representative from the brigade or group responsible for the MCV / FOV. Further details will be shared shortly.

The third Working Group is investigating the refurbishing of CFA laptops that are no longer required or being replaced by CFA. Delegates to the committee have requested CFA investigate 'refurbishing' these laptops and offering them to brigades. The Working group will consider their performance, reliability, and software availability as well as the cost of the work required to get them to the point of being available for Brigades.

MEMBER PARTICIPATION APP

Delegates have requested greater transparency and consultation on a project being scoped for a Brigade Management App that is being developed to allow for the recording of member activities. VFBV continues to advocate for the urgent need for CFA systems to support the more holistic recognition and capture of valuable volunteer time and energy donated to the community. Traditionally, CFA systems only track emergency incident response and attendance, meaning there is a lack of recognition for not only non-emergency activities such as community education and engagement, but also recording of members time and effort when participating in prescribed burn activities and the like.

ESTA (FIRECOMM) PROCEDURES

The Committee is investigating an issue escalated by a VFBV District Council about the procedure where ESTA will seek clarification or direction from a responding appliance when a Group Officer or Group Management Team officer has requested additional resources. The issue is thought to be a flow-on impact from Groups not being adequately recognised or respected in CFA's reporting structure.

The lack of evidence from observation reports has hampered the Committee's ability to progress this issue and delegates are seeking further information from brigades and groups. This issue has highlighted the importance of observation reports and formal escalation of issues to ensure adequate documentation is available to assist with advocacy.

Members are requested to submit Observation Reports concerning this issue, with a copy to please be sent to VFBV Support Officer p.sharman@vfbv.com.au

A similar concern was raised where a Fire Tower's advice concerning responses to incidents at locations where there are multiple calls or the location is near a known registered burn off. Once again VFBV requests that copies of any recent or future Observation Reports of this happening can be forwarded to p.sharman@vfbv.com.au so that the progress of this issue can be monitored.

Joint Community Safety Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2022

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

NEW AUSTRALIAN FIRE DANGER RATING SYSTEM ROLLOUT

The rollout of the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) is underway and is being led by Emergency Management Victoria (EMV). EMV will be in charge of the campaign to communicate the new system to the Victorian public. The changes to the public facing resources and the messaging into the community is a large body of work and will be undertaken by CFA. The current timeframe for completion of this work is September 2022. A comprehensive workplan is intended to include looking at current web content, publications and program resources and deciding what to replace, retire or redesign.

There will be some development of training resources to assist CFA members who deliver community engagement programs, advice and support to ensure old materials are replaced at all levels including at the brigade level and stakeholder engagement with organisations external to CFA, including local government and communities. An audit of CFA's resources is underway and has already identified this project will affect around 160 key pieces of content. Further to this is the significant number of Fire Danger Rating signs that are scattered across the state. It is intended to engage with Districts and brigades as this project continues, and we will keep you informed of progress.

FIRE INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS SCHEME (FIGS)

Members involved in Community Engagement for some time may have been involved in the Fire Access Roads Subsidy Scheme (FARSS) which provided grants to communities for fire related activities. Changes to the scheme have included a rename to – Fire Infrastructure Grants Scheme (FIGS) as many of the projects over time included infrastructure items, for example water tanks and access roads.

The aim of the scheme is to assist municipal councils with projects that directly benefit community safety in CFA areas. Brigades may identify projects in collaboration with their local councils and apply for funding through the scheme. Projects are categorised as fire access road construction, fire access road maintenance, static water supply and 'other'. Expressions of interest are submitted to the Manager Community Safety at the District CFA level and must align to the FIGS guidelines criteria for consideration. Projects are prioritized at the State level and funding is provided to successful applicants after the completion of works.

FIRE SAFETY PLANNING WORKSHOPS

Through completed research and feedback, Fire Safety Planning Workshops, also known as Bushfire Planning Workshops, are being redeveloped to better empower participants to be aware of the risk posed by fire. Fire Safety Planning Workshops are information sessions which are targeted at people living in high-risk environment and are designed to enable people to create their own fire plans that is relevant to their geographical location and risk factors.

These workshops are designed in a way that they can be tailored to specific communities or interest groups. After consultation with communities, workshops will have a number of core topics, which will be included in all workshops and topics which can be included to suit the group participating. These tailored subjects may range from climate change, land management or caring for livestock. The committee was asked to provide feedback on what they think should be the core subjects that are included in every Fire Safety Planning Workshops. Further consultation will occur with brigades and communities over coming months with workshops ready for delivery in time for fire season.

Members can have their say on what they believe should be included by visiting: www.yoursay.cfa.vic.gov.au

Joint Equipment and Infrastructure Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2022

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

COVID-19 IMPACTS CONTINUE

We have previously reported the COVID-19 impact on equipment and fleet management. Significant delays have seen the rollout of projects slow to a crawl with the supply of components and staffing shortages with body builders and suppliers impacted heavily. Due to the lack of supply of cab chassis from overseas there have been delays in the process on numerous appliances builds due to be completed this year such as ULT, light tankers, rehab units and big fills.

The Donations Trust Breathing Apparatus project has been delayed significantly due to impacts on manufacturing and shipping. The scope of the project is to procure, commission and deliver 234 breathing apparatus sets and 468 BA cylinders to 116 brigades. 43 of these brigades have not previously had BA. Currently 80 sets and 160 cylinders have been delivered to date with deliveries to continue as stock arrives.

The other impact from COVID is with the cost of materials for station development and refurbishment projects. Materials in the building industry in some instances have risen 30%. This impacts greatly on VESEP projects that brigades may have scoped for last year's allocation of VESEP. The VESEP steering committee has been working closely with CFA to understand and plan for the impact this has on the organisation and brigades as projects continue.

APPLIANCE REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

Delegates have supported a new CFA Appliance Replacement program. Currently there are 4 main funding sources for replacement appliances: Capital Replacement Program (base funding), VESEP Grants, Fire Service Statement for specialist appliances and adhoc Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) submissions.

Some of the factors that determine funding availability are profile and condition of appliance typology assessed against the Victorian Government Accountability Framework (AMAF) requirements based on asset fit for purpose, make and model of appliance being replaced (typology), appliances condition assessments to determine disposals, crew cab capability requirements to match topography, wear and tear, mechanically fit for purpose, brigade classification & risk profile, identified prioritised replacements and the life span or age of the appliance.

With the recent Victorian budget announcement of no increase in CFA's budget for replacement of appliances it is more important than ever that consultation must involve brigades, groups, district ACFO's, APO's and DMO's to ascertain typology priorities. As a further development training and service exchange vehicles will be factored into the cascade process and all decisions will be communicated to the regions and districts.

SPECIALIST RESPONSE

The CFA Donations Trust has approved the allocation of \$1.04m to purchase important life-saving equipment for brigades across the state. This new equipment will improve the safety of both firefighters and community members at incidents. One part is a new state of the art lighting package which includes a high output 6000 lumens light stand that is currently run-on CFA rescue appliances, this light is coupled with a PAL light, which is a 1500 lumen portable light, it has a flexible or extendable mounting clip and a magnetic base to allow it to be used in multiple situations. Other equipment includes an 18 volt toolkit with a drill, impact driver, grinder and reciprocating saw, there will be a total of 5 batteries in the kit and 2 chargers.

These kits are currently carried on CFA rescue appliances and have been proven to be successful and a step forward to removing 240 volt equipment as part of this improvement in safety, removing trip hazards, electrocution risks and test and tags costs, whilst also reducing OH&S risk to users.

Joint HR, Welfare and OH&S Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2022

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

COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS UPDATE

The committee discussed the resolution of over 150 'legacy' complaint cases in recent months. VFBV congratulated CFA on achieving this milestone, as long-time frames have been a constant concern for volunteers in recent years. Delegates were also eager to understand the level of volunteer satisfaction in the finalisation of their cases and have requested a breakdown of how legacy cases were resolved and importantly what was the volunteer experience and feedback to those resolutions. The "Member Satisfaction Survey" questionnaire is again available to volunteers who are involved in the complaints process, as a complainant or respondent. VFBV believe it is crucial for volunteers to be able to speak to their experience of the complaints process and contribute valuable feedback in order for CFA to improve and refine their procedures. VFBV would encourage any volunteer who has been a complainant or respondent in a complaint case, to request the Member Satisfaction Survey to complete.

Delegates have also requested CFA make volunteers involved in the discipline process aware of the assistance, guidance and support, available to them from VFBV.

HEARING ADVOCATES

After long advocacy, VFBV are currently engaged in work with CFA to create appropriate training and ongoing development of volunteers, identified as potential Hearing Advocates, to assist volunteers who are called to a CFA hearing, as a respondent. Hearing Advocates will already possess relevant skill sets and could potentially be found in vocations such as police, law, Human Resources, OH&S specialists, among others. The CFA Hearing is not a court of law, so expertise in Victorian law is not a prerequisite. Experience and knowledge in principles such as procedural fairness and natural justice would be well regarded. Hearing Advocates will be instructed in the CFA Act and CFA Regulations and the Hearing Process itself. CFA have also agreed to tangible support for Hearing Advocates which addresses VFBV's request for measures to correct the power imbalance that is often present in CFA's current disciplinary procedures. If you are interested in discussing the role of Hearing Advocate, please contact VFBV's Dispute Resolution Officer Christine Fryer via c.fryer@vfbv.com.au for more information.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS

CFA and VFBV continues to encourage all members to obtain a working with children check. The process is completed via the Services Victoria app, or website. You will be required to photograph two (2) personal identity documents and a photo of yourself and upload to the Services Victoria site. A barcode is then forwarded to your mobile phone. You may then attend an Australia post office to complete the process. VFBV have been assisting volunteers who have unfortunately found the process onerous and not always successful, following a number of attempts. VFBV raised this issue with the CFA and requested that a communique be forwarded to District offices to encourage volunteers to attend and be assisted through the process by District staff, if required.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CFA briefed the committee on Volunteer Leadership Development including planning and resourcing for the Volunteering for Leadership program, Development Workshops, the Regional Scholarship Program, which includes the provision of ten (10) fully funded places for 2022 for volunteers, and the well-known Captains Mentoring Program. CFA intend to expand the team to deliver the Captains Mentoring Program and delegates suggested that CFA could consider tapping into existing volunteer Trainers and Assessors.

Joint Operations Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2022

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

ALTERNATE POWER SYSTEMS

The Committee is in active discussions with CFA, alongside a small group of industry experts to review doctrine and capability for brigades dealing with the increased incidence of emergencies involving alternate power systems. Alternative Power Systems can include Electric vehicles which are expected to make up 50% of road users by 2030, Battery Energy Storage systems (BESS), wind and solar which are expanding into large acreage solar farms and wind farms on a larger scale across much of the state as well as lesser known Geothermal and Hydrogen including fuel cells. Research and consultation are expected to continue throughout the year, with a roadmap being developed to inform future training and capability discussions across the State. We will keep you informed of progress.

SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY

Delegates have participated in a Concept of Operations (ConOPS) workshop exploring how CFA's operational response model fits in and supports Victoria's State Emergency Management plan. Similar workshops are being held with Group Officers and DPC's and ACFO's to help inform early work on the Chief Officer's forward-looking review of CFA's service delivery strategy.

The initial workshop considered three scenario's involving bushfire response, structural response, and specialist response.

In the case of grassfire and bushfire, the workshop acknowledged that CFA are considered world leaders in this space, and explored the increased role of recent improvements, such as aircraft being used for night suppression activities. Future leaning conversations looked at the potential for the use of drones for surveillance and planning.

Fireground support was also recognised, with the critical roles of rehabilitation units, staging areas, bulk water carriers to name just a few. The workshop not only covered their capability, but discussions on what ratio's these support services are required to ensure the safety of firefighters and the public alike.

When exploring the structural scenario, delegates discussed initial attack options involving pumpers and tankers, but also looked at the potential for greater BA support, hose layers, bulk water carriers, and the use of robotics and drones to enhance CFA's capability.

The discussion on CFA's specialist response covered not only current capability, but explored areas that may need to be considered in the future. Discussions covered existing CFA specialist response such as Hazmat, High Angle Rescue, Road Crash Rescue, Medical response, and large animal rescue to name just a few.

Command and control featured prominently in all scenario discussions. Another highlight was the importance of communications and the important role communications technology can play, and the need to better keep up with advances and newer technology, while maintaining redundancy and reliability.

Discussions and consultation is expected to continue, and we will keep you updated as it progresses.

ACFO AND COMMANDER VACANCIES

The Committee continues to monitor the impacts of ACFO and Commander vacancies and continues to advocate on the importance of filling these gaps to address the down-stream impacts that result, including a lack of continuity and the large impacts this has on brigades and groups.

CFA advises that it continues to discuss these issues with FRV, and is hoping the recent lateral-entry appointments should start to ease the pressure caused by long-term vacancies. The Committee will continue to monitor.

Joint Training Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2022

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

TRAINER & ASSESSOR ENDORSEMENTS

VFBV delegates on the Joint Training Committee have proposed a systematic and State based appeals process be implemented for TA (Trainer & Assessor) endorsements after VFBV reviewed complaints from dedicated and committed TAs that they are being denied the opportunity to become endorsed to deliver training programs to members. Currently, the State policy for TA endorsement is for District ACFO's and MLD's to endorse or deny TAs to deliver training programs with no accountability or justification required to be given to a TA as to why a decision has been reached. In many situations where TAs have engaged VFBV for help there has been no reasonable justification of denied endorsements. In many cases no genuine or methodical explanations have been given to TAs with many examples of personality differences and instability of ACFO positions leading to poor outcomes. VFBV recognise the contribution that TAs have on CFA and advocate strongly that TAs must be given the opportunity to deliver training and must also be given the respect for a fair and reasonable process of endorsement and/or professional development based on their professionalism and ability. CFA has agreed to work collaboratively with VFBV to develop a fair and non-bias appeals process to ensure ongoing effectiveness of TA's and better transparency in the local endorsement processes.

RPL PROCESS

VFBV representatives to the Joint Training Committee have formally re-requested that CFA act upon volunteer feedback and experiences in order to improve the current time-consuming, cumbersome and unrealistic RPL process currently in place within CFA Training. VFBV along with a cohort of RPL assessors recently consolidated a large number of issues relating to RPL in order to understand the frustrations and concerns, outlining these formally to OD&T. CFA has responded to the request and have reported that an RPL Process plan is currently being drafted within OD&T. VFBV look forward to consulting on the draft process plan and working towards a user-friendly but robust RPL process into the future.

OPERATE PUMPS

At the recent Joint Training Committee VFBV has once again requested that CFA prioritise further development on a fixed process for members to achieve national competencies in both Prepare, Maintain and test response equipment and Operate Pumps. An acquisition and PRL course for these units needs to be acted upon to ensure CFAs commitment to members as communicated in 2020 and 2021. Many members would recall, that in 2020 a large contingent of CFA members received communication from CFA that the national unit of competency – Operate Pumps had been removed after CFA incorrectly awarded them due to a fault with competency mapping and were required to regain certificates to satisfy an external audit.

VFBV do encourage members to return certificates if required however members should also express interest in regaining the competencies if they so desire. This can be done via the Learning Management System (LMS) or by contacting District Learning and Development teams.

DRIVER TRAINING

After constant advocacy from VFBV, we were happy to recently learn that two driver training courses have been released for delivery to the field. Both Drive on-roads and Drive off-roads were removed for delivery late last year due to the requirement to have the units updated to latest units of competency and legislation changes. The new courses are both available for members via LMS with it expected that Districts will be scheduling additional courses to keep up with demand. VFBV will continue to work with CFA on changes and improvements to Driving Policy and Legislation which was again taken down to allow for legislative and JSOP/ SOP changes. Brigades are reminded that all training is scheduled through your District office, so please ensure any brigade requirements and requests for training are documented and sent to your District to ensure it informs your District training plan.

Joint Volunteerism Committee

2 Minute Briefing



June 2022

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

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT HUB

In December last year we reported that the Volunteer recruitment hub was undergoing an overhaul and the proposed changes were progressing well. The new online system is an automated registration process for new members and addresses many of the issues raised by volunteers about missing applications, applications taking too long and improves privacy. The working party has met regularly over the past 12 months to monitor the online system to ensure each new applicant has a clear process when applying to become a member of the organisation. The process for transferring members will also be via the online portal. The new system went live at the end of March and CFA has developed a New Member Registration Guide that is sent out to the member after the brigade has recommended them for membership. The booklet covers CFA values, Child Safe Policy, Working with Children check and much more valuable information about joining CFA. Members of the working party worked very hard to ensure that there was an assistance pathway available to any new member or Brigade who requires help in signing up. The Volunteer Recruitment Hub user manual is available online or new volunteers and BMT's can contact the district office for more assistance. CFA made a commitment that any member who does not have access to the internet or an electronic device will be supported by staff. As with all new systems, the working party will monitor the progress of implementation, and review any issues or unintended consequences raised by members on the new system.

WORKWEAR ROLLOUT

The new Volunteer workwear is continuing to be rolled out across the state. Sizing sessions are being held in many districts with many more to come over the next few months. Given the State Competitions are CFA's largest public facing event of the year, CFA worked hard in the time leading up to the championships to ensure that Judges and Officials were provided with workwear for this year's State Championships held in March. Reports from members who have received the workwear have been positive and many volunteers are keen for the arrival of the gear at their brigade. If you are nominated by your brigade to receive the workwear you are highly encouraged to attend a sizing session when they come to your area.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY MEDAL (NEM)

The first National Emergency Medal ceremony from the devastating 2019-2020 fires were held in District 11 over the past month. Delegates to the Volunteerism Committee have worked hard to advocate for members in the hardest hit areas, Districts 11 and 24 to have the first allocation of medals as they were directly impacted by the fires. 348 Volunteers from East Gippsland received their NEM from his excellency Governor General David Hurley, CFA CO Jason Heffernan and CFA board member Dawn Hartog. There have been over 5500 applicants for the NEM and the first ceremony in east Gippsland is one of many to be held and will continue over the next 12 months. As a further aspect to the NEM was the 2019-2020 Bushfire Recognition Pins. With over 10,000 members eligible the rollout will take some time and members are asked to remain patient as CFA work through the process.

INFORMATION SECURITY POLICY

To address concerns raised by members about the security of the data they provide to CFA, the Committee is reviewing CFA's information security policy. The Victorian Protective Data Security Standards (VPDSS) ensure that CFA comply with endorsed information security policies. CFA has recently undergone a revision of the IT security policies using the VPDSS as guidelines. The recommended information security policy will support volunteers by protecting confidentiality of information such as personnel and health information and providing integrity by limiting access to the platform in line with VPDSS best practice. The committee were pleased to note that an extensive consultation process will continue and is promised to include CFA Executive & DCO's as well as VFBV. Information for members is available via CFA Online.