



VFBV

VOLUNTEER FIRE
BRIGADES VICTORIA

2 Minute Briefings March 2023

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.

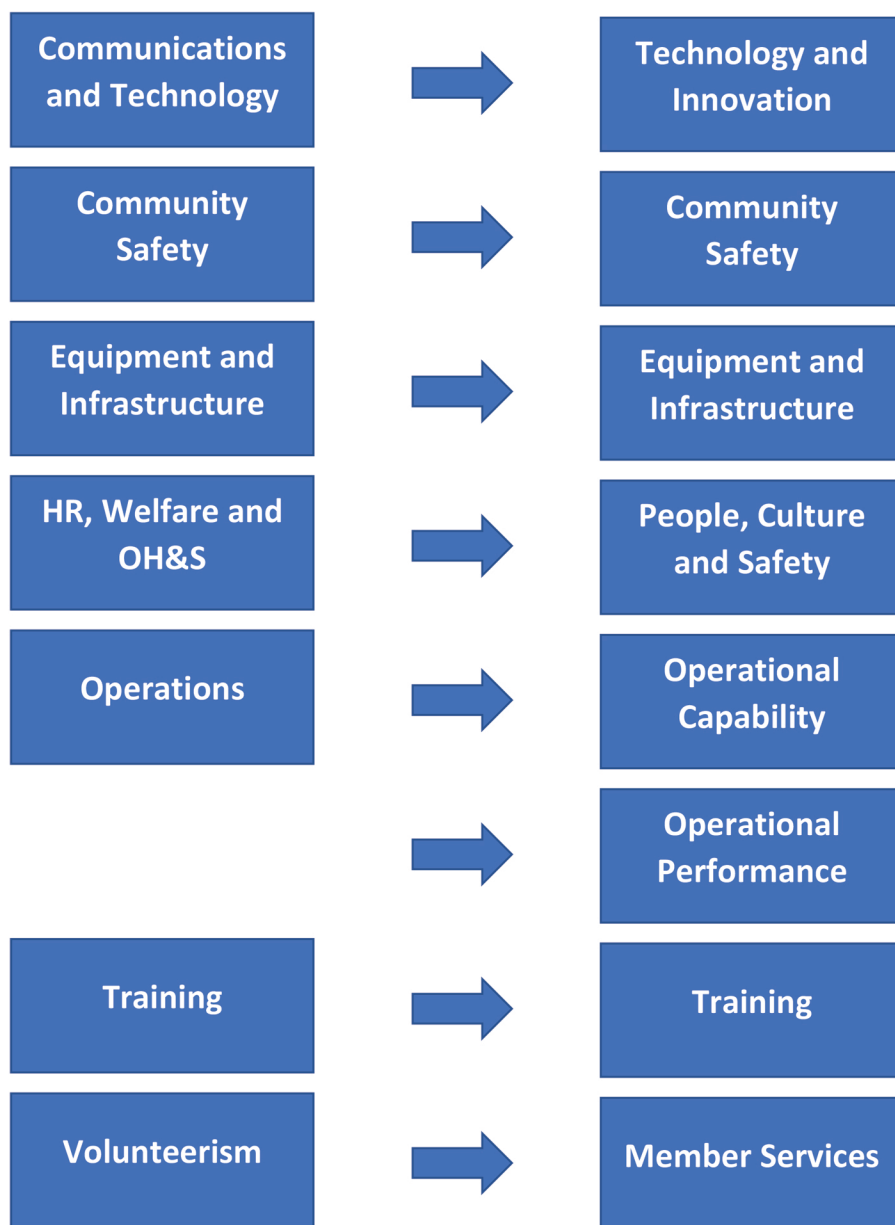
Joint Committees are formal committees between CFA and VFBV made up of VFBV delegates appointed by VFBV State Council, and CFA management representatives appointed by CFA. They are a critical loop in our consultative structures. They endeavour to work collaboratively and cooperatively on issues but may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



SPECIAL NOTICE

Joint Committee Changes

In an effort to strengthen and improve our joint consultative arrangements, CFA and VFBV have revised our Joint Committee structures. As at the next edition, the seven existing committee's will transition to eight committee's:



Joint Communications & Technology Committee

2 Minute Briefing



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MAPPING SYSTEMS

The committee is discussing the various mapping packages that are used within CFA. Each package has benefits and limitations, and therefore CFA does not believe it can standardise to only one product at this time. CFA's current position is members should use the package that they feel most comfortable using as long as the data can be exported in a format that is usable by CFA systems. The two most popular packages in use are Fire Mapper and Avenza. FireMapper is being trialled across the State by 20 Brigades and is used by Air Observers and Ground Intelligence Units. Avenza has good support for QR codes and reading Incident Action/Shift Plans. It also allows for using geo-referenced pdf documents offline however data synchronisation can be challenging. Other products in use include the VicMap Viewer – allowing the download of topographical maps onto smart phones, EM-COP and eMap Online Interactive found on the Members On Line (for planning). EMap log ins are now available to all CFA members by applying for a FireWeb log-In at <https://fireweb.ffm.vic.gov.au/Account/UserRegistration>

FIRS APP IMPROVEMENTS

Delegates have requested some improvements to the FIRS app that is currently available for brigades to enter their fire reports. The requests address concerns raised by volunteers over the increase to the number of questions required for inputting details into the FIRS App for a home Brigade report of a Structure Fire. Historically, when done over the phone - the FIRS call takers would skip over obvious questions not related to the call when talking directly to the Brigade saving time. However, the current App is not that intuitive and does not filter questions based on relevance to the details already entered. CFA has committed to investigating options and the Committee will track progress. The Committee have also suggested there should be some notes or prompts to assist Brigades submitting details, that would assist with data quality.

ALERT CONFERENCING SYSTEM

CFA has advised that some Brigades are using the Alert Conference line for more general teleconferencing purposes such as pre-summer preparedness. CFA has requested our assistance to ensure brigades are aware that the use of the Alert Conferencing System is an emergency redundancy for the EAS Paging system only and its use should be restricted to only those occasions where EAS is down. If brigades need access to a general teleconferencing line, these are available by contacting your Group, District or catchment officer for the number and details.

CONNECTED BRIGADES

The Committee continues to monitor the progress of the 'Connected Brigades' project. During the early phase of this project there were 115 Brigades that opted out and did not take up the offer to be part of the original project that seeks to improve internet access to brigade facilities. CFA have begun to re-contact those brigades to ensure they don't require assistance. The next phase of funding has now been finalised and under the new contract some LCF's particularly in Districts 22 and 23 will have their current inadequate connections upgraded.

TRIPLE ZERO MESSAGING

As part of the Committee's strategic outlook of future technology, work is underway on the ability for the public to use SMS on mobile phones to contact emergency services via Triple Zero. This functionality has the potential to provide much needed alternative pathways for people with speech difficulties/impairments, or for people in desperate situations such as siege, hostage or terrorist events. This work is being driven at the national level by the National Emergency Communications Working Group (NECWG-ANZ). We will provide updates as this work progresses.

Joint Community Safety Committee

2 Minute Briefing



March 2023

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

SCHOOLS IN FIRE COUNTRY

Earlier last year we reported on the development of the Schools in Fire Country program. Since then, further work has been completed, including the pilot program in conjunction with Harkaway Primary School. The pilot ran over three terms and was delivered to year 5 and 6 students. The program is designed to be delivered in the following three phases.

Phase 1: Discover- Students develop their knowledge and understanding of bushfire through learning about fire behaviour, fire ecology, Indigenous cultural burning as well as bushfire risk and hazards. Students also assess their local bushfire risks in their community and what can be done to reduce those risks.

Phase 2: Investigate – Students apply what they have learned to identify a specific problem in their community or local area. They will develop a possible solution to address that problem. This is done by students having conversations with subject matter experts and those who have a good understanding of the local area.

Phase 3: Take Action – Students continue to develop the solution they have identified and put it to the test before making further refinements to their solution. The program concludes with students presenting the problem they have identified and their solution to that problem to the wider school community.

Despite early nerves, the feedback provided by the participating students and those who were involved in the program delivery has been excellent. CFA is now working with other schools for the delivery of future programs.

To compliment the program an agency induction package is in production as well as a professional development package for school teachers. Further information will be provided to brigades on how this program can be used in schools in their local community and the benefit it will bring to students. As the Schools in Fire Country program is rolled out it will allow brigades to partner with local schools to be part of the delivery of this program. It will also allow brigade members to act as subject matter experts on how fire is likely to behave in their local area, the risks, and possible solutions to addressing those risks.

MOBILE ENGAGEMENT VEHICLE BOOKING CALENDAR

Delegates had previously requested that an online MEU booking system be developed to assist Brigade Community Safety co-ordinators to easily book a vehicle for their community activities. We can now report that the online booking system for MEUs is now live. Members are now able to log into Members Online and find a link to the calendar through the MEU information page. At least a month's notice from the date of your booking will need to be provided, as well as details about the event that the vehicle is to be booked for.

A confirmation of the booking will then be provided by email along with information about where the vehicle can be collected from. Eight Mobile Engagement Vehicles are located across the state and available for brigades to use for their community events.

PLANNED BURNS PROGRAM

CFA's planned burns program treated over 3000 hectares of land last year, well up on the year before. This year aims to be even more ambitious with 5,605 hectares being the target with over 300 burns as part of the program.

Planned burns that are part of this program will be prioritised to deliver burns that address the greatest risk to communities and infrastructure (e.g. schools, hospitals, road networks etc). Work is also being done to provide training and accreditation for burn controllers as well as the recognition of prior learning. We will continue to keep you updated throughout the year on the progress of the planned burn program.

Joint Equipment and Infrastructure Committee

2 Minute Briefing



March 2023

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

ONLINE CFA APPROVED EQUIPMENT REGISTER

Some time ago, VFBV requested CFA develop an online register where members could access an up-to-date equipment register of all approved CFA equipment, along with ordering and supply details to address the issue that brigades currently have no source of truth for purchasing and replacing non-stores equipment, or a way to stay abreast of what is CFA approved equipment. While CFA agreed to this request and some initial work had commenced on the register, with personnel changes and the passage of time, progress has been slow, and CFA have now confirmed that the proposed prototype didn't progress due to funding constraints. Delegates expressed disappointment and stressed the value add for members and improved safety outcomes of ensuring brigades had easy access to this information. Discussion also covered the advantages of regular market scanning for improved products and assessing existing equipment for effectiveness and risk association. Delegates suggested that as specialist equipment does currently have a form of online register for rescue brigades which has the current equipment available, perhaps that template could be expanded. Delegates will continue to pursue, and will keep you informed on any progress that occurs over 2023.

PURPOSE BUILT DRIVER TRAINING VEHICLES

Two purpose-built driver training vehicles have been completed and delivered to the Central Highlands Training Ground at Ballan and will be available for use on driving courses this year. A Timeline is still to be determined for the build and rollout of the further 8 vehicles required. The intent will be to have these vehicles located at the various training grounds around the state and for them to be available for volunteer driver training. The training department are currently developing a booking system for these vehicles.

The new vehicles consist of a 13T Hino GT 1528 4x4 Crew Cab Chassis with an automatic transmission and a 7.5T Isuzu NPS75-155 4x4 Crew Cab Chassis with a manual transmission and both vehicles have tray frame and chained concrete blocks (to simulate load to full GVM allowing for 5 x 100kg crew) . Other features are a tray mounted Roll Over Protection Structure (ROPS) and reversing camera integrated into OEM multi-media display. Delegates are pleased with progress and are looking forward to the remainder of the driver training vehicles to be completed so that volunteers can make full use of their availability to improve driver safety.

ULTRA HEAVY TANKER

The members of the Ultra Heavy Tanker (UHT) working party have been very busy, having attended 9 meetings in the consultation process on the first UHT. The CFA committed to the construction of 29 UHT in this round of funding, hoping they will be all completed for the 2023/24 fire season. Brigades in the far west who have had access to the first prototype since the busy 2019/20 fire season have reported many positives and provided valuable feedback to this type of vehicle and many across the state are looking forward to the new improved version. The prototype has now completed its quality assurance and final checks. We will continue to keep you updated as the first vehicles become operational.

CAFS TANKERS

We reported in the December 2-minute briefings CFA's intent with improving the fleet of appliances with Compressed Air Foam Systems (CAFS). The volunteer representatives on the CAFS working party can now report good progress, with the ex-Tasmanian Fire Service CAFS 8.1 Heavy Pumper Tanker purchased by CFA in 2022 is currently at the body builders undergoing modification in line with CFA build requirements and standards. One of the 2x 4.4R Heavy Tanker CAFS retrofits is nearing completion pending changeover and Unit 2 is still under modification subject to release. The retrofit 3.4C Heavy Tanker Conversion will commence pending availability of appliance. The resource for development of training documentation has commenced and should be completed shortly allowing all vehicles to be operational.

Joint HR, Welfare and OH&S Committee

2 Minute Briefing



March 2023

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

CFASafe – IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING HAZARDS

VFBV and CFA have recently discussed the issue of under-reporting on hazards, near misses and incidents. This under-reporting has become quite evident when reviewing the low number of recently reported hazards. Given the recent flood deployments, on top of normal CFA turnouts, training and activities, both VFBV and CFA believe the numbers to be unusually low. Both CFA and VFBV agree that volunteers often adopt an attitude of 'get on with business' and in doing so, when identifying a potential hazard, will go ahead and remedy the problem without then reporting the original hazard. This is understandable and admirable but inadvertently undermines the objective of collecting information and data around safety of volunteers and the equipment and procedures we use every day. The dislike of 'paperwork' and forms that seem to constantly grow is also a big turn-off for volunteers. When a problem is fixed and no report is made, CFA are unable to track trends, and see if similar problems exist across other brigades or other areas. Hazard reports often inform safety bulletins and other remedial actions to improve safety across the whole of CFA.

Regardless of whether the problem is fixed straight away or not, we recommend all hazards or potential hazards should be reported to CFA via CFASafe, or the more recent addition of the Pocket Safety mobile phone app or via the Salmon card when on deployment. VFBV would encourage volunteers to report all matters of safety immediately. Also, consider whether a matter is more appropriate to report as a hazard report or a maintenance report. If a matter has been reported to CFASafe, action should be taken by CFA within 48 hours. If this does not occur, volunteers are urged to follow up with the District Office.

OH&S COMMITTEES

Members would recall that VFBV delegates have been raising concerns for some time around the inconsistency of the structure of District based OH&S committees and the regularity of meetings of those committees and their reporting lines. VFBV continue to stress the importance of the need for these committees to meet regularly and inform CFA of potential themes and issues that exist across each District and Region. CFA have advised that they have resumed work on building a framework to standardise the structure of all OH&S Committees across the State.

Delegates suggested a senior officer such as the ACFO should be accountable for ensuring meetings take place and are attended by a Chair, volunteer OH&S delegates, VFBV representatives, CFA management and staff, consultants etc. The question was raised as to whether the committees should be Regional or District level. The consensus of delegates was that a District level committee would be preferred as a regional perspective may be too large and broad and creates increased travel impositions on many attendees. CFA will draft a policy for consultation addressing governance structure, terms of reference and possible guiding templates. As soon as the draft is provided, we will seek broader volunteer input and feedback.

PRESUMPTIVE LEGISLATION CLAIMS

In a further update, a draft brochure outlining the Gallagher Bassett (GB) procedure for volunteers when making a cancer claim is being reviewed. This brochure was requested by VFBV to improve the volunteer claims experience and to remove a lot of the confusion volunteers have been reporting. Gallagher Bassett are the external law firm engaged by WorkSafe to manage the claims. It is CFA and VFBV's intention that CFA will be overlooking the GB 'end to end' process for volunteers, to ensure GB are making the process as seamless and easy as possible for volunteers and that CFA is appropriately supporting its members throughout the process, acknowledging these members will often be in distress or unwell as they undergo treatment.

Joint Operations Committee

2 Minute Briefing



March 2023

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

CHANGES TO OPERATIONS JOINT COMMITTEE'S FOR 2023

As part of VFBV and CFA's review and strengthening of our joint committee consultative arrangements, the Joint Operations Committee has been divided into 2 committees, with the new **Joint Operational Capability** consultative committee focussing on building brigade and group capability, addressing gaps in service delivery as well as covering protective clothing and equipment and specialist response such as road accident rescue, EMR/FMR, alpine and aviation. The **Joint Operational Performance** consultative committee will continue the great work already achieved in development and review of operational policy, doctrine and standards as well as ensuring continuous improvements in operational compliance, fire investigation, joint SOP's and monitoring operational performance.

VOLUNTEER FIRE INVESTIGATORS

In previous 2 minute briefings we reported that there had been some welcome changes to the way CFA Fire Investigators would be involved after the changes that came about due to Fire Service Reform. Following reform, volunteer fire investigators reported significant barriers and exclusion even though the CFA co-signed an inter-agency agreement in 2016 that would see greater co-operation between agencies in investigating fires and reduce the agencies operating in isolation. It is pleasing to report that since raising these issues and working with CFA to strengthen fire investigation and its support to volunteers, the relationship between agencies has markedly improved over the course of 2022 with over 319 fire investigations conducted in the country area of Victoria. Over 235 of these were fire investigations conducted by CFA volunteer Fire Investigators. There were also 214 structural fire investigations conducted by CFA highlighting that volunteers continue to deliver an outstanding service and why CFA needs this critical capability and the need to continue to build training opportunities for new investigators.

CFA are close to releasing the Fire Investigator training package after its upgrade to PUA19. CFA reported that courses will be run in early 2023 at the updated Huntly training facility however it was noted by members that initial courses are being run during the week which makes it difficult for volunteers to attend and hard to get new members interested in fire investigation. VFBV will continue to advocate for volunteer friendly course scheduling and have asked CFA to schedule evening and weekend courses as a priority.

FIREGROUND TABARDS

As members may recall, a review paper from Emergency Management Victoria in 2013 on the use of tabards within the emergency management sector was completed and issued to agencies. In short, the paper outlined the scope, standards and key requirements for each agency to follow in relation to tabard design, colour, fabric and labelling. CFA developed its own paper in 2018 that outlined how it was going to incorporate the specifications and minimum requirements of IMT tabards into its operations. Despite all this, very little progress has been made in transitioning to the new standards and colours. Delegates have continued to raise concerns about the availability of tabards and the time it has taken to finalise the tabards for operational roles for identification on the fireground. The Committee have continued to advocate on this issue for many years now as it directly addresses the volunteer feedback and criticism that the current lime-green tabards in use across CFA can make it difficult to identify the incident controller at structural incidents due to the tabards being a similar colour to the PPC worn. The new tabards are easier to identify and are made of a lighter fire retardant woven material to reduce discomfort to the wearer and comply with AS/NZS standards and have interchangeable titles.

Progress has finally been made, with the new tabards changing to a more distinguishable red in line with the standards to ensure there is no confusion as to who the incident controller is. CFA has funded an initial rollout to primary appliances in category 3, 4 and 5 brigades and have identified a funding source for allocation to Road Rescue brigades. Further funding is being sought to complete the rollout to the rest of the fleet. The old tabards continue to meet the CFA requirements and are still ok to use for strike team and sector commanders as they are easily identifiable against the wildfire PPC.

Joint Training Committee

2 Minute Briefing



March 2023

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

STRUCTURAL THERMAL IMAGING CAMERA TRAINING

The committee are working through an issue regarding the prerequisites for the Structural TIC training course. Conduct Search and Rescue (from PUA12) should have been a prerequisite for Structural TIC but was not listed in LMS until the problem was identified late last year. This is due to the competency requiring students undertaking the structural TIC training to operate in a hot internal environment.

Members who currently hold the Search and Rescue competency will be able to undertake the Structural TIC Course immediately. However CFA has advised that members who do not currently hold the competency will have to undertake the new Respond to Urban Fire course, once it is released in early 2023, before they can enrol in the Structural TIC course. VFBV delegates will continue to monitor and are discussing with CFA the potential for gap training given how long it has taken for the respond to urban course to be developed, and the lack of search and rescue courses (internal BA) in that intervening period.

All members who have completed GFF, Tree Hazard Awareness and have experience responding to bushfires will still be able to undertake the TIC General Course, as this does not require students to operate in a hot internal environment.

2023 TRAINING COURSE RELEASES

With significant CFA resources being consumed during 2022 to the process of upgrading training packages from the old PUA12 standard to the new PUA19 standard and CFA's response to the RTO audit, there has been a delay in the release dates for many training packages. Understanding the importance of these courses to Brigades, VFBV have been pursuing CFA for an updated schedule of Training Package releases so that brigades can plan. At the last meeting for 2022, CFA presented members with their planned schedule for the first half of 2023. Courses planned to be ready for release during quarter 1 are; Respond to Urban Fire, Operate Pumps, Driving Policy and Legislation (online course) and Crew Leader. The courses planned for quarter 2 are; Strike Team Leader, Sector Commander, Fire Weather, and IMT prerequisites. Delegates will continue to work with CFA to ensure the timely release of packages throughout the year.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

Towards the end of 2022, delegates were updated on the program to start running Professional Development (PD) sessions for Trainer Assessors (TAs), something that VFBV delegates have been pursuing with CFA for quite a while. These are important sessions as all TAs in a Registered Training Organisation must be able to demonstrate ongoing personal development in their field of expertise to maintain their qualification to deliver training.

Delegates will be looking to suggest appropriate topics for these sessions, and are asking TA's for suggestions for possible inclusion. Please send your suggestions to VFBV Support Officer Max Blackmore via m.blackmore@vfbv.com.au

IMPROVEMENTS TO TRAINING RELEASE PROCESS

Concerns about issues that have occurred with uploading some training packages into LMS have been discussed. Recent notable examples being, the incorrect BA package being uploaded causing scheduled courses to be cancelled and a missing prerequisite for the Structural TIC course leading to members enrolled in the course not being able to attend. Delegates have highlighted to CFA the negative impact that these problems have on volunteers with members arranging CFA training around family and work commitments to attend courses that were cancelled at the last minute and brigade capabilities suffering as they are not able to get members on to a course to gain the skills they need. CFA have now undertaken a review of its processes and have changed their process to now include an extra quality assurance step with the Manager, Quality and Evaluation for Operational Doctrine and Training now having to review course details and signoff before materials are uploaded into LMS. Delegates hope that this will avoid these errors from occurring again and will monitor.

Joint Volunteerism Committee

2 Minute Briefing



March 2023

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

NAME CHANGE

As part of VFBV and CFA's review and strengthening of our joint committee consultative arrangements, the Joint Volunteerism Committee will transition to the Joint Member Services Committee in 2023. The new committee will continue working on recruitment, retention, youth, events, championships and recognition, while picking up member communications, brigade finance and fundraising.

CFA MEMBERS POCKETBOOK

Discussions continue on the possible formats of providing important information operational & administrative in easily understood and accessible means electronically. Delegates are looking into the use of technology as part of these methods including a Phone App, as many members have access to a smart mobile phone technology a CFA app could deliver the information contained in the printed version of "Tactics & Administration in the Field Volume 3" and the Brigade Management Manual (BMM) for example.

An app or 'pocketbook' would be readily updatable and be available to all members via their smart phone. Although the advance in accessible technologies is not meant to replace any printed documents, as internet access improves across Victoria more online facilities will become available to members to use should they wish to. Members are constantly being updated on new innovations through the committee working parties. The committee continues to monitor developments in this space with other emergency services.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND RECOGNITION

Brigades continue to highlight the need for assistance with their recruitment programs and are concerned about the delay in rolling out the "Give us a Hand" campaign. CFA along with the other State volunteer organisations are still awaiting the launch of the campaign. Delegates have been assured that CFA Communications has developed the material to support the campaign and it is available on Members Online and consists of a TV campaign, online videos, and targeted advertising material. The District Offices will have access and brigades will be able to seek assistance from your local BASO's.

Recent figures from CFA still show a continuing downward trend in overall brigade membership with an imbalance between members leaving the organisation verses those joining. Whilst it is very important to have a recruitment strategy it is equally important to have a retention strategy. Delegates will continue to advocate for greater support to brigades.

CHAMPIONSHIPS

Recent inspections of the Mooropna facilities have been carried out after the devastating flood impacts in the later part of 2022, with many venues continuing the recovery process, some minor damage to the track and facilities are on track to be fixed prior to the 2023 State Championships in March. The dates for the 2023 events are March 18th and 19th for the running of the Urban Junior Championships and March 25 and 26 for the Urban Senior Championships and the Rural Junior and Rural Senior events.

RECOGNITION OF AUXILIARY SERVICE

VFBV continues to receive reports of members having difficulty having their previous auxiliary service recognised in their service history. Members are reminded that they can have their records updated if their service is not showing, and delegates have requested this advice be included in the Brigade Management Manual (BMM) to clarify how the recognition of Auxiliary Service is managed along with the process to recognise members that have died in the line of duty. This latter issue has been raised by brigades that have become aware of a member that historically has been missed when CFA undertook the process of this recognition. If you need assistance, please speak to your BASO or District Office.